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**A Handbook for Community College Deans: Foundations,  
Frameworks, and Day-to-Day Resources for Leaders of Two-Year  
Institutions of Higher Education**

Thomas James Wilkins-Luton

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A HANDBOOK FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE DEANS:  
FOUNDATIONS, FRAMEWORKS, AND DAY-TO-DAY RESOURCES FOR LEADERS  
OF TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the  
Doctor of Educational Leadership Department  
in partial fulfillment for the degree of  
Doctor of Education

GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

April 14th, 2023

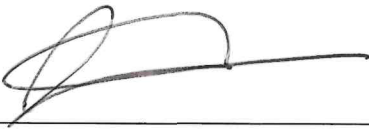


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A HANDBOOK FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE DEANS: FOUNDATIONS, FRAMEWORKS, AND DAY-TO-DAY RESOURCES FOR LEADERS OF TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, a Doctoral research project prepared by THOMAS JAMES WILKINS-LUTON in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

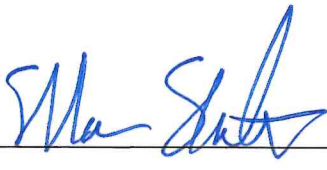
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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the evolving equity-focused purpose and structure of community colleges in the United States in the early 2020's and examines how the leaders of these culturally critical higher education institutions make sense of their place within complex social and educational contexts. This study describes the function of these equity-essential institutions and identifies key structural barriers and student success interventions; explores how community colleges have worked to realign their missions and visions in light of changing student demographics and emerging student-success research; and reflects on the professional foundations, conceptual frameworks, and resources necessary for community college leaders, particularly deans new to their roles, to effectively serve their students, colleagues, and community. Leading with Racial Equity, Structuring Along Guided Pathways, and relationship-based micro-political leadership are anchor points for leaders in this context. Each anchor supplies a reference point for decision-making and action as day-to-day challenges arise. Once functional and structural landscapes are assessed, this study provides an Open Educational Resource (OER) handbook for new community college administrators as they adapt to their roles. Example professional learning models and strategies for assessing the efficacy of onboarding resources are also provided.

*Keywords:* administrative onboarding, community college leadership, Guided Pathways, racial equity, resource handbook



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a life privilege and blessing to have known so many extraordinary students, staff, faculty, and administrators over the past 30 years, educators all. My doctoral journey and the writing of this handbook for community college deans have taken place not only in a specific period of global and personal history defined by the COVID-19 Pandemic but also in a period of unprecedented leadership transition at the community college I have called my professional home for more than 20 years. These experiences — of growth, change, and survival — are irrevocably fused in the core of who I am as a husband, father, student, colleague, teacher, and leader. These experiences have also served as both genesis-thought and sustaining-inspiration for this somewhat unorthodox exploration of the community college landscape in the United States in the early 2020's and my assessment, as autobiographical as it is, of how a new wave of equity-grounded leaders might help make our next chapter one that transforms individual student lives and serves as a catalyst for the creation of more vibrant, revitalized, and diverse communities. It is my hope that those who know and support me — and love the students and institutions we serve — will forgive my audacity in painting with a brush broader than is typical of a doctoral dissertation and offering a map informed as much by the personal topography of experience as it is by the hard-won research of minds brighter and more capable than my own. Nearing the end of the final leg of this long journey, I am grateful to my:

Family: I would not have completed this journey without you.

Friday morning Friends: you taught me to listen and learn from the silence.

Colleagues: this book, as imperfect as it is, is for you.

Students: you, your families, and our communities are why this matters.

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I start from the conviction that many of the most important things we know are things we know before we can speak them; indeed, we know them — though with very little in the way of concepts to make them intelligible to us — even as children, and see them with the greatest immediacy when we look at them with the eyes of innocence. But, as they are hard to say, and as they are often so immediate to us that we cannot stand back from them objectively, we tend to put them out of mind as we grow older, and make ourselves oblivious to them, and try to silence the voice of knowledge that speaks within our own experiences of the world. Wisdom is the recovery of innocence at the far end of experience; it is the ability to translate some of that vision into words, however inadequate. There is a point, that is to say, where reason and revelation are one and the same.

David Bentley Hart (*The Experience of God*, 2013)

The essential thing “in heaven and earth” is . . . that there should be a long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living.

Friedrich Nietzsche (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 1886)

He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8 (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001)

## Chapter 1

### Introduction, Overview, and Organizational Structure

Institutions of higher education fail, thrive, or simply get along based on the quality of the institution's administrative leadership (Gallos & Bolman, 2021; Leaderman et al., 2016). The need for quality administrative leadership has been well understood over time and across organizational purpose and structure (Bligh et al., 2011; Hernandez et al., 2011; Kellerman, 2004; Yammarino, 2013). The need for capable leadership would appear especially pressing in higher education settings today, considering the broad spectrum of challenges colleges and universities face in the post-COVID era and the social influence and sense-making significance (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016) adept academic leaders hold in co-constructing and framing communal understanding during prolonged cycles of crisis (Gigliotti, 2020; Smerek, 2011).

Student populations are shrinking, and shifting demographics are redefining who community college students are and how our culturally critical two-year institutions of higher education serve them (Edgecombe, 2019; Levine & Van Pelt, 2021). The reshaping of the budgetary realities and mission priorities that naturally follow (Christophersen, 2020) underscores the need to hire, onboard, and retain committed and creative college administrators (Buller, 2011; Gallos & Bolman, 2021; Zahneis, 2022). The current body of higher education leadership literature is more robust than ever, especially regarding research outlining the characteristics of "efficacious" college administrators (Siswanto et al., 2023). Many of today's new community college mid-level leaders, particularly those onboarding in regions with less centralized state-level support systems, are left to their own devices. Unfortunately, this leaves new administrators to acclimate to their new roles in real-time with little or no formal preparation or institution/system-specific professional learning opportunities available.

In the summer of 2015, I was one of these newly minted and less-than-prepared rookie administrators. I had read several excellent 30,000-foot, dean-level guidebooks and handbooks in the break after graduation (Behling, 2014; Buller, 2009; Grogan, 2013; Gunsalas, 2006; Jensen & Giles, 2006), but little prepared me for the day-one Instructional Council (IC) meeting with a single bolded agenda item: Cut \$2.2 million from the instructional budget. This was the first such budget reduction in my institution's history, but my college would face similar budget reductions every year for the six years following. Unfortunately, with the impact of COVID-19 on the community college system in my state and fewer-and-fewer college-age students coming to our institutions, we are again engaged in budget reduction conversations as I write.

This dissertation and the handbook that comprises Chapter 2 draws heavily on my lived experience as a community college educator and administrator over the past 30 years. Over my career, I have been privileged to work through the higher education ranks from Adjunct Faculty to Tenured Professor, Faculty Senator to Union Vice President and Negotiator, and later Dean to Associate Vice President to Vice President of Instruction. These experiences have helped me identify several professional foundations, personal dispositions, and critical practices that many useful community college administrators possess and engage in, or at least carefully consider, as they cultivate the craft of leadership and strive to facilitate positive, transformative change at their institutions. While Chapter 2 of this dissertation considers four additional administrative frameworks, I would suggest that there are three foundational elements that inform and undergird the work and day-to-day practices that community college leaders find useful as they make themselves useful to those they serve. These three intersect to form a well-grounded conceptual foundation for administrators working in community colleges today, anchored in racial equity (Bensimon et al., 2020), aligned with Guided Pathways reforms (Bailey et al., 2015), and



committed to the human and highly relational art of working with people on personal and micro-political levels (Lumby, 2015) as they navigate the increasingly crisis-fraught waters of higher education together (Gigliotti, 2020).

These foundations mark an equity-minded paradigm shift away from the preparatory structures of yesterday's community colleges, often heavy laden with multiple terms of zero-level developmental courses and the open-field exploratory principles of course selection as experienced by previous generations of college students (Bickerstaff et al., 2022). Gone are the days of the community college self-serve cafeteria model; the set-menu era of Guided Pathways has arrived (Bailey et al., 2015). This also suggests that today's community college leaders must prioritize the lived experience of our most marginalized students in clearly defined and intentionally designed systems with stronger choice architecture (Bailey et al., 2015). As a former developmental faculty member and then dean over departments with many well-enrolled remedial courses, I can attest that leading this kind of institutional, structural change is challenging and rewarding.

These foundational reforms also challenge a leader's ability to deconstruct and reconstruct institutional reality from the students' perspectives to motivate institutional action on large and small scales. The ability to effectively refocus institutional attention on the students' experience on stage, behind the scenes, understage, and in the everyday audience (Lumby, 2015) can be the difference between sustaining ineffective and often racist (Kendi, 2019) educational systems and inspiring transformational equity-minded systemic change (Bensimon et al., 2020). As high-minded and aspirational as this may seem, and to some extent it is — transformational leadership is always ambitious and aspires (Heifetz et al., 2009) — there simply are no readily

available programs for preparing administrative leaders for the action-oriented and transformational realities of today's community college landscape.

The first chapter of this dissertation will describe the foundational leadership considerations of the evolving community college landscape in an increasingly demographically diverse post-COVID-19 Pandemic era and make an argument for the usefulness of this project. Please see Appendix A for a list of key terms addressed in this discussion. Chapter 2, Part A will then reframe the foundations discussion from Chapter 1, specifically for a community college administrative audience, and describe four additional administrative frameworks useful in the day-to-day work of community college deans. Understanding the distinction between the *foundations* described in Chapter 1 and the *frameworks* described in Chapter 2 is important. *Foundations* describe the core understandings a leader *must know now* to be effective in a community college setting today. Leadership *frameworks* describe the knowledge and skill bases *I wish I had known* when I began my career as an academic dean. Both are presented in an integrated format in Chapter 2, Part A.

Chapter 2, Part B then explores the work domains of a community college administrator and offers practical recommendations and day-to-day resources, complete with guidance from relevant leadership literature, specific examples from my institutional context, and a short list of references for further research. Chapter 2 is currently being adapted into an administrative resource in the Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) for ongoing revision and use by my institution's Teaching and Learning Center; a copy of the Canvas shell will be available upon request as an Open Educational Resource (OER) to those who may want a copy. Considerations, limitations, and implications for this project and the ongoing resource assessment and professional development for community college deans at broader and local levels will also be

explored in Chapter 3. Personal reflections on the practical application of the foundations, frameworks, and day-to-day resources as they relate to my professional life and the development of this project over the past few years will also be explored.

### **Problem Statement: Leadership Onboarding Broadly Considered**

As of the writing of this text (2023), there are very few widely available, just-in-time, or critically current professional-learning programs or resources for academic administrators serving in community colleges in the United States. As a result, new middle-level administrators, particularly those serving as instructional directors, associate deans, or deans, are often unprepared for the challenges facing community colleges in the third decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This professional learning vacuum has left colleges to rely on the more traditional onboarding approach of leveraging the good will of often overworked senior deans to acclimate and onboard new administrative colleagues. This is a labor-intensive mentoring enterprise that is, as likely as not, marked by personal idiosyncrasies, systemic inconsistencies, and potential conflicts of interest. This consideration should not be dismissed with the budgetary and enrolment challenges facing community colleges over the past 10 years and on into the post-Covid era (Rubin et al., 2017; Ruben 2020). Even the most time-honored and iron-clad professional relationships can be sorely tested when beloved programs are on the budget block, and experience confirms that new deans are more likely than seasoned veterans to contribute or concede difficult-to-replace programs or line items when budget conversations become challenging. Administrative inexperience has consequences that impact the lives of students, staff, and faculty.

Additionally, the professional development literature that a new community college dean or director might resource to individually get up-to-speed is either too general to be useful in the immediacy of one's day-to-day work (Behling, 2014; Buller, 2015; Grogan, 2013; Gunsalas,

2006; Jensen & Giles, 2006), too focused on the experiences and challenges faced by deans at four-year colleges and universities (Behling, 2014; Buller, 2015; Grogan, 2013; Gunsalas, 2006), or approached from the somewhat dated top-down perspective of a former Trustee or Executive Cabinet member who came up the community college ladder (Jensen and Giles, 2006). Each of these readers, guides, and handbooks is wonderfully useful to a new administrator. I write this with the fullest respect and admiration for each of these leaders and writers, and I give wholehearted recommendation for each of the resources referenced above. However, it is difficult to know which book to turn to in the heat of a real-time enrollment management decision, and a lot has changed in higher education since the COVID-19 Pandemic redefined our students' needs and our institutional identities.

At community colleges, anything developed or written before 2015 is unlikely to consider the newly re-visioned purpose and structure of two-year institutions in the 2020's. While all the resources mentioned above are generally valuable to a new administrator looking to improve their leadership craft, the rapid rate of change and innovation at the community college level over the past decade has made most of these resources less helpful than they might have been to past generations of fledgling administrators. Little in the earlier administrative how-to literature takes into consideration the radical pre-college reforms recommended by the Community College Resource Center (CCRC) at Columbia University's Teachers College (Bailey et al., 2008; Bailey et al., 2015; Bickerstaff et al., 2022; Jenkins et al., 2022), the structural Guided Pathways reforms that have become an often legislated nationwide movement (Bailey et al., 2015), or the recent recentering of racial equity in strategic planning conversations and the day-to-day work of institutions of higher education (Bensimon, 2019). Community colleges have always understood the socio-economic importance of their place in the public trust

that is open-access education (Boggs & McPhail, 2016; Cohen et al., 2014). However, the bent of this understanding has shifted toward an actualization of the awareness of the significant role community colleges play in facilitating transformational change for historically and systemically marginalized and oppressed student populations, student populations that will shift to a minority-majority in the next two decades (Edgecombe, 2019; Frey, 2018; Jenkins et al., 2021).

### **Problem Statement: Leadership Onboarding on the Local Level**

Nearly every community college in the United States must meaningfully address the shifting demographic, structural, and leadership challenges described above. Washington State and community colleges within the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) system have been nationally recognized for leading innovative systemic change initiatives, especially at the pre-college levels (Obama, 2009). HS+, I-DEA, Open Doors, Ability to Benefit, I-BEST; the list of equity-centered interventions and curricular supports and accelerations is long and noteworthy. However, the demands of understanding and leading innovative work also create challenges and the need for the development of new knowledge bases for new administrators.

For example, where is a new administrator to gain expertise in supporting culturally responsive curriculum design, Guided Pathways reforms, co-requisite instructional models, directed self-placement, multiple-measures assessment, I-BEST support structures, anti-racist composition strategies, or modeling equity-minded leadership dispositions, while also trying to figure out how to fairly resolve student complaints, accurately interpret contract language within the context of its negotiated intent, and quickly determine and communicate to all stakeholders whether a class requires 15 or 17 students to run three weeks before the quarter begins? While

individual professional-learning resources are available, very few resources exist to comprehensively provide new administrators with necessary systemic or centralized methods.

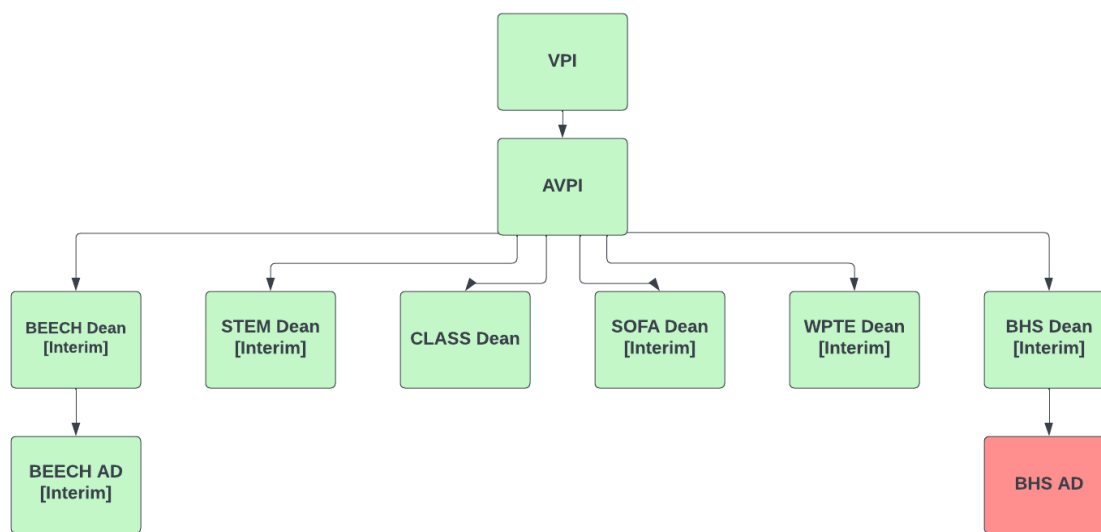
SBCTC has made efforts to provide professional development opportunities for its deans and other administrators in the past, particularly for those serving in professional technical areas, Workforce Deans Academy being a good example (SBCTC, 2023). The focus of this training opportunity is for Career and Technical Education (CTE) administrators, with similar training opportunities offered to CTE faculty. Because CTE faculty often come to higher education from business and industry sectors, SBCTC has provided additional classroom training for CTE faculty and sector-specific administrative professional development for new or aspiring CTE deans. At one time, SBCTC also hosted the Washington Executive Leadership Academic (WELA), which was discontinued before the COVID-19 Pandemic. WELA focused on developing broader systems knowledge and networking opportunities for those seeking cabinet level positions:

WELA focuses on developing your knowledge of the Washington State system and your candidacy skills. You will gain visibility and develop contacts across the state, hone your application and interviewing skills, and deepen your leadership knowledge. You will create an individualized career plan for the year and work with a mentor who holds the position to which you aspire, giving you an opportunity to observe another system college (SBCTC, 2023).

While year-long CTE-specific training and networking opportunities are important for administrators fortunate enough to serve within unified state systems like SBCTC, neither of these opportunities is geared to provide just-in-time resources to address the day-to-day leadership needs of new deans in transfer or Transitional Studies areas. Those serving in less

centralized community college systems, like the one directly to the south in Oregon State, have fewer opportunities still. Figure 1 describes administrative positions at my institution coded by length of time served by the person in the role.

Figure 1: *Administrative Role Coded by Time in Position*



**Instructional Leadership Team (ILT): Positions currently held by leaders in roles less than one year or by interim appointments are in green**

And yet the need for ready resources and practical training for new administrators in my state remains especially urgent. This is largely due to a higher-than-average level of mid-level administrative turnover associated with a high number of new presidential appointments in my state, where nearly a third of the colleges have appointed new leaders to the helm in the past five years, COVID-19, and the general administrative churn associated with the great resignation (Zahneis, 2022). The administrative onboarding challenge is compounded at my institution by several retirements, where 9-out-of-10 Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) administrators will have been in their roles or in interim positions less than a year as of the time I write this sentence in early 2023. Because of an unprecedented level of retirements, attrition, and promotion, my

institution will potentially be hiring seven new deans or associate deans in 2022-2023; I have personally held 3-of-the-10 positions illustrated in green in the visual above in the past year. Two of these positions have been “permanent hires” as the result of nationwide searches.

While personnel change is to be expected, the cost of administrative turnover to my institution creates indirect challenges in terms of negative cultural impact and leadership instability. But let us not dismiss the direct economic impact of personnel hours spent conducting screening and search committees, not to mention lost time as new administrators climb steep learning curves into their new positions. Administrative inexperience costs the institution in direct ways; I can cite two specific examples from Fall Quarter 2023 where a new or interim administrator at my institution inadvertently made a decision that cost the college tens-of-thousands of dollars, simply because the new administrator did not know they needed to do or not do something.

Because there will be very few experienced administrators in the ILT ranks who are familiar with the institution and available to mentor new deans, my institution must consider ways of developing a more formal onboarding and professional-development process. The tried-and-somewhat-true traditional approach of dean-to-dean mentoring will not help my institution this time around. A more systematic, institution-focused, and research-grounded approach to onboarding instructional administrators is desperately needed, not only at my institution but at other community colleges nationwide.

The stakes for our students and institutions are higher than ever, but not much has changed since I became a new administrator all those years ago. The first thing my administrative predecessor said to me when I took my first dean job was, “You know, there is no handbook for being a dean. Good Luck.” She also left me a single yellow sticky note pasted to



the top of her old/my new office keyboard reading, “Learn what to ignore.” Beyond being generally good advice about limiting distraction, clearly, higher education needs to move beyond warm handoffs and sticky notes.

### **Purpose, Aim, and Significance**

The purpose of this autobiographically grounded study of community college administrative onboarding is to provide a literature-rich, context-specific, and experience-informed resource for new community college administrators as they live out their daily lives in service to students, staff, faculty, and community. This study draws on my more than 30 years as a professional educator and the understanding gained as an instructional administrator deeply embedded and connected in a community college that has been historically committed to student-centered and innovation-driven change. This resource, referred to in very early draft form as *Community College Leadership for Dummies* and now, more practically and trademark-compliantly entitled *A Handbook for Community College Deans*, is one part of a three-part just-in-time dean onboarding resource I have developed for new administrators at my institution. I had originally intended to offer the first-of-three parts, the foundational elements of community college leadership, in consideration for this dissertation, but as the project developed, I began to understand the value of each element to either myself, academic administrators generally, or the colleagues I serve with every day.

My aim is to provide a practical insider’s guide that demystifies and humanizes academic leadership at the community college level and helps to effectively onboard new instructional leaders. My hope is that this also increases job satisfaction and efficacy; reduces job turn-over for administrators, faculty, and staff; improves campus climate; and increases the attainment of student learning outcomes for community college students, particularly those from our most

vulnerable populations. High goals, I know. I simply want to be useful and help the community college where I work be better for all in the community.

My aim is to provide a research-rich and experienced-based rationale for *A Handbook for Community College Deans* as a basis for this dissertation exploration, as I develop the text of a community college specific but also generally useful handbook for deaning within the community college system in which I serve and a proposal for and examples of a series of professional development sessions designed to onboard my institution's new permanent administrators. The second chapter of this dissertation is mirrored in an easily updatable format in a Canvas Learning Management System (LMS) course shell, to be updated periodically by administrators in the Office of Instruction and the Teaching and Learning Center at my institution. Beyond the personal and professional growth this project has afforded me, the Canvas-based Deans' Resource Center is likely to be the element of this dissertation with the most lasting value for my institution, as it will provide a centralized platform for easily updatable resources and localized content for those who serve at my institution.

Poor administrative performance has a devastating impact on an institution's ability to effectively fulfill its mission and vision (Kellerman, 2004), not to mention the negative impact of poor leadership on the morale of a college's faculty, staff, and students (Brion, 2021; Cottrell, 2016). Community colleges are likely heading into the roughest waters in recent history with increasing community and legislative expectations that institutions reform systems and structures to reduce equity gaps (Mokher et al., 2021), increase credential attainment (Bailey et al., 2015), and tighten budgets in response to shrinking student numbers (Cohen et al., 2014). Crisis only amplifies poor administrative performance, as the COVID-19 Pandemic so clearly illustrated, and perpetuates structural inefficiencies, cultural dysfunction, and budgetary hardships (Brion,

2021). This project and the handbook that comprises Chapter 2 will help demystify the role of an academic dean at my institution and within the centralized state system in which I work and provide a relevant, relatable resource to those new to the field and, with any luck, help remedy many of the ills associated with poor administrative performance.

Writing and research should be acts of discovery and surprise, and you should never know where you are going to end up at the beginning of any project, even if you are a long-time community college dean writing a self-reflective, semi-autobiographical exploration of community college administrative best practice. This dissertation had rambling and humble beginnings and, through the process of writing it, has humbled me even as I have rambled. This topic has been with me, or better yet in me, throughout my doctoral journey, although I did not always recognize it as a dissertation. This makes reasonable sense, as Ed.D. programs tend to be practitioner focused and quick to build and cross bridges from conceptual frameworks to day-to-day practice.

But the way this project dogged me throughout my studies, even as I explored more traditional dissertation topics, was unexpected and, in many ways, healing. I could not separate myself from the sense, even as the sky was falling in spectacular ways within my broader professional context, that somehow, remarkably, things seemed to be going well within my immediate sphere of influence. The challenges were significant: repeated cycles of deep budget cuts, a disabling college-wide technology systems overhaul, race-based scandal in the newspaper, near complete leadership turnover at my institution's executive cabinet level, a faculty strike, and then all that came with COVID-19. Through this, my leadership team and I stuck together and continued to do the practical day-to-day work of the college. Remarkably, we

also co-created levels of student-centered, faculty-empowered systemic change unheard of in earlier, more stable eras at my institution.

In my first doctoral semester, in a time when COVID-19 was an unknown and at a university that would soon unexpectedly and quickly close its doors, I toyed with a dissertation topic I called, *Worst Case Leadership Scenarios: The Future of Higher Education Administration*, which acknowledged that the future of higher education appeared less than bright and that new academic leaders were not likely to land their dream jobs on their first forays to the administrative dark side. This led to further explorations, some more explicit and some less direct, about what it was about leaders who appeared to survive, if not thrive, in contexts none of us would willingly choose. I must admit that I was flirting with hubris in this early interrogatory phase of my dissertation exploration.

A leadership professor arranged a one-on-one interview with a long-time provost of a well-established and seemingly stable university, and while my questions focused on the dispositions of successful college leaders in times of stress and duress, I am certain the sum of my questioning was understood as an exercise in ego. A lunch conversation with a long-time friend, who also happens to be the president of a well-respected community college in the area, confirmed my fears and my apparent lack of self-awareness. “Why am I and my team so exceptional?” is simply not the most viable dissertation exploration, and even if it is, your friends certainly do not want to hear about it over a sandwich.

This led to further explorations of the elusive nature of accurate and actionable leadership self-perception (Eurich, 2017) and the need for ethical self-checking for those in leadership positions within institutions in turmoil or transition (Buskey & Pitts, 2009, 2013; Starratt 2004). This led to questions about the efficacy of the student-centered Guided Pathways reforms taking

hold in the broader centralized system and community colleges in my state, many of which were being implemented by my college. It takes a confident-but-hopefully-humility-infused leap to acknowledge that there may be something positive and potent happening within the one's own system and that, perhaps, three decades of slugging it out in the community college trenches might provide you with a rallying flag to wave atop the leadership barricades.

As these questions and explorations came and went, the world was in the midst of high COVID, and many of my colleagues on the Dean Team either took promotions within the institution or at the State Board, moved to new schools, or began contemplating retirement. As a visual aid earlier in this exploration illustrates, only one-out-of-ten members of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) has been in their current role more than a year. This is an incredible level of turnover, by any account, but as I began to recognize the level of leadership change that was heading our way, I also reflected on my own onboarding experience. I learned to be a dean from the Dean Team and an incredibly talented and hardworking unit operations manager, who was also retiring soon. The height of the onboarding mountain and the steepness of the professional development climb seemed insurmountable.

Thankfully, the situation brought with it a bit of inspiration. What if my institution's looming administrative onboarding challenge, the research and reflection I was doing in my doctoral program, and the need for a meaningful dissertation topic might align? I was not interested in going through the motions of another multiple regression study, and besides, the heavy data lifting for the kinds of program analysis the deans at my institution did was the work of more talented minds than mine in the office of Assessment and Institutional Research (AIR). After consideration of my own real-life leader-practitioner challenges and consultation with colleagues and advisors, it became clear that a dissertation focusing on the development of an

onboarding tool just might satisfy the needs of the new administrators at my institution and the requirements of my doctoral program. This document is the result of the alignment of these personal and professional vectors.

The centrality of Leading with Racial Equity, the implementation of Guided Pathways reforms, and the need for a more humane form of relational leadership post-pandemic were all key factors. It appeared clear that new administrators at my institution and the colleges throughout the system in which I served needed ready access to updated dean-level onboarding and training as they began their roles. As the following discussion illustrates, the foundations and frameworks that would have been considered baseline knowledge and skill domains for earlier generations of community college leaders have shifted and a new leadership landscape have appeared. None of the leadership how-to handbooks, guides, or readers published 15 years earlier mentioned Guided Pathways reforms and few centered Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in a meaningful way, let alone make it the most critical of foundational values in their leadership approach. Many still do not. This study establishes the need for new community college foundations and frameworks, raises questions for further research and practice, and provides resources to help bridge the onboarding knowledge and skills gap for new leaders.

## **Methodology**

This dissertation exploration and the resource materials generated from it are the result of an extended and purposeful assessment of my life-long professional context as an educator and leader in higher education, specifically at the community college level at one institution within a centralized statewide support system in Washington State. This is a literature-informed and experience-tested study of self within this context, scaffolded by extensive reading and day-to-day verification, focusing not on the ills of my institution or any other specifically but rather, on

the solution-oriented interventions and asset-based best practices of successful community colleges and their administrators. I have mapped the topography of my professional landscape and attempted to distill and describe the practices of effective and influential administrators within the community college system in my state and locally at my institution. As a result, I have developed an open-source handbook and Canvas LMS resource shell for community college deans, specifically focused on the needs of new administrators at my institution and in the statewide system in which I work but also generally applicable to new deans everywhere. This study is informed by experience, observation, reflection, professional reading, trial-and-error, hard knocks, and traditional qualitative research over time.

### **Limitations of Research Design and Ethical Considerations**

Since there are no participants in this study other than the author and those he has generally observed over time, the primary ethical consideration of this study will be maintaining rigorous academic standards in assessing the needs of new community college academic administrators nationally and within my system, the availability of existing onboarding resources and their relevance, and compliance with the standards of the American Psychological Association (APA) in research and document preparation. Researcher bias is to be guarded against in any study, particularly in reflective self-study (Eurich, 2017) and especially one in which the author is deeply embedded institutionally and benefits from systemically. Ethical self-check (Buskey & Pitts, 2009, 2013) and self-assessment measures (Eurich, 2017; Meyerson 1995, 2008, 2010) have been taken to ensure a reasonable objectivity and good-natured fairness in the presentation and assessment of research materials and administrative onboarding resources.

While it would be impossible to develop this project or demonstrate its need without referencing my institution or the state-level system which supports it, I have, when given the choice, decided to limit explicit references to Clark College and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). The one exception being Part B of Chapter 2, as the day-to-day resources embedded in this section are useful to new administrators at my institution because they are specific to my institution. The design of Chapter 2, Part B is easily adaptable to other institutions with a little localizing work, and Clark College's examples illustrate each point well for a broader audience. Limiting direct references in other parts of this exploration is not because I am not deeply grateful to my institution or the broader system for the leadership development and personal growth opportunities they have afforded me, but rather, my hope is to explore the concepts and practices that empower good deaning and effective administrative leadership, rather than offer a critique or evaluation of the institutions that have offered me a near ideal active-learning leadership laboratory. I have done this partly to underscore the general applicability of the foundations, frameworks, and day-to-day resources explored and recommended throughout this text and partly to divert attention away from my institution, my colleagues, and the good people who work so hard to make the SBCTC system what it is today. This is not a study about the outstanding people with whom I work individually, but rather an examination of what I have discovered to work well across the community colleges represented collectively within the system in which I serve.

While positional privilege will also be explored in the "Limitation" selection in Chapter 3, it is worth noting upfront that I began drafting *A Handbook for Community College Deans* while serving as a community college dean, thinking I would offer a peer resource for those onboarding into new dean positions at my institution. Since beginning this project, I have been



promoted to Associate Vice President of Instruction and, more recently, to Vice President of Instruction. These shifts in positional authority are likely to influence how these resources will be received by the new deans at my institution. The way one receives a suggested resource from one's peers is vastly different from how one receives the same resource from one's supervisor; what was originally offered as a set of take-them-or-leave-them player's notes, might now easily be interpreted as a must-study administrative playbook backed by an implicit directive from the coach. Early professional development plans described using this resource as a conversation focus or starting point during Thursday morning Deans' Workgroup meetings, which I am understandably no longer invited to (Deans need peer therapy time, too). I will likely need to hand over the handbook and training responsibilities to a third party, most likely the professional development leads for my institution's newly revitalized Teaching and Learning Center with the understanding that I will leave the onboarding of the new deans and the maintenance of professional development materials to the professionals.

### **Key Conceptual Foundations for Community College Deans**

The development of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* is informed by the literature and research of three key conceptual foundations as understood within the community college leadership context: 1) Leading with Racial Equity, 2) structuring student experience and institutional priorities along Guided Pathways, and 3) developing leadership dispositions that value the complex multi-context roles and relationships of an academic leader but prioritize the humanity and significance of the individual in professional interactions and social constructs. While the interplay of these three conceptual foundations is fluid and practitioner attention must flexibly shift with the needs of the situation, when harmonized individually and collectively, this triad grounds the academic leader in a balanced working understanding of the *Who*, *What*, and

*How* of community college leadership. When assembled in aggregate, these foundations also help distinguish the portrait of administrative disposition described in the following chapters from that recognized by those exploring the topic of community college leadership in the past. In short, today's community college administrator must be an equity-minded leader (Bensimon, 2007; Witman et al., 2015) who understands that structured choice and a radical re-visioning of student support and success are innovations that serve a greater communal good and are best implemented when valued simultaneously as both systemic and one-heart-and-mind-at-a-time work. Our understanding of the equity-centered function and student-facing structure of the community college has rapidly evolved, as has our understanding of leadership roles within these constructs. These three conceptual foundations provided new leaders with patterns for inviting our institutions and ourselves into these new and necessary realities.

### ***Foundation 1: Leading with Racial Equity***

As a foundational framework for community college administrative leadership, Leading with Racial Equity is grounded in the determined grassroots practicality and higher moral calling that has historically been the prime mover and momentum sustainer for community colleges in the United States (Boggs, 2016; Cohen et al., 2014; Long et al., 2016; Nevarez & Wood, 2010). Providing equitable and affordable open-access post-secondary education for those who would benefit most is a near self-evident public good (Scott, 2017) and a difficult proposition to set oneself against from an equity-minded perspective; particularly considering the disproportionate number of students from underrepresented racial groups or of lower socio-economic status who seek community college education (Edgecombe, 2019). Considering the systemic inequities identifiable within nearly all educational structures at all levels in the United States (Long et al., 2016; Rendón, 2021), it is clear that the primary mission of the most democratic of all higher

education endeavors, the community college, should be to directly and indirectly address and dismantle racially-based educational inequality and injustice from the inside out (Bensimon et al., 2020; Witman et al., 2015).

For administrative leaders at my institution and others within the state system that supports our work, there are essentially three justifications for centering racial equity in our leadership practice. Active external links to relevant supporting materials will be provided throughout this dissertation to aid the reader in exploring topics further. Links to embedded supporting documents are also provided with a collected list of links in Appendix B. However, please note that neither the author nor George Fox University are responsible for adverse effects or damage suffered by clicking on links to external or embedded resources:

- First, Leading with Racial Equity is mandated for higher education institutions by Washington State's Legislature ([SB 5194](#), [SB 5227](#)), embedded in the Vision Statement for the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) ([SBCTC Vision Statement](#)), and infused into the current strategic plans of many of our community colleges, including my own ([Equity-Centered Strategic Plan](#)).
- Second, the shifting demographics of our student populations require that community colleges be culturally responsive to changing student needs and that we prepare our institutions for a future more racially diverse and less centered in the structures of whiteness (Hammond, 2014; Edgecombe, 2019).
- Third, Leading with Racial Equity and doing justice, in whatever realm one has the ability, is simply the right thing to do, and I would argue, a basic human responsibility in the world we live in today. Developing competency in this area is particularly critical for white first-generation equity practitioners (Bensimon et al., 2020).

Recognizing and understanding where broader mandates, demographic change and opportunity, and moral imperatives intersect creates a call to equity-minded action for community college leaders. Witman et al. (2015) define *equity-mindedness* in the following way:

Being equity-minded thus involves being conscious of the ways that higher education — through its practices, policies, expectations, and unspoken rules — places responsibility for student success on the very groups that have experienced marginalization, rather than on individuals and institutions whose responsibility it is to remedy that marginalization. (p. 5)

Developing an equity-minded consciousness and recognizing and accepting responsibility for the harm marginalizing systems have caused is a good first step. However, equity-minded awareness in the absence of equity-minded action is a shirking of personal and professional responsibility and has no place in the day-to-day life of a higher education administrator in the United States today. In a professional world where strategic thinking and planning have long held dominance over strategic doing (Gallos & Bolman, 2021), it may be better to take a “ready, fire, aim” approach (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 85) when it comes to walking the equity talk and dismantling the systemic barriers and inequities inherent in our educational institutions (Bensimon 2007; Bensimon et al., 2016, 2020).

Ensuring appropriate equity-minded professional development for students and employees of higher education institutions in diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism are legislative priorities in the State of Washington. Two bills provide legal justification and accountability factors; both bills are linked in the section above. Senate Bill 5194 legislates, “Equity and access in the community and technical colleges.” Among other things, this bill requires all community colleges in the State of Washington to create equity-centered and

culturally appropriate strategic plans, faculty diversity training programs, student outreach processes, and peer mentoring systems. Each community college is also to develop an institution-specific [DEI Glossary](#), similar to the one linked here from the Washington State Office of Financial Management (2022).

Beginning on July 30th, 2022, and every-other year following, all colleges must develop and submit equity-centered strategic plans for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion on their campuses to SBCTC. Senate Bill 5227 requires, “diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism training and assessments at institutions of higher education.” Beginning with the 2022-23 academic year, every new employee working at a SBCTC school must participate in a training program focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism, regardless of whether the employee is full or part-time. Ultimately, colleges are accountable for developing plans to reach and maintain 80 percent employee participation in DEI training programs. However, beginning with the 2024-25 academic year, 35 percent of tenured faculty and 35 percent of administrators must complete these institution-specific programs every two years. The Washington State Legislature has sent and fiscally supported a clear message to leaders of the state’s higher education institutions: Leading with Racial Equity is not optional, and sustainable professional learning plans and processes are required.

Bensimon et al. recognize that for diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to be effective and sustainable, “Equity must be enacted as a pervasive institution- and system-wide principle” (2016, p. 5), and the leading-with-racial-equity has been adopted by SBCTC as a prime mover and key foundation. All statewide council meetings dedicate a significant portion of their agendas to DEI-specific professional learning, and SBCTC’s website is a rich resource for staff, faculty, and administrators seeking professional learning information and materials (SBCTC,

2023). SBCTC’s Vision Statement, adopted in June 2019, makes the mission of all 34 system colleges clear:

Leading with Racial Equity, our colleges maximize student potential and transform lives within a culture of belonging that advances racial, social, and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.

As a result, Leading with Racial Equity informs and infuses every element of my work as an academic administrator and college community member serving at my institution. Leading with Racial Equity directly influences the foundations of my college’s Equity-Focused Strategic Plan, Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan, Guided Pathways Plan, and Academic Plan. Further information and resources for how Leading with Racial Equity guides the practical day-to-day decision-making processes on my campus are provided below in the “Decision-Making: A Three-Part How-To” section in Chapter 2 of *A Handbook for Community College Deans*. Leading with Racial Equity is always we-work, and we will always be on the learning path, but my institution has made significant strides in infusing diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracist practice into the everyday aspects of our work, both strategic and operational. From the development of the Equity-Centered Strategic Plan, [Advancing Justice Framework](#), and [Equitable Decision-Making Tool](#), my institution’s guiding artifacts make explicit and support the expectation that a community college administrator leads with racial equity at the forefront.

As academic culture leaders (Bystydzieński, et al., 2017; Kempner, 2003), focusing the efforts and expertise of our institutions on action-oriented and equity-minded strategy and tactic not only helps our colleges better serve students from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups today (Hern & Brazina, 2016; Brathwaite & Edgecombe, 2018; Ma & Baum, 2016); a commitment to Leading with Racial Equity helps create a redefining personal

and professional expectation that we and our colleges become the creators and sustainers of welcoming spaces for the diverse identities and needs of tomorrow's students as well (McNair, 2016; Rendón, 2021). One important and practical reason for focusing on racial equity when imagining and re-imagining our college systems is that the community college student population, like the general population of the culture around us, is changing and becoming more-and-more racially diverse (Gallos & Bolman, 2021). Leading with Racial Equity and following through on the implementation of the structural reforms that logically follow are not simply good ideas and recommended best practices; put bluntly, shifting student demographics dictate that community colleges must deconstruct existing educational power structures and adapt to a more racially diverse reality if our institutions are to serve and survive (Boggs & McPhail; Long 2016). Edgecombe (2016) reminds us:

Within 30 years, people of non-White Hispanic, Asian, and African descent will represent the collective majority of U.S. residents. And community colleges are projected to enroll most of the postsecondary students from these racial and ethnic groups.

Demography as opportunity posits it is neither plausible nor preferable to continue on the current path. Systems and policies must be directed toward expanding opportunity for this new majority, not toward consolidating power within a shrinking minority. (p. 17)

If we are to be truly ready to meet the needs of our students and communities, where they are and as they are coming to us, we must behave in ways we have not in the past and reorganize into educational structures that would not have been recognizable even 10 years ago. We must recognize and confront the racism inherent in our systems (Bonilla-Silva, 2014; De La Torre, 2013) and commit ourselves fully to antiracist action that deconstructs racial inequality (Kendi,

2019) within our educational systems and, by extension, transforms and revitalizes the lives of individuals and our communities (Mezirow, 1991; Case & Deaton, 2020; Starratt, 2009).

### ***Foundation 2: Structuring Along Guided Pathways***

The second conceptual foundation for community college administrative leadership is restructuring student experience and institutional processes along Guided Pathways (Bailey et al., 2015). Bickerstaff et al. (2022) define Guided Pathways as:

An increasingly popular whole college reform approach that aims to support students throughout their college experience. It emphasizes well-designed programs of study, academic and career exploration and planning, and student supports and advising designed to help students choose a path, stay on a path, graduate or transfer, and enter a career. (p.12)

Guided Pathways gained momentum as a nationwide student-success initiative in 2015 with the release of *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* (Bailey et al.), and it is difficult to imagine a community college administrator's bookshelf today that does not hold a dog-eared copy of this extremely influential book. The Guided Pathways movement was originally and is still supported by leadership and research from the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Teachers College, Columbia University, although the CCRC had been influential in helping community colleges reassess their pre-college developmental education structures well before the nation's community college and legislative leaders became more broadly interested in Guided Pathways (Bailey et al., 2010). I will share more about my institution's CCRC-influenced developmental education reform work in the "Conclusions and Reflections" section of Chapter 3 below.



In a nutshell, early Guided Pathways reforms emphasized clearly defined and readily shared program course sequence maps for students seeking degrees and certificates (Henson et al., 2017; Ran & Lin, 2019), holistic wrap-around support services for students throughout their college experience (Daugherty et al., 2018), and the restructuring of placement procedures and curriculum design sequencing from traditional pre-college pre-requisite developmental models to multiple-measures or directed self-placement and college-level co-requisite support courses (Rodriquez et al., 2018). Reformers also emphasized accessing and completing barrier courses early in a student's career, as the earning of college-level credits in math and English in the student's first year is a powerful indicator of academic momentum and predictive of degree or certificate attainment (Strumbos et al., 2018).

The implementation of Guided Pathways at many institutions, including my own, approached the systemic and structural deconstruction and reconstruction process through four student-centered lenses: 1) clarify the path, 2) enter the path, 3) stay on the path, and 4) ensure student learning. We quickly formed cross-campus committees of faculty, staff, and administrators to ensure that we addressed each area that impacted the student experience. An extraordinary amount of excellent work was completed. Program maps and meta-majors were developed, and placement processes were re-visioned around multiple measures. Shortened college-level corequisite math and English course sequences were designed and implemented, and student support systems were enhanced. Culturally responsive and inclusive teaching and learning professional development was offered, and the Guided Pathways Advisory Council (GPAC) was formed to guide the work. It was a remarkable time at our institution.

Guided Pathways funding provided by my institution's Board of Trustees, Foundation, College Spark Washington, and later, the Washington State Legislature through SBCTC

supported staff positions and project development across Advising, Assessment & Institutional Research, Communications and Marketing, Instruction, and Student Affairs. While this list of accomplishments is not exhaustive and may seem overly wide-ranging, the Guided Pathways framework provided a new student-centered focus to our work and provided a comprehensive approach to building bridges between pillars of our campus community, and therefore, across gaps in the student experience that we had not been able to span before.

With this sort of student-centered and organization-unifying impact at my institution and at other schools within the system in my state, it is not surprising that Guided Pathways was adopted by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Since early implementation efforts in 2015-16 at my institution and a handful of others in the state, the 34 community colleges in the State of Washington system were legislatively mandated in 2019, through House Bill 2158 ([HB 2158](#)), to implement these important change factors as they carry out their mission and vision. SBCTC has since developed the Washington State Guided Pathways Advisory Council (GPAC) and supports the development of Guided Pathways at system colleges through resource allocation, mentoring, and professional development. This excellent Guided Pathways [video](#) (SBCTC, 2023) is a good example of the readily available resources provided by the state board.

Guided Pathways reforms provide equity-minded community college leaders with a second leadership foundation, although early Guided Pathways proponents did not seem to recognize or explicitly describe Guided Pathways as an antiracist, or even equity-centered, structural intervention designed to address systemic barriers to student success (Bailey et al., 2015). Community college leaders quickly realized, however, that Guided Pathways reforms

provided a powerful structural means to achieving racial equity ends (Bragg et al., 2019; Fink & Jenkins, 2020). McClenney (2019) recognized the connection:

At the heart of the guided pathways reform is a passionate commitment to achieving equity in college access and outcomes for students. As colleges fundamentally redesign students' educational experiences, they assume the professional and moral obligation to ensure that institutional policies and practices are specifically designed to promote equity — and conversely, to eliminate unintentional barriers, unconscious bias, and institutional racism.

Ideally, every design decision is made with equity in mind. (p. 87)

While structurally an equity-centered initiative (Bickerstaff et al., 2022; Brathwaite & Edgecombe, 2018; Edgecombe, 2019), CCRC has recognized that early Guided Pathways efforts “underemphasized” (Jenkins et al., 2022 p. 3) the equity-centered nature of the reforms and have since committed to deepening their understanding of how these efforts advance educational equity. A comparison of the four Guided Pathways pillars emphasized in 2015 (Bailey et al., 2015) with the five process reflections and recommendations outlined by CCRC leadership in 2022 (Jenkins et al.) illustrates the evolution of the thinking about Guided Pathways well:

Based on our research, we believe that colleges should focus on implementing the following reforms, which we think are essential to achieving more equitable student success:

- Organize all programs by meta-major and backward-map them to ensure they prepare students to secure a family-supporting job or transfer to a four-year college with no excess credits in their field of interest.
- Redesign the onboarding experience to help all students explore their interests

and options, connect with an academic and career community, and develop an individualized educational plan aligned with their career and transfer goals.

- Ensure that every student is able to take a well-taught course on topics that interest them in their first term.
- Reorganize advising to enable case management by field, and monitor progress and schedule classes using students' individualized educational plans.
- Integrate active and experiential learning throughout programs, both inside and outside the classroom. (p. 18)

These five recommendations denote a deepened understanding of the individual student's experience within the Guided Pathways process and a necessary shift toward centering racial equity within the Guided Pathways framework. The implementation of Guided Pathways reforms is still about improving student access, support, learning outcomes, and degree or certificate attainment, but the process has become more focused on the student's individual experience within the newly created structures than with previous systems-level deconstruction and reconstruction process that community college leaders were preoccupied with ten years ago.

With the heavy emphasis on much-needed macro-level systemic and structural change in the first two administrative leadership foundations of Leading with Racial Equity and the implementation of Guided Pathways reforms, a community college leader would do well to turn to developing a deeper human or micro-level sense of self and others within these broader, hopefully better, social constructs.

### ***Foundation 3: The Micro-Politics of People Work***

When I first began mapping the broad structure of this project and identifying the core domains of knowledge and action that a community college leader must be versed and immersed

in, *Leading with Racial Equity* and implementing Guided Pathways reforms were quickly and inarguably the first two priorities. It is interesting and illustrative of their importance that both foundations have been the focus of legislative action in my state since I began this project. However, it seems unlikely that lawmakers or the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) are going to take official interest in the third knowledge and skill domain that I will explore below. However, its place within the three-part interactive superstructure of administrative must-haves is just as non-negotiable as the two that precede it. That said, its inclusion is based more on 30 years of personal and professional observation than on the number of peer-reviewed articles cataloged in my Endnote folders. My current assurance is the result of pursuing a leadership practice question as I have observed and experimented in the professional laboratory that is my local community college. I have questioned how committed community college leaders, who possess astounding expertise in structural foundations and frameworks, struggle to engage others in the day-to-day work and, therefore, find themselves incapable of co-creating cultures of transformative change for their students and institutions.

The answer to this question is complex and should likely be the focus of its own dissertation exploration. However, community college leaders who understand that a significant part of everyday leadership involves personal integrity, individual interaction, and the incremental exercise of influence also appear to be the leaders most capable of facilitating the most meaningful and sustaining change. The third foundational framework for community college administrative leadership demonstrates a commitment to developing a leadership disposition that recognizes and values the complex multi-context roles and relationships of an academic leader. More importantly, it prioritizes the humanity and significance of individuals in professional interactions and social constructs. While *Leading with Racial Equity* and

restructuring community colleges around Guided Pathways represent the systemic ends and means of transformative community college reform, the third anchor for effective administrative leadership focuses, counterintuitively, on the everyday micro-politics of people work.

There is an extremely rich literature on the various types of constructive deviance in stakeholder behavior within organizations (Dahling & Gutworth, 2017; Meyerson, 2010; Vadera et al., 2013), authentic leadership (Alavi & Gill, 2016; Bryman, 2011; Gardener et al., 2011), change leadership (Buller, 2015; Fullan, 2011; Heifetz et al., 2009) and relational leadership (Crippen 2010; Eberly et al., 2013; Hernandez et al., 2011). However, this discussion will focus on the three points of research-grounded leadership insight that rang most true to my experience in three decades of community college service as a faculty member, union leader, and academic administrator: Homan's (2017) analysis of how organizational change *really happens*, Davis' (2019) observations on the organizational change power of radical interdependence, and Lumby's (2015) metaphor-based analysis of micro-political emotional intelligence for leader in educational settings.

Homan's (2017) work, best characterized in his 2017 TED Talk *The Inner Side of Organizational Change*, offers keen insight into how organizational transformation takes place, often despite the best efforts of an organization's formally recognized leadership. The complexities of macro- and micro-politics are too infused with the messiness of human nature to allow the best conceived and executed plans of administrative leaders to be implemented without challenges, even if these points of grassroots resistance and redirection are never explicitly articulated in strategic plans or policy one-pagers. Homan argues that change leadership is not monocentric, and that leaders who bank on the self-apparent value of a structural or systemic change initiative or the positional power inherent in their title or rank are bound for

disappointment, or worse, as generally 70-to-80 percent of change processes led from a top-down, on-stage, tools-and-techniques supported leadership approach fail. Real change leadership is more polycentric and, as Homan suggests, “Influenced by everyone but controlled by no one” (2017). Stakeholders in all organizations, including community colleges in the United States, are wonderfully adept with the tools of positive deviance (Vadera et al., 2013) and well-versed in the counter-systems of tempered radicalism (Meyerson, 2010), even if these tools and countermeasures to heroic leadership (Davis, 2019) are never explicitly acknowledged.

If community college leaders are to accept Homan’s (2017) thesis, “The more you try to manage change, the more it comes to a halt,” and I think we would be wise to do so, how are we to move forward together, as leaders and co-creator colleagues, given the social justice imperative and systemic necessity of Leading with Racial Equity and restructuring colleges around Guided Pathways? In other words, if systems resist change and leaders alone cannot move organizations forward, how are we to get the work done?

In *A Guide to Collaborative Leadership*, Davis (2019) suggests a courageous and vulnerable approach to collaborative leadership with the potential to renew purpose to stakeholder participation, transform organizational culture, and force-multiply social impact. Davis describes her journey from the leader-centered hero culture of her early leadership experiences to the collaborative organizational culture shifts that actively engaged more stakeholders and listened to more voices as decisions were made, plans were created, and actions were implemented. This process of decentering organizational leadership and creating an expectation of radical interdependence within the organizational structure and between the organization and the broader community brought the satisfaction of fiscal success and deeper social purpose to the company and its employees. Radical interdependence and a refocusing on

we-work over I-work infused a *why* into the company's work life that was more motivating to its employees than any position, promotion, or year-end bonus.

Given her company's success, Davis questions why individualism and hero culture persist as leadership models in organizations today when, "The joy and success that comes from interdependence and vulnerability is worth the effort and the risk. And if we're going to solve the challenges that the world is facing today, we have no alternative, so we had better start getting good at it" (2019). Knowing that the company was doing *good* as well as doing *well* transformed Davis' understanding of her leadership place and purpose, and this awareness also motivated her colleagues to do more and better as they did the right thing.

Lumby (2015) also offers insight into the social, emotional, and motivational mechanics of effective leadership and provides a metaphorical framework to assist administrators in understanding their shifting roles within their various leadership contexts. As we will explore later in Chapter 2, a keen and well-developed metaphorical understanding of our identities as leaders, not only helps us understand ourselves better, but it also helps us recognize the need for stronger, more genuine relationships with the people with whom we work and serve. In an exploration of the importance of micro-political emotional intelligence in higher education settings where leaders, "use social skill and interpersonal assets to achieve change through daily, often informal, activity" (2015, p. 8), Lumby draws on Becher's (1984) comparison of higher education institutions (HEI) to theaters where leaders participate in onstage, backstage, and under-stage activity. Lumby writes:

Onstage is the public arena. Backstage is the work of groups of people organizing what is projected to the HEI community and the public. Under-stage activities are the private



conversations, the decisions on what to communicate and how, who to invite on board, and tactics to influence and to persuade. (p. 10)

This theater and stage metaphor gives leaders a good place to start as they consider their roles within the professional communities they serve. As both Lumby and Davis (2019) acknowledge, leaders must be able to take center stage and engage the organizational community in the co-construction of a shared vision (Gigliotti, 2020; Koerner, 2020). Administrative leaders must also be able to work effectively backstage to form and empower smaller groups within the institution to take on specific tasks (Boggs & McPhail, 2019; Ruben et al., 2017). Heifetz et al., (2014) would likely support Lumby's use of Becher's (1984) metaphor and this multi-level approach as well: a leader needs to spend time both in the balcony and on the practice field if they are to understand and facilitate adaptive change. Under-stage activities are often less discussed, for obvious reasons, but there are certainly times when that one-on-one, off-the-record telephone call or off-campus cup of coffee helps develop a relationship or create better understanding between individuals who would not otherwise have been able to share as frankly in a larger public setting (Shamir & Lapidot, 2003; Higgerson & Joyce, 2007).

Each facet of the theater metaphor provides an easily understood frame of professional reference for day-to-day leadership that illustrates the importance of a particular kind of relationship within a specific higher education setting. I would suggest we consider adding one additional facet to Becher's (1984) theater metaphor and encourage ourselves as leaders to break down the proverbial 4th wall and walk straight out into the audience and sit down in the first open seat, and I believe Davis (2019) would approve of this amendment to the metaphorical process. Each of the onstage, backstage, and under-stage contexts and interactions denote a professional relationship and context focused on an activity and initiated with a specific purpose,

but deliberately choosing to develop relationships in informal and less purpose-driven contexts allows leaders to listen and learn from those most likely impacted by whatever the change process of the day may be. As Sitkin et al., suggest:

To show an understanding and appreciation of others, the leader must be able to engage the team and give them a voice for their perspectives — and then listen to that sharing of ideas and demonstrate its real value going forward. Just as people need to be led by someone real, they also desire to be understood, respected, and cared about. (2009, p. 29)

Real relationships matter within organizations, especially for change leaders. Buller (2013) notes that positive leaders are one of the cornerstones of successful colleges and universities, and these kinds of people-focused change “leaders are at least as people oriented as they are goal oriented” (p. 14). People-centered leadership challenges have been compounded by the systemic nature of Leading with Racial Equity, the structural focus of Guided Pathways reform, and the depersonalization of the Zoom community colleges of the COVID-19 era. Leaders must recognize that systems vision is essential in creating meaningful change, but the change battle is often lost or won one watercooler conversation at a time.

### **Synthesizing the Foundations**

Walking collectively, courageously, and compassionately into an unknown future is not easy for institutions or comfortable for the individuals who make those institutions effective, and we often require maps to guide us along our way. The three conceptual foundations for leaders of two-year institutions of higher education, when taken as the parts of a larger and more integrated whole, provide community college leaders with several ways to interpret the landscapes around and ahead. The first of the three integrated foundations address *Who* we are to serve. The second foundation addresses *What* we are to do to ensure systemically and historically marginalized

groups are served through equitable educational processes and outcomes. The third foundation outlines a systems-savvy *How* for community college leadership that moves beyond tools-and-techniques and empowers those most capable of creating meaningful change the loudest voice and broadest opportunity to do so.

Ultimately, the *Who*, *What*, and *How* of community college leadership is empowered by and leads us back to the *Why*. The literature of leadership is comprehensive when it comes to plumbing the motivational depths of *Why*, but rather than cite and incite, I would encourage leaders, at whatever level and in whatever context, to do the inner I-work of reflecting on and clarifying the reasons they choose to give themselves to this demanding and gratifying work in service to others, and through that process, I would encourage leaders to chart their own *Why* maps. Maps do not simply provide leaders with new ways of understanding and doing, they also provide us with essential lenses through which we can reimagine ourselves, others, and our work in a world that desperately needs fresh ways of seeing who we are and the spaces in which we move.

The second chapter of this dissertation builds on the three essential foundations of community college leadership established in Chapter 1 and integrates them with four additional conceptual frameworks useful to administrative leaders in higher education as they serve our students and communities.

## Chapter 2

### Introduction to the Role of the Community College Academic Dean

Being an academic administrator at a community college is, as one new dean recently observed, not for the faint of heart. It is also one of the toughest jobs, as many others have also observed, you will ever love. It is important to remember that being an academic dean is a difficult job if done well. As another long-time faculty member and new interim dean observed, “It is not that the work is all that difficult to do or the decisions all that difficult to make. It is just that there are so many calls to make, and you must make them so fast.” That is an astute observation: among other things, a dean’s job is to make decisions — a lot of them — and quickly, and usually with campus community members standing by, and then be accountable for each decision as if it were the most important you had made all day. If you are going to survive as an academic administrator and maintain any real sense of wellbeing, the perfectionism and overfocus that may have caused you to excel in previous positions will need to be replaced by an earnest humility and a real sense of hustle. The humility part will be easy: humiliation will find you long before you go looking for it. It is best to give yourself, and others, a bit of grace in this regard. As with many things in life, the advice of Crash Davis, the veteran baseball catcher for the Durham Bulls, is likely to help, “Don’t try to strike everybody out. Strikeouts are boring. Besides that, they’re fascist. Throw some ground balls — it’s more democratic” (Sheldon, 1988). Remember to go easy on yourself and your faculty and staff: it is a long season and there are no pinch hitters.

### Part A: Leadership Foundations and Frameworks

The first section of the *A Handbook for Community College Deans* provides in-depth discussions of the seven knowledge and skill domains critical to the professional practice of

deans serving in community colleges today. In the early stages of this project, I considered these domains as a set of conceptual frameworks metaphorically unified as something like the seven pillars of community college leadership, which was one of the first working titles of this resource. As I read, reflected, and wrote, I came to realize that I do not view all seven domains as being important in the same ways, and my seven pillars shifted into two tiers. While I would loathe to do without any of these knowledge bases in my professional practice, I began to understand that some of these were more non-negotiable than others. There were those domains that I felt community college leaders *must* be well versed in to serve their students and communities effectively and those domains I *wish* I had known more about when I took those first steps out of the composition classroom and into the administrative boardroom all those years ago. The *Must Know Nows* I designated as *foundations* for community college leaders; the *Wish I Had Known Thens* were still important, at least to me and many others, and I designated them as *frameworks*. The foundation-framework distinction still feels meaningful to me as I write at this point much later in the project development process, but my hope is that others will find the research, reflections, and resources provided below useful as they decide what is most valuable to them as they learn and grow in their professional practices.

The *Must-Know-Now* Foundations for administrative leaders of two-year institutions of higher education are:

- Leading with Racial Equity
- Structuring Along Guided Pathways
- The Micro-Politics of People Work

The *Wish-I-Had-Known-Then* Frameworks for administrative leaders of two-year institutions of higher education are:

- Metaphors Matter
- Communication as Old as Aristotle
- Decision-Making: A Three-Part How-To
- Self-Care in a Serving Others World

While the tiered categories for the foundations and frameworks are distinct, the organizational structure for each of the seven knowledge and skill domain discussions follows the same pattern. Each of the seven sections offer 1) a centering thought from the research literature, 2) a research-anchored discussion of the foundation or framework appropriate to the community college leadership context, 3) a poem that illustrates or relates an essential concept through an associative artistic lens, 4) three questions for reflection and self-development, and 5) a list of five noteworthy resources for further study and reflection. It is my hope that others will find these discussions as useful and meaningful as I did as I developed this project.

### ***Foundation 1: Leading with Racial Equity***

#### **A Centering Thought from the Research Literature**

The death of George Floyd was the latest in a long line of police shootings of Black citizens, and the broad protest movement under the banner of *Black Lives Matter* had been pushing for reform since early 2012. It took the actions of a courageous 17-year-old girl who recorded the dramatic and painful 8 minutes and 46 seconds-long video of Floyd's death on her cell phone that was played and replayed on television and across the internet to finally open the eyes of a nation and the world to systemic racism and to send outraged citizens into the streets of large and small cities during a pandemic demanding change — to move the country, in the words of scholar Ibram Kendi (2016, 2019, 2020), from denying a history of racial injustice that has haunted the United States since the 17th

century to launching a proactive, ‘anti-racist revolution’ (2020). To quote Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” (Gallos & Bolman, 2021, pp. vii-viii)

### **Leading with Racial Equity as a Leadership Foundation**

As a foundational framework for community college administrative leadership, Leading with Racial Equity is grounded in the determined grassroots practicality and higher moral calling that has historically been the prime mover and momentum sustainer for community colleges in the United States (Boggs, 2016; Cohen et al., 2014; Long et al., 2016; Nevarez & Wood, 2010). Providing equitable and affordable open-access post-secondary education for those who would benefit most is a near self-evident public good (Scott, 2017) and a difficult proposition to set oneself against from an equity-minded perspective, particularly considering the disproportionate number of students from underrepresented racial groups or of lower socio-economic status who seek community college educations (Edgecombe, 2019). Considering the systemic inequities identifiable within nearly all educational structures at all levels in the United States (Long et al., 2016; Rendón, 2021), it is clear that the primary mission of the most democratic of all higher education endeavors, the community college, should be to directly and indirectly address and dismantle racially based educational inequality and injustice from the inside out (Bensimon et al., 2020; Witman et al., 2015).

For administrative leaders at my institution and others within the state system that supports our work, there are essentially three justifications for centering racial equity in our leadership practice. Active external links to relevant supporting materials will be provided throughout this handbook to aid the reader in exploring topics further. Links to embedded supporting documents are also provided with a collected list of links in Appendix B. However,

please note that neither the author nor George Fox University are responsible for adverse effects or damage suffered by clicking on links to external or embedded resources:

- First, Leading with Racial Equity is mandated for higher education institutions by Washington State’s Legislature ([SB 5194](#), [SB 5227](#)), embedded in the Vision Statement for the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) ([SBCTC Vision Statement](#)), and infused into the current strategic plans of many of our community colleges, including my own ([Equity-Centered Strategic Plan](#)).
- Second, the shifting demographics of our student populations require that community colleges be culturally responsive to changing student needs and that we prepare our institutions for a future more racially diverse and less centered in the structures of whiteness (Hammond, 2014; Edgecombe, 2019).
- Third, Leading with Racial Equity and doing justice, in whatever realm one has the ability, is simply the right thing to do, and I would argue, a basic human responsibility in the world we live in today. Developing competency in this area is particularly critical for white first-generation equity practitioners (Bensimon et al., 2020).

Recognizing and understanding where broader mandates, demographic change and opportunity, and moral imperatives intersect creates a call to equity-minded action for community college leaders. Witman et al. (2015) define *equity-mindedness* in the following way:

Being equity-minded thus involves being conscious of the ways that higher education — through its practices, policies, expectations, and unspoken rules — places responsibility for student success on the very groups that have experienced marginalization, rather than on individuals and institutions whose responsibility it is to remedy that marginalization.

(p. 5)



Developing an equity-minded consciousness and recognizing and accepting responsibility for the harm marginalizing systems have caused is a good first step. However, equity-minded awareness in the absence of equity-minded action is a shirking of personal and professional responsibility and has no place in the day-to-day life of a higher education administrator in the United States today. In a professional world where strategic thinking and planning have long held dominance over strategic doing (Gallos & Bolman, 2021), it may be better to take a “ready, fire, aim” approach (Fullan & Scott, 2009, p. 85) when it comes to walking the equity talk and dismantling the systemic barriers and inequities inherent in our educational institutions (Bensimon 2007; Bensimon et al., 2016, 2020).

Ensuring appropriate equity-minded professional development for students and employees of higher education institutions in diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism are legislative priorities in the State of Washington. Two bills provide legal justification and accountability factors; both bills are linked in the section above. Senate Bill 5194 legislates, “Equity and access in the community and technical colleges.” Among other things, this bill requires all community colleges in the State of Washington to create equity-centered and culturally appropriate strategic plans, faculty diversity training programs, student outreach processes, and peer mentoring systems. Each community college is also to develop an institution-specific [DEI Glossary](#), similar to the one linked here from the Washington State Office of Financial Management (2022).

Beginning on July 30th, 2022, and every-other year following, all colleges must develop and submit equity-centered strategic plans for advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion on their campuses to SBCTC. Senate Bill 5227 requires, “diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism training and assessments at institutions of higher education.” Beginning with the 2022-23

academic year, every new employee working at a SBCTC school must participate in a training program focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracism, regardless of whether the employee is full or part-time. Ultimately, colleges are accountable for developing plans to reach and maintain 80 percent employee participation in DEI training programs. However, beginning with the 2024-25 academic year, 35 percent of tenured faculty and 35 percent of administrators must complete these institution-specific programs every two years. The Washington State Legislature has sent and fiscally supported a clear message to leaders of the state's higher education institutions: Leading with Racial Equity is not optional, and sustainable professional learning plans and processes are required.

Bensimon et al. recognize that for diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to be effective and sustainable, "Equity must be enacted as a pervasive institution- and system-wide principle" (2016, p. 5), and the leading-with-racial-equity has been adopted by SBCTC as a prime mover and key foundation. All statewide council meetings dedicate a significant portion of their agendas to DEI-specific professional learning, and SBCTC's website is a rich resource for staff, faculty, and administrators seeking professional learning information and materials (SBCTC, 2023). SBCTC's Vision Statement, adopted in June 2019, makes the mission of all 34 system colleges clear:

Leading with Racial Equity, our colleges maximize student potential and transform lives within a culture of belonging that advances racial, social, and economic justice in service to our diverse communities.

As a result, Leading with Racial Equity informs and infuses every element of my work as an academic administrator and college community member serving at my institution. Leading with Racial Equity directly influences the foundations of my college's Equity-Focused Strategic Plan,

Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Plan, Guided Pathways Plan, and Academic Plan.

Further information and resources for how Leading with Racial Equity guides the practical day-to-day decision-making processes on my campus are provided below in the “Decision-Making: A Three-Part How-To” section in Chapter 2 of *A Handbook for Community College Deans*.

Leading with Racial Equity is always we-work, and we will always be on the learning path, but my institution has made significant strides in infusing diversity, equity, inclusion, and antiracist practice into the everyday aspects of our work, both strategic and operational. From the development of the Equity-Centered Strategic Plan, [Advancing Justice Framework](#), and [Equitable Decision-Making Tool](#), my institution’s guiding artifacts make explicit and support the expectation that a community college administrator leads with racial equity at the forefront.

As academic leaders, focusing the efforts and expertise of our institutions on action-oriented and equity-minded strategy and tactic not only helps our colleges better serve students from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups today (Hern & Brazina, 2016; Brathwaite & Edgecombe, 2018; Ma & Baum, 2016); a commitment to Leading with Racial Equity helps create a redefining personal and professional expectation that we and our colleges become the creators and sustainers of welcoming spaces for the diverse identities and needs of tomorrow’s students as well (McNair, 2016; Rendón, 2021). One important and practical reason for focusing on racial equity when imagining and re-imagining our college systems is that the community college student population, like the general population of the culture around us, is changing and becoming more-and-more racially diverse (Gallos & Bolman, 2021). Leading with Racial Equity and following through on the implementation of the structural reforms that logically follow are not simply good ideas and recommended best practices; put bluntly, shifting student demographics dictate that community colleges must deconstruct existing educational

power structures and adapt to a more racially diverse reality if our institutions are to serve and survive (Boggs & McPhail; Long 2016). As Edgecombe (2016) reminds us:

Within 30 years, people of non-White Hispanic, Asian, and African descent will represent the collective majority of U.S. residents. And community colleges are projected to enroll most of the postsecondary students from these racial and ethnic groups.

Demography as opportunity posits it is neither plausible nor preferable to continue on the current path. Systems and policies must be directed toward expanding opportunity for this new majority, not toward consolidating power within a shrinking minority. (p. 17)

If we are to be truly ready to meet the needs of our students and communities, where they are and as they are coming to us, we must behave in ways we have not in the past and reorganize into educational structures that would not have been recognizable even 10 years ago. We must recognize and confront the racism inherent in our systems (Bonilla-Silva, 2014) and commit ourselves fully to antiracist action that deconstructs racial inequality (Kendi, 2019) within our educational systems and, by extension, transforms and revitalizes the lives of individuals and our communities (Mezirow, 1991; Case & Deaton, 2020).

### **A Poem**

#### **Untitled — James Baldwin**

Lord,

when you send the rain

think about it, please,

a little?

Do

not get carried away

by the sound of falling water,

the marvelous light

on the falling water.

I

am beneath that water.

It falls with great force

and the light

Blinds

me to the light.

(Baldwin, 2014)

### **Questions for Reflections and Self-Development**

1. Think about a time when you were treated unfairly. What happened and how did that make you feel? Did this experience motivate you to do something differently? If so, what? Did this experience motivate you to treat others differently? If so, how?
2. What do you consider to be the core or foundational constructs that inform your professional practice? Can you name three? How would your work be different if you could no longer consider one of these foundational constructs in your work?
3. What does *Leading with Racial Equity* mean to you? What is one thing you can do in your day-to-day work to center *Leading with Racial Equity* more centrally? How will you know you have been successful in doing so?

### **5 Noteworthy Resources**

Bensimon, E. M., McNair, T. B., & Malcom-Piqueux, L. (2020). *Equity talk to equity walk: Expanding practitioner knowledge for racial justice in higher education*. Jossey-

Bass.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006, 2014). *Racism without racists color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. (4th ed.). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Gallos, J., & Bolman, L. G. (2021). *Reframing academic leadership* (2nd ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Kendi, I. X. (2019). *How to be an antiracist*. One World.

Long, A. (2016). *Overcoming educational racism in the community college: Creating pathways to success for minority and impoverished student populations*. Stylus Publishing, LLC.

## ***Foundation 2: Structuring Along Guided Pathways***

### **A Centering Thought from the Research Literature**

The role community colleges play in providing postsecondary access to underrepresented students is obvious when one examines the demographics of their enrollment: they serve a disproportionate number of low-income, immigrant, first-generation, and ethnic students. Indeed, a majority of low-income, Hispanic, and Native American students who are undergraduates are enrolled in community colleges. Yet most students who enter these colleges never finish: fewer than four of every ten complete any type of degree or certificate within six years. (Bailey et al., 2015, p. 1)

### **Guided Pathways as a Leadership Foundation**

The second conceptual foundation for community college administrative leadership is restructuring student experience and institutional processes along Guided Pathways (Bailey et al., 2015). Bickerstaff et al. (2022) define Guided Pathways as:

An increasingly popular whole college reform approach that aims to support students throughout their college experience. It emphasizes well-designed programs of study, academic and career exploration and planning, and student supports and advising

designed to help students choose a path, stay on a path, graduate or transfer, and enter a career. (p.12)

Guided Pathways gained momentum as a nationwide student-success initiative in 2015 with the release of *Redesigning America's Community Colleges: A Clearer Path to Student Success* (Bailey et al.), and it is difficult to imagine a community college administrator's bookshelf today that does not hold a dog-eared copy of this extremely influential book. The Guided Pathways movement was originally and is still supported by leadership and research from the Community College Research Center (CCRC) at Teachers College, Columbia University, although the CCRC had been influential in helping community colleges reassess their pre-college developmental education structures well before the nation's community college and legislative leaders became more broadly interested in Guided Pathways (Bailey et al., 2010); I will share more about my institution's CCRC-influenced developmental education reform work in the "Conclusions and Reflections" section of Chapter 3 below.

In a nutshell, early Guided Pathways reforms emphasized clearly defined and readily shared program course sequence maps for students seeking degrees and certificates (Henson et al., 2017; Ran & Lin, 2019), holistic wrap-around support services for students throughout their college experience (Daugherty et al., 2018), and the restructuring of placement procedures and curriculum design sequencing from traditional pre-college pre-requisite developmental models to multiple-measures or directed self-placement and college-level co-requisite support courses (Rodriguez et al., 2018). Reformers also emphasized accessing and completing barrier courses early in a student's career, as the earning of college-level credits in math and English in the student's first year is a powerful indicator of academic momentum and predictive of degree or certificate attainment (Strumbos et al., 2018).

The implementation of Guided Pathways at many institutions, including my own, approached the systemic and structural deconstruction and reconstruction process through four student-centered lenses: 1) clarify the path, 2) enter the path, 3) stay on the path, and 4) ensure student learning. We quickly formed cross-campus committees of faculty, staff, and administrators to ensure that we addressed each area that impacted the student experience. An extraordinary amount of excellent work was complete: program maps and meta-majors were developed, placement processes were re-visioned around multiple-measures, shortened college-level corequisite math and English course sequences were designed and implemented, student support systems were enhanced, culturally responsive and inclusive teaching and learning professional development was offered, and the Guided Pathways Advisory Council (GPAC) was formed to guide the work. Guided Pathways funding provided by my institution's Board of Trustees, Foundation, College Spark Washington, and later, the Washington State Legislature through SBCTC supported staff positions and project development across Advising, Assessment & Institutional Research, Communications and Marketing, Instruction, and Student Affairs. While this list of accomplishments is not exhaustive and may seem overly wide-ranging, the Guided Pathways framework provided a new student-centered focus to our work and provided a comprehensive approach to building bridges between pillars of our campus community, and therefore, across gaps in the student experience that we had not been able to span before.

With this sort of student-centered and organization-unifying impact at my institution and at other schools within the system in my state, it is not surprising that Guided Pathways was adopted by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC). Since early implementation efforts in 2015-16 at my institution and a handful of others in the state, the 34 community colleges in the State of Washington system were legislatively mandated in 2019,



through House Bill 2158 ([HB 2158](#)), to implement these important change factors as they carry out their mission and vision. SBCTC has since developed the Washington State Guided Pathways Advisory Council (GPAC) and supports the development of Guided Pathways at system colleges through resource allocation, mentoring, and professional development. This excellent Guided Pathways [video](#) (SBCTC, 2023) is a good example of the readily available resources provided by the state board.

Guided Pathways reforms provide equity-minded community college leaders with a second leadership foundation, although early Guided Pathways proponents did not seem to recognize or explicitly describe Guided Pathways as an antiracist, or even equity-centered, structural intervention designed to address systemic barriers to student success (Bailey et al., 2015). Community college leaders quickly realized, however, that Guided Pathways reforms provided a powerful structural means to achieving racial equity ends (Bragg et al., 2019; Fink & Jenkins, 2020). McClenney (2019) recognized the connection:

At the heart of the guided pathways reform is a passionate commitment to achieving equity in college access and outcomes for students. As colleges fundamentally redesign students' educational experiences, they assume the professional and moral obligation to ensure that institutional policies and practices are specifically designed to promote equity — and conversely, to eliminate unintentional barriers, unconscious bias, and institutional racism.

Ideally, every design decision is made with equity in mind. (p. 87)

While structurally an equity-centered initiative (Bickerstaff et al., 2022; Brathwaite & Edgecombe, 2018; Edgecombe, 2019), CCRC has recognized that early Guided Pathways efforts “underemphasized” (Jenkins et al., 2022 p. 3) the equity-centered nature of the reforms and have

since committed to deepening their understanding of how these efforts advance educational equity. A comparison of the four Guided Pathways pillars emphasized in 2015 (Bailey et al., 2015) with the five process reflections and recommendations outlined by CCRC leadership in 2022 (Jenkins et al.) illustrates the evolution of the thinking about Guided Pathways well:

Based on our research, we believe that colleges should focus on implementing the following reforms, which we think are essential to achieving more equitable student success:

- Organize all programs by meta-major and backward-map them to ensure they prepare students to secure a family-supporting job or transfer to a four-year college with no excess credits in their field of interest.
- Redesign the onboarding experience to help all students explore their interests and options, connect with an academic and career community, and develop an individualized educational plan aligned with their career and transfer goals.
- Ensure that every student is able to take a well-taught course on topics that interest them in their first term.
- Reorganize advising to enable case management by field, and monitor progress and schedule classes using students' individualized educational plans.
- Integrate active and experiential learning throughout programs, both inside and outside the classroom. (p. 18)

These five recommendations denote a deepened understanding of the individual student's experience within the Guided Pathways process and a necessary shift toward centering racial equity within the Guided Pathways framework. The implementation of Guided Pathways reforms is still about improving student access, support, learning outcomes, and degree or certificate

attainment, but the process has become more focused on the student's individual experience within the newly created structures than with previous systems-level deconstruction-reconstruction process that community college leaders were preoccupied with five years ago.

With the heavy emphasis on much-needed macro-level systemic and structural change in the first two administrative leadership foundations of Leading with Racial Equity and the implementation of Guided Pathways reforms, a community college leader would do well to turn to developing a deeper human or micro-level sense of self and others within these broader, hopefully better, social constructs. This brings us to exploring the importance of the micro-politics of 'people work'.

### **A Poem**

#### **Pathways — Rainer Maria Rilke**

Understand, I'll slip quietly  
away from the noisy crowd  
when I see the pale  
stars rising, blooming, over the oaks.

I'll pursue solitary pathways  
through the pale twilit meadows,  
with only this one dream:

You come too.

(Rilke, 2011)

### **Questions for Reflections and Self-Development**

1. Have you ever been lost? What happened? Did someone help you find your way back to familiar surroundings or did you find your way yourself? What do you do now to ensure that you do not lose your way?
2. Have you ever been absolutely certain that you were doing things as you should and then realize that you had been doing things in a way that was not helpful to yourself or others? What happened and how did that feel? Did that motivate you to do things differently? What changes did you make?
3. What are three barriers at your institution that stand in the way of students being more successful? What can you do to help remove those barriers? Who are three people you could call for help? What prevents you from calling one of them today to discuss the issue?

### **5 Noteworthy Resources**

Bailey, T. R., Smith Jaggars, S., & Jenkins, D. (2015). *Redesigning America's community colleges: A clearer path to student success*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bragg, D. D., Wetzstein, L., & Bauman, K. (2019). Integrating racial equity into guided pathways. Seattle, WA: Community College Research Initiatives, University of Washington.

Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University.

Jenkins, D., Lahr, H. E., & Mazzariello, A. N. (2022). How to achieve more equitable community college student outcomes: Lessons from six years of CCRC research on guided pathways. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.

State Board for Community and Technical Colleges Student Success Center.

### ***Foundation 3: The Micro-Politics of People Work***

#### **A Centering Thought from the Research Literature**

Why does hero culture persist, and why don't we work together more? Well, I don't know why everyone else does it, but I can tell you why I did it. Interdependence is a lot harder than being a hero. It requires us to be open and transparent and vulnerable, and that's not what traditional leaders have been trained to do. I thought being a hero would keep me safe. I thought that in the elevation and separation that comes from heroic leadership, that I would be untouchable. This is an illusion. The joy and success that comes from interdependence and vulnerability is worth the effort and the risk. And if we're going to solve the challenges that the world is facing today, we have no alternative, so we had better start getting good at it. (Davis, 2019)

#### **The Micro-Politics of People Work as a Leadership Foundation**

When I first began mapping the broader structure of this project and identifying the core domains of knowledge and action that a community college leader must be versed and immersed in, Leading with Racial Equity and implementing Guided Pathways reforms were quickly and inarguably numbers 1 and 2 on the list. It is interesting and illustrative of their importance that both foundations have been the focus of legislative action in my state since I began this project. However, it seems unlikely that lawmakers or the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) are going to take official interest in the third knowledge and skill domain that I will explore below, but its place within the three-part interactive superstructure of administrative must-haves is just as non-negotiable as the two that proceed it, even if its inclusion is based more on 30 years of personal and professional observation than it is on the

number of peer-reviewed articles cataloged in my Endnote folders. My current assurance is the result of pursuing a leadership practice question as I have observed and experimented in the professional laboratory that is my local community college. I have often wondered how is it that committed community college leaders, who possess astounding levels of expertise in structural foundations and frameworks, like Leading with Racial Equity and implementing Guided Pathways reforms, find themselves struggling to engage others in the day-to-day work and, therefore, find themselves incapable of co-creating cultures of transformative change for their students and institutions.

The answer to this question is complex and should likely be the focus of its own dissertation exploration. However, community college leaders who understand that a significant part of everyday leadership involves personal integrity, individual interaction, and the incremental exercise of influence also appear to be the leaders most capable of facilitating the most meaningful and sustaining change. The third foundational framework for community college administrative leadership demonstrates a commitment to developing a leadership disposition that recognizes and values the complex multi-context roles and relationships of an academic leader but, more importantly, prioritizes the humanity and significance of individuals in professional interactions and social constructs. While Leading with Racial Equity and restructuring community colleges around Guided Pathways represent the systemic ends and means of transformative community college reform, the third anchor for effective administrative leadership focuses, counterintuitively, on the everyday micro-politics of people work.

The literature on the various types of constructive deviance in stakeholder behavior within organizations (Dahling & Gutworth, 2017; Meyerson, 2010; Vadera et al., 2013), authentic leadership (Alavi & Gill, 2016; Bryman, 2011; Gardener et al., 2011), change

leadership (Buller, 2015; Fullan, 2011; Heifetz et al., 2009) and relational leadership (Crippen 2010; Eberly et al., 2013; Hernandez et al., 2011) is extremely rich. However, this discussion will focus on the three points of research-grounded leadership insight that rang most true to my experience in three decades of community college service as a faculty member, union leader, and academic administrator: Homan's (2017) analysis of how organizational change *really happens*, Davis' (2019) observations on the organizational change power of radical interdependence, and Lumby's (2015) metaphor-based analysis of micro-political emotional intelligence for leader in educational settings.

Homan's (2017) work, best characterized in his 2017 TED Talk *The Inner Side of Organizational Change*, offers keen insight into how organizational transformation takes place, often despite the best efforts of an organization's formally recognized leadership. The complexities of macro- and micro-politics are too infused with the messiness of human nature to allow the best conceived and executed plans of administrative leaders to be implemented without challenges, even if these points of grassroots resistance and redirection are never explicitly articulated in strategic plans or policy one-pagers. Homan argues that change leadership is not monocentric, and that leaders who bank on the self-apparent value of a structural or systemic change initiative or the positional power inherent in their title or rank are bound for disappointment, or worse, as generally 70-to-80 percent of change processes led from a top-down, on-stage, tools-and-techniques supported leadership approach fail. Real change leadership is more polycentric and, as Homan suggests, "Influenced by everyone but controlled by no one" (2017). Stakeholders in all organizations, including community colleges in the United States, are wonderfully adept with the tools of positive deviance (Vadera et al., 2013) and well-versed in the

counter-systems of tempered radicalism (Meyerson, 2010), even if these tools and countermeasures to heroic leadership (Davis, 2019) are never explicitly acknowledged.

If community college leaders are to accept Homan's (2017) thesis, "The more you try to manage change, the more it comes to a halt," and I think we would be wise to do so, how are we to move forward together, as leaders and co-creator colleagues, given the social justice imperative and systemic necessity of Leading with Racial Equity and restructuring colleges around Guided Pathways? In other words, if systems resist change and leaders alone cannot move organizations forward, how are we to get the work done?

In *A Guide to Collaborative Leadership*, Davis' (2019) suggests a courageous and vulnerable approach to collaborative leadership with the potential to renew purpose to stakeholder participation, transform organizational culture, and force-multiply social impact. Davis describes her journey from the leader-centered hero culture of her early leadership experiences to the collaborative organizational culture shifts that actively engaged more stakeholders and listened to more voices as decisions were made, plans were created, and actions were implemented. This process of decentering organizational leadership and creating an expectation of "radical interdependence" within the organizational structure and between the organization and the broader community brought the satisfaction of fiscal success and deeper social purpose to the company and its employees.

Radical interdependence and a refocusing on we-work over I-work infused a *Why* into the company's work life that was more motivating to its employees than any position, promotion, or year-end bonus. Given her company's success, Davis questions why individualism and hero culture persist as leadership models in organizations today when, "The joy and success that comes from interdependence and vulnerability is worth the effort and the risk. And if we're going



to solve the challenges that the world is facing today, we have no alternative, so we had better start getting good at it” (2019). Knowing that the company was doing *good* as well as doing *well* transformed Davis’ understanding of her leadership place and purpose, and this awareness also motivated her colleagues to do more and better as they did the right thing.

Lumby (2015) also offers insight into the social, emotional, and motivational mechanics of effective leadership and provides a metaphorical framework to assist administrators in understanding their shifting roles within their various leadership contexts. As we will explore later in Chapter 2, a keen and well-developed metaphorical understanding of our identities as leaders, not only helps us understand ourselves better, but it also helps us recognize the need for stronger, more genuine relationships with the people with whom we work and serve. In an exploration of the importance of micro-political emotional intelligence in higher education settings where leaders, “use social skill and interpersonal assets to achieve change through daily, often informal, activity” (2015, p. 8), Lumby draws on Becher’s (1984) comparison of higher education institutions (HEI) to theaters where leaders participate in onstage, backstage, and under-stage activity. Lumby writes:

Onstage is the public arena. Backstage is the work of groups of people organizing what is projected to the HEI community and the public. Under-stage activities are the private conversations, the decisions on what to communicate and how, who to invite on board, and tactics to influence and to persuade. (p. 10)

This theater and stage metaphor gives leaders a good place to start as they consider their roles within the professional communities they serve. As both Lumby and Davis (2019) acknowledge, leaders must be able to take center stage and engage the organizational community in the co-construction of a shared vision (Gigliotti, 2020; Koerner, 2020). Administrative leaders must

also be able to work effectively backstage to form and empower smaller groups within the institution to take on specific tasks (Boggs & McPhail, 2019; Ruben et al., 2017). Heifetz et al., (2014) would likely support Lumby's use of Becher's (1984) metaphor and this multi-level approach as well: a leader needs to spend time both in the balcony and on the practice field if they are to understand and facilitate adaptive change. Under-stage activities are often less discussed, for obvious reasons, but there are certainly times when that one-on-one, off-the-record telephone call or off-campus cup of coffee helps develop a relationship or create better understanding between individuals who would not otherwise have been able to share as frankly in a larger public setting (Shamir & Lapidot, 2003; Higgerson & Joyce, 2007).

Each facet of the theater metaphor provides an easily understood frame of professional reference for day-to-day leadership that illustrates the importance of a particular kind of relationship within a specific higher education setting. I would suggest we consider adding one additional facet to Becher's (1984) theater metaphor and encourage ourselves as leaders to break down the proverbial 4th wall and walk straight out into the audience and sit down in the first open seat, and I believe Davis (2019) would approve of this amendment to the metaphorical process. Each of the onstage, backstage, and under-stage contexts and interactions denote a professional relationship and context focused on an activity and initiated with a specific purpose, but deliberately choosing to develop relationships in informal and less purpose-driven contexts allows leaders to listen and learn from those most likely impacted by whatever the change process of the day may be. As Sitkin et al. (2009) suggest:

To show an understanding and appreciation of others, the leader must be able to engage the team and give them a voice for their perspectives — and then listen to that sharing of

ideas and demonstrate its real value going forward. Just as people need to be led by someone real, they also desire to be understood, respected, and cared about. (p. 29)

Real relationships matter within organizations, especially for change leaders. Buller (2013) notes that positive leaders are one of the cornerstones of successful colleges and universities, and these kinds of people-focused change “leaders are at least as people oriented as they are goal oriented” (p. 14). People-centered leadership challenges have been compounded by the systemic nature of Leading with Racial Equity, the structural focus of Guided Pathways reform, and the depersonalization of the Zoom community colleges of the COVID-19 era. Leaders must recognize that systems vision is essential in creating meaningful change, but the change battle is often lost or won one watercooler conversation at a time.

### A Poem

#### **The Runes — Denise Levertov**

*These words were given me in a dream. In the dream I was a Finnish child of 8 or 9 who had been given by her teacher the task of writing out these 3 ancient runes of her people. This is how they went:*

(1) Know the pinetrees. Know the orange dryness of sickness and death in needle and cone. Know them too in green health, those among whom your life is laid.

(2) Know the ship you sail on. Know its timbers. Deep the fjord waters where you sail, steep the cliffs, deep into the unknown coast goes the winding fjord. But what would you have? Would you be tied up to a sandwhite-quay in perpetual sunshine,

yards and masts sprouting little violet mandolins?

(3) In city, in suburb, in forest, no way to stretch out the arms —  
so if you would grow, go straight up or deep down.

(Levertov, 1983)

### **3 Questions for Reflections, Action, and Self-Development**

1. What can you do to become more informally engaged with those you work with? What can you do to know and be known by others better? List three things. Do one of them today.
2. List three meetings that you are required to attend but do not really need to be at. What do you think would happen if you did not attend? Now skip one of those meetings. Were you right?
3. Who are three frontline workers at your institution who are known for really knowing their stuff? Call each of them this week and ask what they think about something that is happening on campus. Listen. What happened when you did this?

### **5 Noteworthy Resources**

Buller, J. L. (2015). *Change leadership in higher education: A practical guide to academic transformation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Davis, L. (2019, September). *A guide to collaborative leadership* [Video File]. TED Talks.

Fullan, M. (2011). *Change leader: Learning to do what matters most*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Homan, T. (2017). The inner side of organizational change [Video File]. TED Talks.

Lumby, J. (2015). *In the wings and backstage: Exploring the micropolitics of leadership in*

*higher education*. Research report. Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

### **Synthesizing the Foundations**

Walking collectively, courageously, and compassionately into an unknown future is not easy for institutions or comfortable for the individuals who make those institutions effective, and we often require maps to guide us along our way. The three conceptual foundations for leaders of two-year institutions of higher education, when taken as the parts of a larger and more integrated whole, provide community college leaders with several ways to interpret the landscapes around and ahead. The first of the three integrated foundations address *Who* we are to serve. The second foundation addresses *What* we are to do to ensure systemically and historically marginalized groups are served through equitable educational processes and outcomes.

The third foundation outlines a systems-savvy *How* for community college leadership that moves beyond tools-and-techniques and empowers those most capable of creating meaningful change with the clearest voice and broadest opportunity to do so. Ultimately, the *Who*, *What*, and *How* of community college leadership is empowered by and leads us back to the *Why*. The literature of leadership is comprehensive when it comes to plumbing the motivational depths of *Why*, but rather than cite and incite, I would encourage leaders, at whatever level and in whatever context, to do the inner I-work of reflecting on and clarifying the reasons they choose to give themselves to this demanding and gratifying work in service to others, and through that process, I would encourage leaders to chart their own *Why* maps. Maps do not simply provide leaders with new ways of understanding and doing, they also provide us with essential lenses through which we can reimagine ourselves, others, and our work in a world that desperately needs fresh ways of seeing who we are and the spaces in which we move.

The section below builds on the three essential foundations of community college leadership described above and integrates them with four additional conceptual frameworks valuable to administrative leaders in higher education. Addressed in less detail and depth than the foundations, the discussions of the four frameworks are meant to provide an initial point of scholarly, professional, and personal context and reflection. Each of these has been meaningful to me as an educational leader, and it is my hope that others will find them valuable to their professional lives and practice, too.

### ***Framework 1: Metaphors Matter***

#### **A Centering Thought from the Research Literature**

Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish — matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thought or action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008, p. 3)

#### **Professional Metaphors as a Leadership Framework**

When I first moved into the corner office of the 1950's single-level bunker that was and still is the T-Building, imaginatively named for its letter-like shape, I had a front-row view of the construction of the college's new 70,000 square foot, \$40 million STEM building. Over that first summer in my first dean job, I would occasionally look up over the top of my computer monitor and the 20-foot-tall blue-tarp-covered mound of dirt that spanned the muddy field between us

and watch red brick and shining glass climb and encase the state-of-the-art building's superstructure. Watching that building come together was fascinating, and I was thrilled to have the opportunity to watch the construction process up close. As we had our first one-on-one meetings in my new office, the division chairs and department heads would inevitably comment on the view, and I would point out something that had just been completed or how the workers had used rigging to lower themselves to pressure wash the brick on the upper levels. It made for good introductory conversation, but later in that first meeting, I would turn our attention back to the building and ask, "I'm wondering, if we could build anything together in the BEECH Unit, what would that be?" I would also turn to the tarp-covered earth mound and ask, "And maybe more importantly, what do we need to get out of the way so that our students can be more successful?"

Metaphors create beauty and richness in everyday communication, but they also create and sustain the perceptual frames of understanding and activity through which we interpret others, the world, and ourselves (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008). They make the realms of concrete, glass, and earth meaningful to those professionally preoccupied with student placement, fall-to-fall persistence, and the attainment of learning outcomes. As Heifetz et al. suggest, "When you learn about several different disciplines, you can begin to think in terms of metaphors, see how ideas, inventions, and findings in one area of expertise can be applied in another" (2009, p. 253). By comparing two similar-yet-dissimilar things and creating a unique frame of understanding between the message sender and receiver, metaphors provide new vision, expand and deepen thinking, give purpose to action, and help us understand our roles and ourselves in fresh ways (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008; Lumby & English, 2010; Spicer & Alvesson, 2010). Metaphors help us make sense of the world.

Metaphors help us make sense of our surroundings, but they also help us make sense of our professional contexts as educational leaders (Schechter et al., 2018). Metaphors like these matter in the life of an educational institution and to the people who construct and deconstruct systems for students. They provide faculty and administrative leaders with opportunities to focus thought and action around a cause, and researchers have explored the many ways leaders have adopted metaphor to create identity and motivate action in diverse contexts (Burkinshaw & White, 2020; Edmonstone, 2019; Randall et al., 2020). Spicer & Alvesson (2010) have explored the professional identities of leaders through the metaphors of saints, gardeners, buddies, commanders, cyborgs, and bullies. Lumby & English (2010) have explored the nature of educational leadership through the metaphors of machinery, accounting, war, sport, theater, religion, and lunacy. While metaphors, like any form of communication, can be misused, (McCandless, 2012), they can also positively create identity, influence thought, and shape action for the good of others.

The visual metaphor of the new STEM building and the mound of earth was nearly perfect for those early conversations my colleagues and I had about work ahead. Over the next seven years, the Basic Education Division, English Division, Communications and Humanities Division, and College 101 Department engaged in a level of curricular reform never seen on our campus. During that time, we submitted nearly 400 Course Action Request (CAR) forms through our campus Curriculum Committee and redesigned the college's English placement and Math/English articulation processes for pre-college students. The BEECH Unit is the largest on our campus, and there was not a course or system left untouched by the will to build better and the drive to see obstacles to student success eliminated. While we would likely have engaged in



the work, regardless, that new building and dirt pile seemed to give us permission to talk more creatively, meaningfully, and openly about the work ahead.

### **A Poem**

#### **Metaphors — Sylvia Plath**

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,  
 An elephant, a ponderous house,  
 A melon strolling on two tendrils.  
 O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!  
 This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.  
 Money's new-minted in this fat purse.  
 I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.  
 I've eaten a bag of green apples,  
 Boarded the train there's no getting off.  
 (Plath, 1982)

### **3 Questions for Reflections and Self-Development**

1. Did you participate in show-and-tell at school as a child? What item did you bring to class? Why was the item significant to you? If you were to start your next meeting with show-and-tell, what would you bring? How would you explain its personal significance to your colleagues?
2. What leadership metaphors do you find particularly useful or appealing? What are their strengths? What are their limitations?
3. Have you ever embraced a metaphor in your professional life? What was it? Did you communicate it to others? What was the outcome?

## 5 Noteworthy Resources

- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2008). *Metaphors we live by*. University of Chicago Press.
- Lumby, J. & English, F. W. (2010). *Leadership as lunacy and other metaphors for educational leadership*. Corwin.
- McCandless, B. (2012). The use and misuse of metaphor in education and education reform. *Education*, 132(3).
- Schechter, C., Shaked, H., Ganon-Shilon, S., & Goldratt, M. (2018). Leadership metaphors: School principals' sense-making of a national reform. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 17(1), 1-26.
- Spicer, A., & Alvesson, M. (2010). Metaphors for leadership. In *Metaphors We Lead By* (pp. 39-58). Routledge.

### ***Framework 2: Communication as Old as Aristotle***

#### **A Centering Thought from the Research Literature**

“Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (Palmer, 2017, p. 10).

#### **A Time-Proven Communication Model as a Leadership Framework**

Given the title of this section, one might assume this is going to be an in-depth scholarly treatment of the age-old Aristotelian rhetorical paradigm of *logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*, and *kairos* (Kennedy, 2007) made familiar, if not unpopular, by so many freshmen composition and Communication 101 courses. If thoughts of random acts of rhetorical analysis excite you, and the former English professor in me hopes that they do just a little, you will likely be let down slightly but not completely disappointed by this experience-informed treatment of the topic of persuasive communication in the workplace. To form a general baseline, Kennedy's (2007)

approximate definitions of Aristotle’s “three means of persuasion” are helpful: “logical argument is called *logos*; the projection of the speaker’s character is called *ethos*; awakening the emotions of the audience is called *pathos*” (p. ix). Employing these three in the perfect time, proportion, and context denotes the appropriate use of *kairos*. It is not uncommon for English professors to refer to these four as the quality of the text, character of the author, sensibility of the audience, and the particulars of the setting (Purdue, 2023). Attention to these four elements, separately and in aggregate, can go a long way in helping an administrative leader move important initiatives forward.

This may sound a bit off at first, and I will address the challenges inherent in this statement more below, but there appears to be a misunderstanding, especially among administrative leaders new to their roles, that the ends of communication is to demonstrate the rightness of an idea to others above all else, but as an hour with your politically radicalized uncle at the Thanksgiving table will quickly illustrate, the chasm between being right and being persuasive is vast. An academic leader would do well to put forward logical ideas informed by reliable data and organized into coherent arguments (*logos*). However, doing so while considering the authority of one’s position (*ethos*), the impact of the message on the person receiving it (*pathos*), and the timing of the communication (*kairos*) would be better. Consistently disregarding any one of the four means of persuasion is, frankly, the stuff of no-confidence votes. As a person who processes ideas externally and appreciates receiving feedback before making decisions, I have been surprised, with each promotion up the administrative ladder, by how readily others have been willing to simply take my most random thoughts and comments as the next marching order. The higher the level, the more readily my comments moved action. This was startling at first, and I was not certain what to think. Is my *ethos* so sterling that others

naturally trust and act upon my good judgment? Is the campus context and culture, one meaningful way to frame professional considerations of *kairos*, so dysfunctional and fear-stricken that supervisors are to be obeyed without question? The truth is that it is probably neither option completely, or at all, but a possible blending of the two, coupled with the logical value of my suggestion and the level of willingness inherent in the disposition of the person doing the task. As one can see, persuasion can be complicated and fascinating, but one thing is certain: ignoring any one of the four means of persuasion will limit an administrator's ability to engage people and lead institutions.

A note on personal integrity. As Kennedy (2007) points out in his introduction to *On Rhetoric*, "Aristotle was the first person to recognize clearly that rhetoric as an art of communication was morally neutral, that it could be used either for good or ill" (p. ix). In the end, our integrity is all we have as leaders. If we make questionable decisions that benefit ourselves or our constituents but do not take the broader good into consideration, we fritter away the only real influence we have with others. The first step toward integrity is to engage in processes of honest self-reflection on a regular basis: if you know who you are and what you hold dear, it is easier to make good decisions for yourself and others. The second step toward integrity is to be stubbornly present in your interactions with those around you.

I spent the first seven years of my career living and teaching in Japan, and I have a sign hanging by my office door where I greet visitors that reads, "*Ichigo, Ichie*," which means, "One moment, One opportunity." This reminds me of the humanity and dignity of the person in front of me and of the preciousness of the moment we are sharing. My giving of this moment is an act of care, both for them and myself. The third step is to be willing to do the work: nothing builds trust like follow-through. Finally, always tell the truth or at least a version in alignment with the

*pathos* and *kairos* of the moment. Billy Collins' poem "[Aristotle](#)" is wonderful but too long to quote in full here, but Emily Dickinson (2016) also has some powerfully wise things to say about telling the truth in Poem 1263, and I take her advice to heart.

### A Poem

#### Poem 1263 — Emily Dickinson

Tell all the truth but tell it slant --  
 Success in Circuit lies  
 Too bright for our infirm Delight  
 The Truth's superb surprise  
 As Lightning to the Children eased  
 With explanation kind  
 The Truth must dazzle gradually  
 Or every man be blind --  
 (Dickinson, 2016)

### 3 Questions for Reflections and Self-Development

1. Are there times when it is appropriate to lie? Describe the situation and explain why it is okay to stretch the truth in this situation. Are there times when it is never okay to lie? Why?
2. What do you see as the three most important characteristics of an educational leader? Do you possess any of these? If not, what can you do to develop these characteristics in ways that make you a better leader and colleague?
3. Think of a colleague who is exceptionally skilled in one for the four means of persuasion: *logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*, or *kairos*. What do they do so well and what can you learn from

them? Now, imagine they are only good at that one thing and terrible at the other three.

What challenges would they face in leading others?

### **5 Noteworthy Resources**

Gigliotti, R. A. (2019). *Crisis leadership in higher education: Theory and practice*. Rutgers University Press.

Higgerson, M. L., & Joyce, T.A. (2007). *Effective leadership communication: A guide for department chairs and deans for managing difficult situations and people*. Anker Publishing.

Kennedy, G. A. (2007). *On rhetoric: A theory of civic discourse* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Ruben, B. D., De Lisi, R., & Gigliotti, R. A. (2017). *A guide for leaders in higher education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

Stucki, I., & Sager, F. (2018). Aristotelian framing: logos, ethos, pathos and the use of evidence in policy frames. *Policy Sciences*, 51, 373-385.

### ***Framework 3: Decision-Making: A Three-Part How-To***

#### **A Centering Thought from the Research Literature**

Decision making is best done at the lowest possible level of any institution. The people who deal most directly with an issue know most about it and have to live with the consequences of the decision on a daily basis. In addition, making decisions helps groom them to become potential academic leaders in the future. (Buller, 2015, p. 173)

#### **Deciding How You Are Going to Decide as a Leadership Framework**

If you are a community college dean, a significant portion of your day is dedicated to attending meetings. Under healthy and ideal circumstances, the purpose of a meeting is to listen,

learn, share, and make decisions, although some administrators attend meetings in what seems to be an odd form of professional FOMO (fear of missing out, or P-FOMO in professional settings). The adage, “If you’re not at the table, you’re on the menu” persists for a reason. This section will focus specifically on the last element of the better-intentioned list above: decision-making. Many of the 30,000-foot guides to academic leadership commit space to the how-to of decision-making (Cohen et al., 2014; Boggs & McPhail, 2020; Jensen & Giles, 2006; Long 2016), and some decision-making processes and frameworks can be quite complex (Brighouse, 2016; Nevarez & Wood, 2010; Wood & Nevarez, 2014). Fisher et al. (2011) promotes a well-respected four-step process: 1) separate the people from the problem, 2) focus on interest, not positions, 3) invent options for mutual gain, and 4) insist on using objective criteria. Buller (2015) advocates a seven-step process: 1) write it down, 2) gather it up, 3) think it through, 4) weigh it out, 5) check within, 6) move it along, and 7) check it over.

Interestingly, however, few intentionally infuse equity-mindedness into the decision-making processes of their committees and standing meeting groups. One of the best ways to ensure equity-infused outcomes and avoid the cognitive fugue that comes with day-in, day-out group gatherings, especially in the new age of Zoom fatigue, is to establish an explicit expectation at the formation of every committee that the committee members co-create a process for making decisions. The process that seems to have worked best at my institution involves a three-step set of agreements.

### **A Three-Part Decision-Making How-To**

1. **Agree on who is at the table.** This is an important element of shared governance, and stakeholders on my campus have worked hard to articulate how the shared governance process works in a document called [\*Shared Governance and You\*](#) (2020). Keep in mind

that viewed through an equity lens, it is often more important to ask who is NOT at the table but should be. If a student is not on the committee and the work of the committee impacts student lives, you need to ask why you do not have at least one student member and then go find students to participate. Additionally, all committees on our campus are required to have at least one graduate of the year-long Broadening Understanding, Intercultural Leadership, and Development (B.U.I.L.D.) Program. If you are going to move equity forward, you must have equity-minded representation on the committee. If you are not at the table, you may not be on the menu, but you certainly will not be able to eat. Representation matters and creates meaningful change.

2. **Agree on data sources ahead of time.** This does not need to be an overly complex process, although some committee members may attempt to make it so: a very common move when the data do not support a beloved program or initiative is to question the data and then discard them outright because whatever numbers are being examined are not the product of a double-blind test trial or something similar. More than once have I seen hundreds of thousands of dollars allocated on arguments no more complex than, “We do not have good data [or we did not prepare any], so please trust our professional judgment,” followed by an appeal to the merits of “qualitative” research and analysis. As tech CEO Jim Barksdale is famously credited with saying, “If we have data, let’s look at data. If all we have are opinions, let’s go with mine” (Schmidt & Rosenberg, 2014). Much of this can be avoided if the group agrees to its data sources ahead of time, whether those be the State Board Tableau dashboard for retention data or three agreed-upon local news channels for those 4 a.m. is-it-a-snow-day? discussions.



3. **Agree on a decision-making process or framework.** As the references above illustrate, there are many good decision-making frameworks available to educators, ranging from the strongly narrative and values based (Brighthouse, 2016) to the one-step-at-a-time process based (Buller, 2015). My campus has agreed to the use of the [\*Equitable Decision-Making Tool\*](#) to ensure equitable outcomes in decision-making processes. The college's Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion supplies regular professional development opportunities to train campus community members on how to use the tool, and many carry laminated copies of the tool in their notebooks for quick reference during the decision-making part of a meeting. I have yet to see its use lead to a decision that was less data-informed or less inclusive.

Decision-making is a complex process, especially within educational systems that have the potential to improve the lives of so many. Jensen and Giles (2006) write that, "Every decision you make has three elements: educational, fiscal, and political. Too often, we are good on the first element and not on the other two. Too many administrators think, 'I'm an educator, not a politician'" (p. 87). I would add a fourth element of Leading with Racial Equity to the paradigm. If decision-making groups commit to an up-front process of explicitly addressing and agreeing to who is at the table, what data are to be used, and the decision-making framework that will best lead to a consensus outcome, educational, fiscal, political, and equitable elements are most likely to align.

### **A Poem**

#### **The Road Not Taken – Robert Frost**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
 And sorry I could not travel both

And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

(Frost, 1979)

### **3 Questions for Reflections and Self-Development**

1. Are there any personal practices that you like to engage in when you have a difficult decision to make? What do you do?
2. What are three difficult decisions facing your workplace right now? What can you do to help make these decisions easier for others and yourself?
3. Think of a time when you had to make a difficult decision and the outcome of the decision was not what you had hoped. What did you do? What would you do differently next time?

### **5 Noteworthy Resources**

Brighthouse, H., Ladd, H. F., Loeb, S., & Swift, A. (2016). Educational goods and values: A framework for decision makers. *Theory and Research in Education*, 14(1), 3-25.

Buller, J. L. (2015). *The essential academic dean or provost: A comprehensive desk reference*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Clark College. (2020). [\*Equitable decision-making tool\*](#). Internal document (Clark College) unpublished.

Clark College. (2020). [\*Shared governance and you\*](#). Internal document (Clark College) unpublished.

Fisher, R., Ury, W. L., & Patton, B. (2011). *Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in*. Penguin.

### ***Framework 4: Self-Care in a Serving Others World***

#### **A Centering Thought from the Research Literature**

By surviving passages of doubt and depression on the vocational journey, I have become clear about at least one thing: self-care is never a selfish act — it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to the others.

Anytime we can listen to true self and give it the care it requires, we do so not only for ourselves but for the many others whose lives we touch. (Palmer, 2000, pp. 30-31)

### **Caring for Self as a Leadership Framework**

This last discussion may be a bit of an unusual one as far as explorations of conceptual leadership frameworks go, especially hidden within a handbook hidden within a dissertation, and it will likely be brief and more personal than the others, but I am going raise a flag here all the same. Consider this more a caring exhortation and kind word of encouragement than a cataloging of the literature and a marshaling of the hard-earned ideas of others. Leading with Racial Equity within Guided Pathways structures in sustained cycles of crisis would seem to be the new normal for community college leaders (Brion, 2021; Fortunato et al., 2018; Gigliotti, 2020).

COVID-19 brought to light and placed a magnifying glass on what many have known for a long time: educators are in trouble. As crises become more and more the norm, intentional and well-supported processes that care for the self and the educational community are no longer a luxury or even optional. Mullen, in the forward to Freytag and Shotsberger (2022), articulates the challenges stemming from the COVID-19 Pandemic to the kind of “embodied” work educators do day-in and day-out:

Hence the paradox that confronts most devoted educators, for whom this work is not simply the way one earns a paycheck, but a way of life. The very work that gives them fulfillment and satisfaction each day of their working lives is also draining them of the energy they need to sustain that work for a lifetime. This privileged calling of making a difference of good in the next generation is also costing them more than they often feel able to pay. (p. iii)

Taken as a collective reality, the landscape of educational leadership today leads educators to a realization of a greater need for intentional self- and communal care in our homes and professional spaces. For many who teach and serve in schools, the COVID-19 Pandemic brought a new recognition that educators must take better care of themselves. The research literature, while wonderfully empathetic and supportive, also illustrated a self-care situation as complex and potentially confounding as the human beings it centered on. Wall (2022) identified five areas of self-care: 1) Physical, 2) Emotional, 3) Social, 4) Cognitive, and 5) Spiritual. Urick et al. (2021) identified six domains: 1) Physical, 2) Professional, 3) Relational, 4) Emotional, 5) Psychological, and 6) Spiritual. Evidently, taking care of oneself can be a bit more complicated than a warm bath and a good book, although neither Wall nor Urick would likely discourage a weary educator from pursuing an evening reading in the tub.

However complicated the situation may be, we owe it to ourselves to be better to ourselves. This, as Palmer (2000) points out above, is not just an act of self-love; caring for self is caring for others. Early in the pandemic and stuck at home in Zoom meetings most of the day, I realized I needed to do more to take care of myself, so I made a pledge to complete 30 minutes of physical exercise every day. I knew this would be good for me and probably help me be less of a bear to those also stuck at home with me. As an odd personal quirk, I am motivated by streaks, so I decided to see how many days in a row I could exercise without breaking the streak. This compulsive tick motivated 965 consecutive days at last count, and we have been well into a post-COVID world for quite some time now. A hundred days into the exercise streak, I realized that I needed more quiet de-stress time, so I set about sitting quietly for 30 minutes each day. I just completed day 865. The point is not to humble-boast about my own persistence, as I am not completely sure my compulsion for daily streaks is a wholly healthy thing. The point, as I take it,

is that we as educational administrators must each find ways to motivate ourselves to be better to ourselves, no matter how many personal domains we identify. What works for me will likely not work for you; it does not matter what you do, only that you find a way to better care for yourself.

As Koerner (2020) reminds:

The dean who pays attention to self-care is deliberate and self-initiated about emotional, physical, and mental health. In a professional role, this means that warding off stress and anxiety by preparing for future events, being authentic, and sometimes leading from the heart as well as the mind makes for a job well done and a happier life. (p. 73)

We must be kinder to others and ourselves. Our vocations demand it. We must give grace and be willing to receive it when our moment of need arrives. It will not surprise those who have read as far as this in this extended discussion of the foundations and frames that undergird and support the work of educational administrators that much of the time that I dedicated to getting still and quiet over the past 865 days has been invested in reading poetry. Here is a good one by William Stafford (1999) about finding time to care for yourself in a world that will make you shake your head.

### **A Poem**

#### **Any Morning – William Stafford**

Just lying on the couch and being happy.  
Only humming a little, the quiet sound in the head.  
Trouble is busy elsewhere at the moment, it has  
so much to do in the world.

People who might judge are mostly asleep; they can't

monitor you all the time, and sometimes they forget.

When dawn flows over the hedge you can

get up and act busy.

Little corners like this, pieces of Heaven

left lying around, can be picked up and saved.

People won't even see that you have them,

they are so light and easy to hide.

Later in the day you can act like the others.

You can shake your head. You can frown.

(Stafford, 1999)

### **3 Questions for Reflections and Self-Development**

1. What do you do for self-care? How has this changed since the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Make a list of 10 things you could do today to care for yourself. Do one of them.

2. What do you do to ensure that you and others you care about are exercising appropriate

self-care? Is there a process that works best for you to hold yourself accountable, or is

valuing flexibility over accountability part of your self-care plan?

3. Are there elements to self-care that Wall and Urick do not include in their lists above? If

so, what are they and what do you do to practice them?

### **5 Noteworthy Resources**

Freytag, C., & Shotsberger, P. (2022). *Self-care for educators: Soul-nourishing practices to promote wellbeing*. Freedom Hill Press.

- Koerner, M. (2020). *The successful dean: Thoughtful strategies and savvy tips for today's evolving leadership*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Palmer, P. J. (2000). *Let your life speak: listening for the voice of vocation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Stafford, W. (2009). *The way it is*. Lone Goose Press.
- Urlick, A., Carpenter, B. W., & Eckert, J. (2021, March). Confronting COVID: Crisis leadership, turbulence, and self-care. In *Frontiers in education* (Vol. 6, p. 642861). Frontiers Media SA.

### **Foundations, Frameworks, and other North Stars**

The seven administrative foundations and frameworks described above provide guiding principles for the day-to-day work of academic deans and other mid-level leaders and managers serving in community colleges in the United States today. Each is intended to provide a frame of reference for thought, decisions-making, and action. Even if they do not always give us specific guidance or direction as to how to address a particularly challenging problem or decision on a given day, they can certainly tell us which direction to lean when all other points of reference are obscured. Leaning into a leadership disposition anchored and framed in equitable outcomes, well-tended paths, care for others, creative thinking, conscious communication, intentional decision-making, and care for self certainly cannot lead us in the wrong direction.



## **Part B: Day-to-Day Leadership Resources**

Ask any good English Department Chair what they think you, as a new academic dean, need to know when starting your job, or onboarding a new faculty leader into theirs, and you are likely to receive a lengthy preamble [not included] and a detailed list of needed knowledge bases like the following [do not ask why I am so confident in this assertion]:

1. Grade Appeals and Complaints: processes, contract, legal stuff, etc.
2. Scheduling: processes with Office of Instruction; How contract relates to scheduling
3. Enrollment Management: using data and consulting with other departments about what to offer and when
4. Adjunct Stuff: teaching loads, benefits, scheduling, hiring-and-firing processes, legal stuff, HR
5. Student Affairs Processes and Coordination: advising, registration, enrollment, and placement
6. ctcLink: What do chairs have access to and how to use the various tools?
7. Running Start and other Dual Credit information
8. FERPA, especially as it relates to complaints and grade appeals
9. Behavioral Intervention and Student Conduct: what your role is in all that; how to support faculty when they have a student conduct issue
10. Bookstore Processes
11. Course Equivalency Training
12. Website Editing Training

13. Contract Training: I think there is an assumption that we all know the contract, or maybe there should just be an expectation that new chairs and deans read the contract and ask questions if they have them.

14. Social Justice & Allyship training: At the very least, Equity in Hiring training should be a must for any new division chair or dean.

That is quite a list and represents only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the daily knowledge bases needed to smoothly lead and manage an academic unit. Ask the same question to other campus stakeholders in different areas, managing different levels and types of responsibility and you will certainly get a different, equally lengthy, and equally thoughtful list. My former Unit Operations Manager's list would have included attention to budgetary and compliance issues that others simply would not have considered, and that list would have arrived in the most beautifully organized and detailed spreadsheet you have ever seen.

When I became a new dean, I went on a question-asking tour, interviewing every dean and Executive Cabinet member on my campus. Fortunately, there were far more experienced deans and vice presidents on my campus at that time than there are now. One well-respected dean with a reputation for straight talk, who now works at the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), gave some great advice: "Do not worry about making mistakes," she said. "We all mess up all the time, and besides, it takes five years to learn this job, anyway." That was excellent and accurate insight, and I still take it to heart, but my hope is also to shorten the time up the administrative learning curve with the resources below. The second part of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* provides more detailed information about the specific day-to-day responsibilities of community college deans. While it is my hope and aim that this handbook be generally useful to all community college deans, the model resources provided will

focus specifically on the work of deans at my institution. This should provide both a general overview of the subjects at hand and specific examples of how one institution has addressed the issues.

What follows is an administrative practitioner's day-to-day resource. It assumes the foundations and frameworks described earlier in this text, but it also seeks to provide a more day-to-day, just-in-time reference guide for the issues and processes that community college leaders address day-in and day-out in their work. To manage the scale and scope of this section for the needs of this project, I have limited the number of day-to-day work domains of a community college dean to five, although there are undoubtedly more. Annual and Term Cycle Process Work and Technology Work immediately come to mind as other domains that a leader must develop competency in, both having many sub-topics critical to day-to-day dean work; unfortunately, those domains and topics, and many others, will need to be explored later. I have also limited the number of complete section entries within each domain to seven as well and then included a list of topics for further inclusion at the end of each section. I would imagine an expanded version of this resource will develop most fully over time in the *Deans' Canvas Resource Shell* version of this resource. This portion of the handbook is separated into five sections, each related to the day-to-day work life of an academic dean. The day-to-day domains, addressed in alphabetical order, include:

1. Budget Work
2. Committee Work
3. Faculty Work
4. Institutional Work
5. Student Work

Each domain section includes seven entries. Each entry includes: 1) a brief description of the item, topic, or issue with a suggested approach if warranted, 2) an illustrative text or example artifact, and 3) one or two references for further study or a key quote from the relevant research literature.

Much of the text and artifact supporting material provided in *A Handbook for Community College Deans* originates from the institution at which I serve, although I will include examples from other institutions if they seem better suited to illustrate a point. Since this portion of the text is specifically focused on the day-to-day leadership needs of administrators at my institution, I will cite from and reference my college's collective bargaining agreements and website whenever possible, although those adapting this resource for their own purposes should feel free to modify the text and references in whatever way serves the needs of their leaders and institutions. Questions may arise about why I would focus so much on collective bargaining agreements. The simplest response is that dean work is relational work, and the people deans interact with most, day-in and day-out, are represented by one of these two agreements on my campus. Also, academic administrators are important supporting cast members in these binding documents. In the 108 pages of the most recent AHE Agreement (2022), the word *dean* occurs 61 times, *vice president* 82 times, *director* 17 times, and the administrative catch-all *the college* 218 times. Interestingly, the word *faculty* occurs 665 times; we are at the bargaining table as I write this sentence, and believe me, I will be looking for ways to include *faculty* in the agreement just one more time to help infuse the next version with an appropriate level of Miltonic gravitas. When examples are overly lengthy, I will supply an example quotation and a link to the fuller document or website. If links are not active or permission is needed to access a document or file, please reach out to [jwilkins-luton@clark.edu](mailto:jwilkins-luton@clark.edu), and I will supply access.

### ***Budget Work***

The Budget Work section of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* includes information about the following topics or issues relevant to the day-to-day work of academic administrators:

1. Budget Reduction Processes
2. Class Capacity and Budget Impact
3. Council and Conference Travel
4. Foundation Accounts
5. Grant Management
6. Tenure Line Allocation Process
7. Unit Budgets

Additional topics for future consideration include Budget Approval Process, Equipment Allocation Planning, Faculty Development Funds, Purchasing and Acquisitions.

Ruben et al. (2017) offers as succinct an introduction to and rationale for a dean's Budget Work as any I could write:

There was a time when an understanding of budgeting models was only necessary for leaders on governing boards or in the business and finance areas of colleges and universities. Increasingly, knowledge of budgeting assumptions and practices is also becoming vital for all leaders, especially given their importance in planning, resource allocation, and organizational assessment activities. (p. 29).

While colleges are siloed institutions and academics tend not to consider *educational enterprises* to be the latter (Mitchell & King, 2018), attention to fiscal matters is a core competency for any dean, especially with boards and accreditors expecting assessment, decision-making, and fiscal allocation processes to be integrated.

### **Budget Reduction Processes.**

**Description:** We start with Budget Work and the topic of Budget Reduction Processes for alphabetical reasons, not because they are most important, although they just may be as community colleges recover from the fiscal impacts of COVID-19 (Gigliotti 2020; Ruben, 2020). A quick search for the word *budget* on my institution’s public-facing website will relieve a list of documents cataloging the history of the college’s budget struggles and reductions. Interestingly, of the 11 departments listed for elimination in the college’s very first budget reduction, described in the 2015 artifact below, seven were proposed by first-year deans. Of the remaining four departments, three were reinstated by senior deans in the years following. While the college has experienced many budget reductions since and is in the process of working through the largest in its history as I write, each reduction was approached in a different way. Each leader must contribute and accept responsibility appropriate to the level, but adaptive problems, like budget reductions, should never be treated as fly-solo or delegate-up scenarios (Gallos & Bolman, 2021). For budget reductions to be effective and create as little harm as possible, leaders must dedicate as much time to intentionally and collaboratively addressing and developing the *why* and *how* of the process as they do to determining and communicating the actual reductions.

#### **Artifact:**

- [VPI Background Regarding 2015 Budget Reductions](#) (Clark College, 2023)

#### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- “In order to give the work back, leaders need to orchestrate a process that engages constituents in addressing the challenge, understanding the issues and searching for answers” (Gallos & Bolman, 2021, p. 178).

### **Class Capacity and Budget Impact.**

**Description:** Class capacities have a direct impact on college budgets. This is addressed through a slightly different lens in the section on Committee Work and the Curriculum Committee below, as Clark College is in the unique position of being the only community college of the 34 in the state system that appears to have delegated the determination of class capacities to a faculty majority committee; class caps are negotiated at the bargaining table at the other 33 schools. Regardless, developing a data-informed process for determining appropriate class capacities for courses is an important first step and should be insisted on and supported by deans as faculty engage in assessment activities and suggest curricular and structural interventions in their courses. Equitable student learning is the mission of the college, and data-informed fiscal accountability will allow us to continue to engage that mission.

### **Artifact:**

- The Curriculum Committee is responsible for reviewing the appropriateness and integrity of course offerings, approving new courses, course changes, and deleting individual courses. Committee review will include consideration of appropriateness as a lower-division course, congruence between content and credits, rigor of course, effect on students, programs, and College resources. (CCAHE, 2023, p. 9)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- The most successful faculty leaders learn how budgets affect strategic direction without attempting to serve as backup administrators on matters outside their purview. Like the other governors, they must step forward to own that a college is fundamentally an *educational enterprise*. Both words matter here. (Mitchell & King, 2018, pp. 140-141)

### **Council and Conference Travel.**

**Description:** Professional development is encouraged at Clark College, and all dean-level administrators at the college are expected to participate in state-wide council meetings and other professional development activities that will likely require travel. Travel to these events is fiscally supported through a variety of means depending on the needs of the college and the professional interests of the administrator. Most college-wide initiatives, like Leading with Racial Equity and Structuring Along Guided Pathways, are supported with funds through the Office of Instruction or the appropriate supporting office on campus, the ODEI and Guided Pathways offices, respectively, in these cases. Other travel is supported through Foundation accounts, more about this below, or through designated unit line items. Unit deans will have designated accounts set aside to facilitate professional development for the dean and unit operations manager, typically designated with a IZBO prefix. Council and conference attendance should be noted during annual supervisory and goal-setting processes.

### **Artifact:**

- [How to Apply for Professional Development Funding Document](#) (Clark College, 2023)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- The College shall develop, fund, and implement a development and training program for faculty, classified, and exempt employees to enhance their effectiveness in fulfilling their roles, duties and responsibilities including the quality of instruction and other services to students, and to provide opportunity for personal growth. The Board of Trustees delegates to the president or designee the responsibility to administer the development program in an equitable manner and in accordance with negotiated agreements. (Clark College, 2023)



### **Foundation Accounts.**

**Description:** The relationship between the Clark College Foundation and Clark College is an important one, and deans are wise to actively engage in the fostering and development of this partnership. This would be new news to those outside the college, but the positive relationship between the foundation and college community is well known to anyone who has spent any time on campus. The Clark College Foundation is one of the largest community college supporting foundations in the United States with endowments exceeding \$100 million, and fund-raising and the management of foundation accounts is an important dean-level responsibility. These accounts often have specific designations depending on the donor's intent but can often be accessed to flexibility support initiatives as need be. Accounts in my previous dean role supported scholarships for Transitional Studies students, summer math camps for students from BIPOC communities, English Department's Columbia Writer's Series author visits, and much more. Nearly every department in the unit was supported by at least one foundation account. Broader campus-wide initiatives, like the annual Faculty Excellence Award, are also supported. The unit operations manager will have a list of active accounts, and deans are encouraged to keep revenue streams active as this encourages further donor contributions. Handwritten thank you notes from the dean are not required, but they certainly do not discourage the fostering of this important student-success supporting partnership.

### **Artifact:**

- [Clark College Foundation Webpage](#) (Clark College Foundation, 2023)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- “Since its inception, Clark College Foundation has provided Clark College with more than \$82 million in college-related support” (Clark College Foundation, 2023).

## **Grant Management.**

**Description:** Grant management is becoming an increasingly important dean-level responsibility with tightening local budgets and decreasing funding coming from the state and federal level. Every grant is different and has different levels of reporting accountability, depending on the source. While it is exciting to receive a College Spark Washington, Title III, or specifically tailored grant from the state board, it is important to remember that managing a grant means additional work for you and your staff, so be judicious in what grants you apply for. The English Department, for example, would never have been able to implement its composition redesign project, which resulted in the complete deconstruction and reconstruction of the college's composition sequence from a prerequisite to a corequisite model, if it had not been for the generous support of College Spark Washington. That said, collecting data and completing the annual reporting process created a significant amount of work for the faculty, unit support staff, and the dean. Grants are wonderful, much needed, and support work faculty and staff might not otherwise be able to accomplish, but a dean is wise to consider the reporting and accountability strings that come attached. We instituted the \$10K rule in my previous unit, which meant we did not apply for grants below that threshold unless the reporting requirements were nearly non-existent.

### **Artifact:**

- How I recently describe my grant oversight responsibilities: Oversee BEECH Unit's grants and ensure compliance and timely reporting; 19 grants worth more than \$4.6 million over past five years

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [College Spark Washington Webpage](#) (College Spark Washington, 2023)

### **Tenure Line Allocation Process.**

**Description:** Think tenure is not important to faculty? The term is used 280 times in the CCAHE Agreement (2022). Although not a perfect process and still in need of revision, the yearly allocation of available tenure lines follows a richer evidence gathering and assessment process than it has in past years. In November, deans ascertain the number of available tenure lines and develop a set of criteria to evaluate proposals. The criteria are then shared with faculty division chairs for feedback and revision. Once the criteria are agreed upon, the faculty leads with the help of the unit operations managers develop a shared process for identifying quantitative data, keying off the number of FTE per faculty category and current number of benefitted adjunct positions. The deans and division chairs then draft a proposal integrating the qualitative and quantitative elements into a coherent narrative, which is then shared with the other deans and Vice President of Instruction (VPI), prior to a series of dean-level meetings where the proposals are considered and approved. The criteria are not weighted or scored using a rubric, and deans typically come out of these meetings approving a line or two that do not make sense to all. This year, for example, the deans approved a new position in Department A (department of 6 tenured faculty, serving 210 FTE, with 25% adjuncts) and denied another position in Department B (department of 5 tenured faculty, serving 410 FTE, with 73% adjuncts). We do our best, but the debate occasionally overcomes the data.

#### **Artifact:**

- [Information to Evaluate Tenure Position Requests](#) (2023)

#### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- “Tenured — a faculty member who has successfully completed the probationary period, and has been awarded tenure by the Board of Trustees” (CCAHE, 2020, p. 7).

## **Unit Budgets.**

**Description:** Not all deans take an active interest in their unit budgets, but they do this to the harm of their students and to the detriment of the institution; they also rob themselves of opportunities to facilitate meaningful, change-oriented work for their faculty. I was fortunate as a new dean to have been trained by the world's greatest unit operations manager. She is a next-level expert at all things fiscal and spreadsheet, and we committed early to providing her time in her work cycle to keep the unit's expense-tracking spreadsheets as real-time as possible. This not only capitalized on my unit ops' professional strengths and interests, but it also provided me and the unit's leadership team with ready information about available funds. In seven years, we were never over budget, but were often at zero, and we actively supported many of the transformative Leading with Racial Equity and Guided Pathways projects mentioned in other places in this exploration directly with unit funds. It was important for me to learn early on that a unit budget is not a savings account and that kudos are not given for not allocating resources to move important work forward. Effective budgeting is also an expected skill at the Vice President of Instruction level, so deans are wise to develop this skill as early in their tenure as possible.

### **Artifact:**

- [Dean-Level Unit Budget Management Description](#) (2023)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- “No CEO ever got fired for having a lousy curriculum, but many have been fired for not balancing the books. Seventy-five to 85% of our budgets are personnel. Budget is class schedule and student-to-faculty ratio. That’s why your vice president of instruction must also understand budgets. If you can’t pay the bills, you’re gone” (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. 87).

### ***Committee Work***

The Committee Work section of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* includes information about the following topics or issues relevant to the day-to-day work of academic administrators:

1. Board of Trustees (BOT)
2. Curriculum Committee (CC)
3. Instructional Council (IC)
4. Instructional Planning Team (IPT)
5. Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC)
6. Statewide Councils
7. Tenure Review Oversight Committee

Additional topics for future consideration include Accreditation Steering Committee, Deans-AVP-VPI, Deans' Workgroup (DWG), Screening Committees, Tenure Review Oversight Committee (TROC).

Committee work and meetings are the heart-and-soul of dean-level administrative work. This was true face-to-face before the COVID-19 Pandemic, and it is doubly but two-dimensionally true now in the age of Zoom. Most of my peers and I averaged 20-to-30 meetings a week prior to 2020, and I now average between 30-and-40 with the rare week where I peak over 40. Zoom has eliminated the need to physically move from one meeting space to another, so it is not uncommon, nor healthy, even now in 2023, for me to have an 8-hour block of meetings and not need to leave my office. Let's be honest, this is not a good thing. Meetings are an important part of the life of a college, but a post-COVID expectation reset is in order.

### **Board of Trustee (BOT).**

**Description:** A dean's relationship with the Board of Trustees (BOT) is...interesting. On the one hand, it is an important relationship to develop because relationships with the BOT are important to your boss, and your boss' boss. Presidents pay special attention to the BOT, so you should, too. On the other hand, deans do not typically have a lot to do with the BOT on a daily basis. Boards are a little bit like grandparents: you see them mostly on special occasions, and you are usually telling them about something cool you (or your faculty) have done that everyone can be proud of. My best advice for a new dean is to attend as many board meetings as possible and never miss if something related to your unit is on the agenda. Boards ask lots of questions, and who knows, this might be your moment to shine.

### **Artifact:**

- The Clark College Board of Trustees consists of five members who are appointed by the Governor of Washington. Members serve a five-year term and must live in the college's service district. The Board seeks to ensure the quality and relevance of college programs and provide stewardship of public resources. In this role, the Board is responsible for strategic planning; development and approval of college policies; and approval and oversight of the operating budget. (Clark College, 2023)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Board of Trustees Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- “We believe the board of trustees has the ultimate responsibility for deliberating on the recommendations of the CEO and making decisions in the best interest of the institution. We sometimes forget that boards, not committees or CEOs, are empowered to hire and fire and make policy” (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. 46).

### **Curriculum Committee (CC).**

**Description:** Curriculum Committee (CC) is one of the big three instructional committees, which also includes Instructional Planning Team (IPT) and Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC) and plays the vital role of ensuring the excellence of the curricular offerings. The Curriculum Committee is, understandably, a faculty majority committee. Historically, Clark's CC has been given the ability to determine the appropriate class capacity for courses; Clark is the only school in the state system who follows this practice. While this would appear to make sense, it does not take long for an administrator new to the committee to realize the budgetary impact of a college-wide class cap reduction from 25 students to 20. As a dean, you will want to ensure that class cap reductions are warranted, data is presented or challenged when lacking, and that the budgetary impact of cap decisions are well understood by the committee.

### **Artifact:**

- The Curriculum Committee is responsible for reviewing the appropriateness and integrity of course offerings, approving new courses, course changes, and deleting individual courses. Committee review will include consideration of appropriateness as a lower-division course, congruence between content and credits, rigor of course, effect on students, programs, and College resources. (CCAHE, 2022, p. 9)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Curriculum Committee Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- “Remember: Whoever owns the curriculum process owns the budget. Scheduling determines costs, enrollment, hiring, and, ultimately, budget. Do not give the faculty carte blanche or you could lose control of the heart of the institution” (Jensen & Giles, 2006, p. 49).

### **Instructional Council (IC).**

**Description:** Instructional Council (IC) comprises the broadest representation of administrative leaders in Instruction and meets every-other Wednesday morning for two hours to fulfill the purpose articulated in the purpose statement below. All director level and above administrators at the college are members, as are other administrators in key roles. IC serves as a communication, advisory, and decision-making group; the personal and professional relationships developed on IC are wonderful as well. Different Vice Presidents of Instruction (VPI) have viewed the group in diverse ways, but those who value participatory governance and the marketplace of ideas also value Instructional Council's ability to present, vet, and disseminate ideas from and to the broader campus community. With the introduction of the Deans-VPI Workgroup, occasionally called Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), IC has struggled to redefine its purpose and place as an administrative decision-making body. One thing is for certain: the broad depth of experience and perspective on IC provides much needed context and voice for decision-making and communication-loop support.

### **Artifact:**

- Instructional Council Purpose Statement: We work with the VPI to provide advice and make decisions regarding the creation, implementation, and evaluation of policies, processes, and resource allocations. Also, we collaborate on instructional operational issues and practices. (Clark College, 2023)

**Resources and/or Key Quote:** “The impact that relationships have within shared governance have on a college or university can also profoundly affect how leadership manages the shop” (Mitchell & King, 2018, p. 20).



### **Instructional Planning Team (IPT).**

**Description:** In an advisory capacity to the Vice President of Instruction, Instructional Planning Team (IPT) oversees the development and revision of instructional programs at the college. On a personal note, it is also the committee that I have served on the longest with 17 years now under my IPT belt. IPT's understanding of its work has evolved over the years, although its contractual charge has not. Most recently IPT has taken on the responsibility for developing and implementing the college's Program Viability Process. This has transformed the self-concept of the committee and its workflow processes. It has also formalized and institutionalized what had previously been an ad hoc and reactive program-review process, while satisfying external accreditor expectations in a meaningful, program-supportive, and productive way.

### **Artifact:**

- [TEMPLATE Program Viability Report](#) (2023)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- The Instructional Planning Team is responsible for instituting and overseeing the instructional planning process; making recommendations to the Vice President of Instruction regarding academic policy such as distribution, transfer and degree requirements; developing and revising program review procedure, monitoring the scope of program review, resolving disputes related to program review activities; and making recommendations to the Vice President of Instruction regarding the approval of new programs and changes to and deletions of current programs. (CCHE, 2022, p.7)

### **Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC).**

**Description:** Clark College’s Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC) holds a special place in my heart, as another colleague and I founded the committee and served as the first faculty co-chairs, while serving as outcomes assessment liaisons in 2010. We would also both later become deans in the same year in 2015. The OAC and Clark College have added many more tools to their outcomes-assessment toolbox since those early days of workshops designed to help faculty develop meaningful course, program, and general education outcomes. As a dean, you may be asked to serve on the OAC. Most deans serve on the every-other-week gauntlet of Instructional Planning Team (Monday), Curriculum Committee (Tuesday), and Outcomes Assessment Committee (Wednesday). At very least, you will be required to keep tabs on the happenings on the OAC, as you are responsible for holding faculty accountable for their annual outcomes assessment work plans.

### **Artifact:**

- The Outcomes Assessment Committee (OAC) is responsible for providing support to faculty in developing/revising course-level and program-level outcomes and ensuring course outcomes, program outcomes and assessments align. Additionally, the OAC is available to review program-level assessment plans as needed or requested. The purpose is for the committee to be a work session to support faculty in their outcomes assessment process. (Clark College, 2023)
- “In accordance with IPT-defined process, participate in program review and outcomes assessment activities that impact student success” (CCAHE, 2022, p. 82).

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Roles and Responsibilities for Outcomes Assessment Activities](#) (2023)

## **Statewide Councils.**

**Description:** The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) facilitates a variety of councils and commissions that support the work of the state board and the colleges within the system. Academic deans are expected to serve on at least one of these councils or commissions as a representation of the college. The councils attended by administrators within Instruction are: [Instruction Commission \(IC\)](#), [Articulation and Transfer Council \(ATC\)](#), [Baccalaureate Leadership Council \(BLC\)](#), [Council for Basic Skills \(CBS\)](#), [Continuing Education Council \(CEC\)](#), [eLearning Council \(ELC\)](#), [Library Leadership Council \(LLC\)](#), and [Workforce Education Council \(WEC\)](#). Each council typically has one member from each of the 34 schools in the SBCTC system. Members are expected to share news and concerns from their local institution about issues relevant to the specific council or commission. Deans are also expected to bring information back from their group and share with the relevant committees on their local campuses.

### **Artifact:**

- The Washington Association of Community and Technical Colleges (WACTC) is the organization of community and technical college presidents. WACTC develops policy recommendations to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) and to the system in conjunction with eight commissions and their councils.
  - Commissions act on matters referred by its members and WACTC, common issues, develop uniform procedures for member colleges when appropriate, and work with SBCTC and stakeholders.

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [SBCTC Council Organizational Chart](#) (2023)

### **Tenure Review Committees.**

**Description:** Tenure committees are responsible for the mentoring and guidance of tenure-track candidates throughout the eight-quarter tenure review process. As the dean, you will serve as the administrator on the committee, although you may not necessarily be the chair, as that position is determined by vote of the committee in the first organizational meeting. Since tenure is, in essence, a faculty led and supportive process, I typically recommend that the committee administrator immediately inform the committee of their desire to have a faculty member serve as chair. This provides the candidate with two authority figures as resources throughout the process, the faculty chair and the dean. The dean on the committee is also responsible for keeping the Vice President of Instruction (VPI) informed as to the successes and challenges a candidate may be facing. Since the committee's role is to support the candidate, and not serve as a gatekeeping body, the VPI can provide advice and resources to the dean, committee, and candidate as necessary. Remember: the goal is a successful-but-intensive professional development process, and candidates are to be afforded every support and opportunity to be successful.

### **Artifact:**

- A Tenure Review Committee will be established for each probationer, with the intent to monitor and enhance the probationer's professional development throughout the tenure review process. The committee will be responsible for working with the probationer until the probationer is either granted tenure or is no longer in the tenure process and the committee has been dismissed. (CCAHE, 2022, p. 16).

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#) (AAUP, 1940)

### ***Faculty Work***

The Faculty Work section of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* includes information about the following topics or issues relevant to the day-to-day work of academic administrators:

1. Academic Freedom
2. All Things Adjunct: Pools, Rank, Loads, and Benefitted Positions
3. Course Assignment Processes
4. Curriculum Development
5. Evaluation Processes
6. Faculty Responsibilities
7. Outcomes and Assessing Student Learning

Additional topics for future consideration include Faculty Contact Hours, Moonlighting, and Bumping Rights; Hiring Processes; Sabbaticals, Syllabus Language & Templates.

Deans are the administrators who work most closely with faculty. In fact, many deans move into the administrative ranks after spending time in a faculty leadership role of some sort, be it division chair, department head, or a faculty liaison. This was my story. I am currently the Chief Academic Officer or Vice President of Instruction (VPI) at my institution, but I served many years as a union officer and outcomes assessment liaison before becoming a dean, and I still maintain faculty tenure and seniority rank within my previous department. Before making the administrative transition, I spent 23 satisfying years teaching, and I still miss the classroom every day. The gap between faculty member and administrator can, at times, seem a chasm, but in truth, both deans and professors are in the same business: ensuring that students learn and that lives are changed by the one thing we are both certain has the power to transform lives and communities: a college degree (Bailey et al., 2015, Cohen et al., 2014).

**Academic Freedom.**

**Description:** Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the college and university system in the United States. If you have never had the opportunity to read the [1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure](#), there is no time like the present. The artifact below is the college's supporting statement of the 1940 articles as posted on the college website and reinforced in the college's policies and procedures. It is important to take time to become familiar with academic freedom, given the nation's recent partisan political tensions and a closer scrutiny given by the public to the words of professors in and out of the classroom. A review of the distinctions between and limits of academic freedom and freedom of speech for faculty as they walk out their professional and personal lives can be meaningful, and time well invested.

**Artifact:**

- The College subscribes to the 1940 "Statement on Academic Freedom and Tenure" issued by the American Association of University Professors and the Association of American Colleges as endorsed by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the Association for Higher Education, the National Education Association, and other professional groups. (CCAHE, 2022)

**Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Academic Freedom Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [American Association of University Professors Webpage](#) (AAUP, 2023)

### **All Things Adjunct: Pools, Rank, Loads, and Benefitted Positions.**

**Description:** Adjunct faculty make up 70 percent of all professors at Clark College. Adjuncts are represented by CCAHE contractually and by the Adjunct Faculty Council in matters of shared governance. Nearly all campus committees have at least one standing adjunct faculty member as well. Adjunct faculty may also hold affiliate or associate rank, depending on time served at the college and other factors. The process of managing all items related to adjunct faculty can be complex, so the title of this section is a bit misleading, but serving and caring for adjunct faculty must be a top priority for any dean. I recommend careful attention to the CCAHE Agreement (2022), as adjuncts are referenced 136 times, and forming a positive relationship with a colleague in Human Resources to ensure compliance in all areas. Fortunately, deans and division chairs work closely together on issues related to adjunct faculty, but two areas will likely require a quick scramble up the learning curve: managing adjunct loads and determining adjunct benefit status; there are important thresholds that a dean will do well to be aware of early on.

#### **Artifacts:**

- The Adjunct Faculty Council gathers information about the issues and concerns of adjunct faculty and makes recommendations to improve adjunct faculty working conditions. The Committee will distribute a quarterly written brief and annual recommendation report to the AHE President and the Vice-President of Instruction. (CCAHE, 2022, p. 10)

#### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [CCAHE Contract](#) (CCAHE, 2023)

### **Course Assignment Processes.**

**Description:** The college does not follow a formalized process for determining how courses are assigned to faculty. Full-time faculty are required to maintain contractually required loads each quarter, and adjunct faculty may teach up to the load allowed by their benefit status; however, how specific classes are assigned to individual faculty is a matter of departmental policy and practice. Some departments allow tenured faculty to select courses based on seniority order, and others schedule based on other agreed upon processes before scheduling adjuncts.

### **Artifact:**

- Adjunct Scheduling (AHE, 2022)

1. The following criteria will be considered when scheduling adjunct faculty:

- a. Availability to teach the course(s).
- b. The faculty member's qualifications to teach the course(s). Preference may be given to faculty with unique qualifications to teach the course(s).
- c. Length of service to the College.
- d. Department needs to develop adjunct faculty and to meet College goals around diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- e. Preference may be given to faculty to teach a course that they have designed, developed, or significantly redesigned.
- f. Balancing loads to meet College commitments in associate contracts.

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- “If you bring yourself up to speed, you’ll understand when to have sympathy for your units and their difficulty in offering the classes the curriculum requires and the students need; and you’ll understand when to call *bullshit...*” (Justice, 2019, p. 78).



## **Curriculum Development.**

**Description:** One of the primary roles of full- and part-time faculty is to engage in ongoing development and revision of departmental curriculum. While the curriculum development process is different in every department, most departments consider it the role of the fulltime, tenured faculty to determine curriculum standards. Most departments provide adjunct faculty with completed Canvas course shells for most courses that can be easily adapted by onboarding adjuncts. Additional compensation will occasionally be provided to faculty developing new curriculum; the compensation is determined by state standards as outlined in yearly Perkins grant guidelines. The general rule is that if the faculty want to develop the course, it is treated as part of the job description and no stipend is provided, but if external forces, like insistent administrators or legislators, require the course to be developed, the work is considered above-and-beyond and a stipend supports. Most faculty at least like curriculum development, and it is an important part of the job.

### **Artifact:**

- “In order to achieve this, faculty members at Clark College...engage in on-going curriculum review and development” (CCAHE, 2022, p. 82).

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- “Curriculum is a strange affair. It typically develops by accrual rather than by parsing data, taking time for deep reflection, and consistently engaging with national practices” (Justice, 2019, p. 67).

### **Evaluation Processes.**

**Description:** Providing helpful, accurate, and timely evaluations is a meaningful part of the growth and development process for our faculty, and Clark has many forms of formal evaluation: self-, student, peer, and supervisory, to name a few. Each happens within a certain context and at intervals. Fortunately, for the dean, the Unit Operations Managers typically track the when, why, and how of the process and notify faculty about what is needed. This leaves the dean to evaluate the feedback and determine the next course of action if one is needed. Understanding the purpose of the process is important. Note that the contract language below says nothing about discipline or dismissal. Those happen, if they happen, after a professional development plan has been developed and not adhered to. Evaluations are for growth and improving teaching, not vetting which adjunct faculty member will be given a class next term or, more importantly, which will not.

### **Artifact:**

- The purpose of faculty evaluation is to provide for professional and personal faculty growth and to foster a standard of teaching and service that provides for quality student education. All parties will conduct evaluations objectively in an equitable and professional manner. (CCAHE, 2022, p. 2)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Faculty Supervisor Form for Face-to-Face Classes](#) (2023)
- “There’s a second, harder part of setting expectations: you must also model the desired behavior. Hypocrisy detectors are among our most finely honed human attributes, and ‘Do as I say, not as I do’ is not a successful form of mentoring” (Gunsalus, 2006, p.19)

### **Faculty Responsibilities.**

**Description:** Deans often receive requests from faculty, often accompanied by a stipend request, to work on favorite projects, and administrators often ask faculty to engage in new endeavors that may or may not please the established faculty in the department. Understanding the faculty job description helps both parties know what to do and whether additional compensation is in order if something new is deemed necessary. Earlier in my career, when I was bargaining on the faculty side of the table, a former administrator quipped that the job of an administrator was to have 100 ways to say *no*. Now that I have been an administrator for some time, I find my job is much more often to seek ways to say *yes*. The faculty job description helps me figure out when it is appropriate to do which and when extra compensation might be needed to sweeten a pot or reward extraordinary work.

### **Artifact:**

- [Faculty Job Description](#) (CCAHE, 2022)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- As Markie notes in *A Professor's Duties* (1994), there is both the letter and the spirit: We are supposed to inspire our students by communicating a vision of intellectual excellence and to help them acquire the qualities needed to make that vision a reality in their lives. Some of the qualities — analytic skills, verbal skills — are intellectual abilities, some — self-discipline and perseverance — are traits of character, and others — a commitment to the truth and objectivity, a belief in the value of free inquiry — are moral values. Like all values, these last are best taught by word, example, and expectation. Our role includes acknowledging them in word, displaying them in action, and holding students to them in their course work. (p. 4)

### **Outcomes and Assessing Student Learning.**

**Description:** The 18 words quoted in the first entry in the artifact section below meant a \$2,000-a-year raise for full-time faculty in 2006. The college was in trouble with accreditors, and many faculty were not especially interested in assessing outcomes at course, program, and college-wide levels. All these years later, we are still working to improve our assessment processes, but many have been put in place and faculty are well-versed and engaged in assessment. The dean's job is to ensure expectations for assessment are clear, work is well-supported, and accountability measures are in place.

#### **Artifacts:**

- “In accordance with IPT-defined process, participate in program review and outcomes assessment activities that impact student success” (CCAHE, 2022, p. 82).
- Dean Role in Assessment: Ensure all academic and non-instruction service units within their respective programs/departments have assessment plans, carry out assessment that meet prescribed standards, and submit annual reports that document improvements based on assessment results. Assign specific personnel for initiating, coordinating, and reporting assessment activities. Responsible for the successful operation of assessment systems within their divisions & offices to achieve increased institutional effectiveness. Deans and Academic Chairs ensure assessment of GE outcomes. (2023)

#### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Roles and Responsibilities for Institutional Assessment](#) (2023).
- “What part of ‘*assess everything everywhere*’ don’t you understand?” (NWCCU Evaluator, 2011, to the author).

### ***Institutional Work***

The Institutional Work section of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* includes information about the following topics or issues relevant to the day-to-day work of academic administrators:

1. Accreditation
2. Contracts and Collective Bargaining
3. Communication Flow
4. Duties of an Academic Dean
5. Management Rights
6. Organizational Charts and Reporting Structures
7. Shared Governance

Additional topics for future consideration include Conflict Management and Resolution, Crisis Management and COOP Plans, Policies and Procedures, Program Review.

The first domain of the day-to-day work of an academic dean, Institutional Work, tends to be of the 30,000-foot variety and is likely to have broader institutional implications if mismanaged, although this is also true of other entries in other domains as well. It is important to learn, and I must admit that I am still in the process of figuring this out, that balancing the short- and long-game implications of some day-to-day responsibilities of dean life can be a real challenge and will not be addressed well by daily or weekly to-do lists. Although, learning to write things down is never a bad idea either (Allen, 2015). Fortunately, the workplace is also our laboratory, and figuring out what to do, when, and how is part of the process. The following seven items should serve as helpful in attempting to survey the broader dean-life landscape.

**Accreditation.**

**Description:** Clark College's accrediting body is the Northwest Commission for Colleges and Universities, also known as the NWCCU. Maintaining compliance with NWCCU accreditation standards is an important part of an administrator's job. Maintaining program accreditation with other accrediting bodies may be a required job duty for CTE faculty members as well, and some director positions may have significant responsibility, particularly if accreditors mandate a director for the program (AHE Agreement, 2022, p. 86). Clark College's Accreditation Steering Committee oversees accreditation activities at the college.

**Artifact:**

- [2022 NWCCU Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report: Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness](#)

**Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Clark College Accreditation Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [NWCCU Webpage](#) (NWCCU, 2023)
- Regional accreditation of post-secondary institutions is a voluntary, non-governmental, self-regulatory process of quality assurance and institutional improvement. It recognizes higher education institutions for performance, integrity, and quality to merit the confidence of the educational community and the public. Accreditation or pre accreditation by a post-secondary regional accrediting agency qualifies institutions and enrolled students for access to federal funds to support teaching, research, and student financial aid. (NWCCU, 2023)

## **Contracts and Collective Bargaining Agreements.**

**Description:** Clark College works in collaboration with two unions, The Clark College Association for Higher Education (CCAHE, 2022), which serves and represents faculty, and The Washington Public Employees Association (WPEA, 2021), which serves and represents the college's classified staff. As noted below, CCAHE represents the interests of the faculty at the college, and the AHE Agreement is the standard by which issues related to wages and working conditions are defined. Even though I have bargained on both sides of the table at my institution and have written and negotiated more than a few words in the AHE Agreement, my best advice is to acquire digital, searchable copies of all applicable contracts for your institution and look up contract language every single time you or another person has a contract question. This will save you many, many headaches down the road, and besides, it is fun to say, "Let's figure this out together."

### **Artifact:**

- "The College will not bargain with or recognize any academic employee organization other than the Clark College Association for Higher Education as representing the academic employees of the College in the bargaining unit defined in this Section" (AHE Agreement, 2022, p. 4).

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [CCAHE Contract](#) (CCAHE, 2022)
- [WPEA Contract](#) (WPEA, 2021)

### **Communication Flow.**

**Description:** It is important to remember, because of its unique position on the cusp between faculty and cabinet administration, that a major function of the dean role is to move information up, down, and laterally within the institution, while also maintaining feedback and consensus-building loops. This is also one of the most difficult parts of the job. People will be quick to let you know if there is something they think they should have known but did not get a memo on; they will usually do this while also reminding you that there are far too many meetings and emails to keep up with.

Use your college email account for all official college email communication whenever possible. Division chairs will also help support the flow of information as they, “establish and implement effective methods of communication with faculty within the division/department” (AHE Agreement, 2022, p. 85). The Communications and Marketing Department can also help when resources are needed, so do not be shy about reaching out. Communication is a key function of the college meeting structure, so deans are expected to attend and participate in a wide variety of meetings to increase communication flow and opportunities for shared governance, more about this in the “Committee Work” section.

### **Artifact:**

- Faculty will be able to: “Effectively use computer applications for instruction and communication where appropriate” (AHE Agreement, 2022, p. 82).

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Communication and Marketing Charge Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)



### **Duties of an Academic Dean.**

**Description:** It might be good to answer the question, “What does a dean do?” in specific terms. This question is answered in a more narrative and conceptual way in the introduction to Part A of this handbook. For Part B, let us go straight to the basic description used for most job announcements, linked in the resources section at the bottom of the page. And just in case you were still skeptical about keeping a copy of the faculty contract handy, the word dean appears 61 times in the most current version (AHE Agreement, 2022). Learn to love that contract.

### **Artifact:**

- How I describe my former dean job to others: The Dean of BEECH provides leadership, supervision, management, planning, and advocacy for faculty and staff within the English Division, Communications & Humanities Division, Transitional Studies Division, Transitional Studies Student Support, College Success Department, Intensive English Language Program (IELP), Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Pathways, relevant self-support community education offerings, and Dual-Credit Programs across all units of the college: CTE Dual Credit, College in the High Schools, Running Start, Open Doors, and iTech Early College partnership. The Associate Dean of BEECH, division chairs, department heads, and unit operations manager report directly to the dean, and the dean reports directly to the Vice President of Instruction.

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [List of Duties of an Academic Dean](#) (2023)

### **Management Rights.**

**Description:** I received an email just this morning from a long-time employee asking if I wanted to create a Memo of Understanding (MOU) to clear up a misunderstanding about the composition requirements for tenure committees; the requirements for tenure committees are often confused with the requirements for tenure-track screening committees. My without-hesitation response was *no*. Why? Because the contract is silent about the departmental make up of tenure committees, and where the contract is silent, management rights permit flexibility in decision-making. There is a misunderstanding that where the contract is silent, no rule can be enforced, and this is incorrect. Where the contract is silent, management rights hold. New administrators are often surprised that it benefits the college not to have an item explicitly outlined in the agreement: where the contract is silent, there is administrative flexibility.

### **Artifact:**

- Except for the limitations imposed by the specific provisions set forth in this Agreement, all management rights, powers, authority and functions, remain vested exclusively with the College. It is expressly recognized that such rights, powers, authority and functions include the full and exclusive control, management and operation of the business and all other affairs of the College which are not specifically set forth in this Agreement. Furthermore, the College, at its discretion, reserves the right to establish, amend or modify policies and procedures which do not alter this Agreement, provided that no bargaining unit working condition, enumerated in this Agreement or not, may be modified without prior agreement with the Association. (CCAHE, 2022, pp. 11-12)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [WPEA Contract, Article 37](#) (WPEA, 2021, pp. 79-80)

## **Organizational Charts and Reporting Structures.**

**Description:** Buller (2015) reminds us that everyone reports to someone and knowing who to talk to about what issue and at what level is a key community college dean survival skill. It is surprising the number of times you will come across a community member who has learned your name and role at the college from the Instructional Org Chart, so become familiar with these important tools and make sure yours is up to date. As a rule, if you are going to communicate with a peer or supervisor about an issue within a peer's unit, it is a good idea to include all parties in the communication up front. For example, if a position vacancy opens in a peer's unit and you have personnel needs in your unit, it is best to approach the peer about the need and opening before discussing it with your mutual supervisor. Additionally, Executive Cabinet members may require their staff to cc them on any emails to other Cabinet members or to vet emails through them before sending, and presidents certainly want to be aware of the purpose and content of any communication with trustees before it happens. Every college has its norms of communication, but it is best to avoid even the perception of end-runs and blindsides whenever possible, and an updated org chart can help clarify the best communication path.

### **Artifact:**

- [Instructional Org Chart](#) (Clark College, 2023)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Clark College Organizational Charts Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- “All leadership entails leadership from the middle. When you understand how organizations really work, you realize that everybody reports to somebody” (Buller, 2015, p. 4).

### **Shared Governance.**

**Description:** Interestingly, shared governance is not found in either the CCAHE (2022) or WPEA (2021) collective bargaining agreements, and there is good reason for this. Shared governance is the process by which members of the college community provide input on items not defined in collective bargaining. Administrators should expect questions about how they would facilitate and encourage shared governance in every job interview, and what the committee is essentially asking is, “How do we know that you won’t bludgeon us with management rights?” One answer is that we will actively engage in transparent and mutually beneficial processes of shared governance, like campus-wide committees and artifact-producing workgroups with students, staff, faculty, and administrators well represented.

### **Artifact:**

- Shared governance at Clark College is a decision-making framework in which institutional policies and priorities are determined by the decision-making body in collaboration with those affected. Roles and responsibilities of students, faculty, staff, administrators, and trustees will need to be clearly defined and communicated to ensure accountability. Effective shared governance requires all members of the college community to contribute to an environment of mutual respect and trust. (Clark College, 2023)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Shared Governance and You Document](#) (Clark College, 2023))
- [Clark College Shared Governance Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [Clark College Shared Governance and You Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)

### ***Student Work***

The Student Work section of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* includes information about the following topics or issues relevant to the day-to-day work of academic administrators:

1. FERPA
2. Grade Appeal Process
3. International Students
4. Running Start, Open Doors, and CTE Dual Credit
5. Student CARE Process
6. Student Complaint Process
7. Transitional Studies

Additional topics for future consideration include Honors Program, Petitions and Waivers, Scholarships, Withdrawal Policy.

Many would support the idea that Student Work is the most important work administrators, faculty, and staff do at community colleges, and with very good reason. Serving students is the reason our institutions exist, and forgetting to center students and their experiences in the heart of administrative foundations, frames, and daily practices misses the point of all those long meetings, detailed reports, and complicated conversations. While not all, many community colleges encourage administrators to maintain some form of connection to students and the classroom, either through occasional teaching or limited advising. The thinking goes that administrators who are reminded of how rewarding and challenging it can be to facilitate teaching-and-learning also maintain an empathetic disposition toward the faculty they serve. Regardless, spending time in the hallways and attending campus functions helps us all to keep clear our purpose and remember the reason for stepping into our roles in the first place.

**The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).**

**Description:** Ensuring that student confidentiality is safe-guarded is the responsibility of every employee of an academic institution, and deans play an important role in ensuring that the tenets of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) are adhered to. College websites are typically rich resources for FERPA related material, and the Clark College website is no exception. Links are provided in the resource section below. All college employees are required to complete FERPA training when they are hired and every two years thereafter as well.

**Artifact:**

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended (also sometimes referred to as the Buckley Amendment), is a federal law regarding the privacy of student records and the obligations of the institution, primarily in the areas of release of the records and the access provided to these records. Any educational institution that receives funds under any program administered by the U.S. Secretary of Education is bound by FERPA requirements. Institutions that fail to comply with FERPA may have funds administered by the Secretary of Education withheld. (Clark College, 2023)

**Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Frequently Asked FERPA Questions](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [FERPA Definitions](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [FERPA for Faculty](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [FERPA for Parents](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [FERPA for Staff](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [FERPA for Students](#) (Clark College, 2023)

**Grade Appeal Process.**

**Description:** As an academic dean, you will inevitably need to address grade appeals. At Clark College, the [Grade Appeal Process](#) (Clark College, 2023) is separate from the [Student Complaint Process](#) (Clark College, 2023) and focuses specifically on student issues where a grade change is the student's requested remedy. Most appeals and complaints will be vetted through Student Affairs before arriving in a dean's inbox, but students will occasionally reach out to a dean as a first step. When this happens, it is important to assess the student's situation and then remove yourself from the process if a grade change is being sought, as the dean is the third and final arbiter in the grade change process and should not meet with the student until the faculty member and division chair have had an opportunity to assess the situation and accept/deny the appeal.

**Artifact:**

- An academic appeal refers to a claim by a student that a specific grade assigned to the student by an instructor is the result of arbitrary or capricious application of otherwise valid standards of academic evaluation or to a student's claim that the instructor has made an arbitrary or capricious decision or taken an arbitrary or capricious action which adversely affects the student's academic standing. (Clark College, 2023)

**Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Grade Appeal Process Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [Grade Change/Academic Appeal Policy Form](#) (Clark College, 2023)

**International Student Programs.**

**Description:** Clark College serves international students from many countries around the world. In most cases, there will not be a great deal for a dean to manage regarding international student recruitment; however, deans will be called on to collaborate with the International Programs Office to attend student events and provide support for students who may have questions about programs of study that may differ from those offered in the student's home country. The International Programs Office is also responsible for ensuring that students from the United States, who travel on state-supported international study tours, have a Clark College instructor of record to manage grade recording, and deans have historically been called on to fill this role. There are also many scholarship opportunities for international students available; a link is provided below.

**Artifact:**

- “International Programs at Clark College provides support services and opportunities to foster a global perspective and cross-cultural competence for Clark College and the communities it serves” (Clark College, 2023).

**Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [International Programs Office Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [International Student Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [International Student Scholarships](#) (Clark College, 2023)



**Running Start and CTE Dual Credit.**

**Description:** Running Start and CTE Dual Credit provide high school students within the college's service district the opportunity to receive Clark College credit at low cost while still attending high school. Clark College has historically been the largest Running Start serving college in the Washington State system, and Running Start enrollments are a significant revenue generator for the college. After averaging 15 credits a quarter over six quarters, nearly 350 students a year graduate from Clark College, earning both their associate degree and high school diploma at the same time (Clark College, 2023).

**Artifacts:**

- The Running Start program allows high school juniors and seniors to earn college credits while completing their high school education — saving students money while advancing their education. Students are able to attend college, at minimal cost, while still living at home as a high school student. (Clark College, 2023)
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) Dual Credit is a partnership between the college and high school partners designed to guide local students into high-skill and high-demand careers with local industries. Formerly known as Tech Prep, CTE Dual Credit classes are taught at the high school or skills center and integrate academics with technical skills to help prepare students for advanced education and careers related to professional-technical occupations. (Clark College, 2023)

**Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Running Start Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)
- [CTE Dual Credit Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)

**Student CARE Process.**

**Description:** The Student CARE Process at Clark College supports students in a variety of ways by providing resources to meet students' needs whatever they may be. Whether the challenge be academic, financial, or any other of many, many, many possibilities, the CARE Team can likely assist students in finding what they need. Ensuring that your faculty and staff are aware that the CARE Team is in action and that resources are available is an important dean role. I would encourage any new dean to invest time early in their onboarding process to become familiar with the MANY resources available. It might be a good idea to invite a member of the CARE Team to present at one of your first Unit Leadership Team (ULT) meetings as well to both familiarize yourself and remind your leaders of resources...Did I mention that there are SO MANY RESOURCES?

**Artifact:**

- The Student CARE process exists to support students as they face a variety of barriers to their academic success and well-being. By collaborating with the reporter and through partnerships, the CARE team will create a plan that can include connecting students to an appropriate college department, communicating an institutional process, or identifying college and/or community resources for assistance. (Clark College, 2023)

**Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Student CARE Process Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)

### **Student Complaint Process.**

**Description:** The Student Complaint Process is for student complaints that do not involve financial aid, tuition reimbursement, grade changes, or security/parking issues as part of the formal resolution. In most cases, the student will already have met with Student Affairs staff, who will have helped the student identify the appropriate complaint process. Occasionally, students will contact the dean's office wanting to file a complaint when they really want to discuss a grade appeal. When this happens, the dean should connect the student with the Unit Operations Manager, who will help the student engage the appropriate process. For complaints that do not involve grade changes as part of the sought-after resolution, connecting the student with the CARES Team staff and scheduling a time to meet with the student are the next, best steps.

### **Artifact:**

- Our goal is that students are satisfied with the education and services received at Clark. If you do have a concern about your experience – services received, quality of instruction, interaction with staff – you may follow our complaint process to seek resolution or be heard. Any student who has a concern and feels they have been treated unfairly has the right to file a formal complaint. A formal complaint process has been established in order to assure impartial and equitable resolution for those challenges and concerns. (Clark College, 2023)

### **Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Student Complaint Process Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)

**Transitional Studies.**

**Description:** The Transitional Studies Program addresses one of the three key mission areas of the college by providing near-no-cost (\$25 a quarter if the fee is not completely waived) English as a Second Language (ESL), High School Plus Diploma programs, High School Adult Diploma programs, Transitional Studies Tutoring, and testing for federal accountability and the GED. Transitional Studies serves immigrant and refugee populations, in addition to students from other groups, and most of the college's systemically marginalized students enter the college through the Transitional Studies Program. Transitional Studies also has its own caseload advisors and success coaches, who create individualized educational plans for students as they assess and work toward their individualized goals.

**Artifact:**

- Clark College's Transitional Studies team helps students prepare for college-level classes and higher wage jobs. Our programs and support services can help you:
  - Learn English
  - Earn a high school diploma or GED
  - Get ready for college
  - Gain valuable job skills
  - Our programs can get you ready for college or the workplace in as little as one quarter. (Clark College, 2023)

**Resources and/or Key Quote:**

- [Transitional Studies Webpage](#) (Clark College, 2023)

### **Final Thoughts on *A Handbook for Community College Deans***

It is my sincere hope that the leadership foundations, frameworks, and resources explored in *A Handbook for Community College Deans* are of use to those setting sail into the too-often turbulent, too-often uncharted waters of community college leadership. The voyage is long, but the rewards are great, for us as we learn to serve others in better ways, and for those who so courageously join us on the journey.

### **A Poem**

#### **“Little Gidding” from *Four Quartets* – T. S. Eliot**

We shall not cease from exploration  
 And the end of all our exploring  
 Will be to arrive where we started  
 And know the place for the first time.  
 Through the unknown, remembered gate  
 When the last of earth left to discover  
 Is that which was the beginning;  
 At the source of the longest river  
 The voice of the hidden waterfall  
 And the children in the apple-tree  
 Not known, because not looked for  
 But heard, half-heard, in the stillness  
 Between two waves of the sea.

(Eliot, 2001)

**Part C: Deans' Canvas Resource Center**

This is a Canvas mirror of Part A and Part B, localized for administrators at my institution. Access to this resource may be requested at [jwilkins-luton@clark.edu](mailto:jwilkins-luton@clark.edu).

## Chapter 3

### Discussion

This final dissertation chapter is a reflection on the process of recognizing and addressing the need for a conceptually-oriented-but-practical onboarding resource for mid-level administrators at my institution and community college systems more generally in the United States, with the research and development of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* being the primary emphasis and product of my work over the past three years. A discussion of the project's general implications, limitations, implications for research and practice, and concluding reflections are provided below. Onboarding and professional development sessions will likely take place during regularly scheduled Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) or Deans' Workgroup (DWG) meetings on Thursday mornings. However, the support of my institution's Teaching and Learning Center may also be solicited for reasons described in the "Implications for Practice" section. PowerPoint slides for an example Professional Learning Series Sample Plan to be conducted with my institution's ILT are also provided below.

### General Implications

The implications of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* are potentially far-reaching, but at minimum, this project has had a profound impact on my personal growth and practice as an educator-scholar and community college administrator. It may be illustrative to consider the implications of this project in terms of concentric circles of impact or significance, beginning first with myself and then widening out to my institution's Dean Team, my institution, the state-wide system in which I serve, and finally, community college leaders everywhere. These circles of concentric consideration give structure to the discussion of the impact on the research and practice implications and limitations of this project later as well.

1. **Personal Implications.** The personal implications for any dissertation study, beyond the obvious professional advancement benefits of degree conferral, are the deepening of one's understanding of knowledge and skill domains that one would simply not have had the capacity to develop without the demands and support of the dissertation process. This study may be more appropriate to my personal-professional context than many others might have been, as it has afforded me the opportunity to explore, deepen, and solidify my understanding of the foundations and frameworks essential to being a community college administrator within my professional context. I have evaluated, reinforced, and revised many of the experienced-informed convictions that Leading with Racial Equity, Guided Pathways reforms, relational micro-political intelligence, metaphorical sensitivity, effective communication, structured decision-making, and self-care are all critical constructs for effective administrative leadership. I have now developed the research-supported bases to revise and adapt my understanding in ways that will make me a better colleague to those with whom I work. The research required to explore these topics with fresh eyes has only deepened my appreciation of each and, no doubt, improved my professional practice.
2. **Dean Team Implications.** The implications for the Dean Team at my institution are obvious and direct. This is the group for whom this project was developed. They are both the audience for this text and, potentially, the proverbial guinea pigs as I attempt to evaluate and revise the materials in this resource to assist the new deans as they acclimate to their new professional environments. Ideally and on the surface, *A Handbook for Community College Deans* will help ensure the best possible preparation for the team's new members, but even if every member of the group disagrees with my assessment of



the professional landscape during conversations about the various topics, the norming processes that the deans will undergo as they create their own expectations and develop their own understandings, will be invaluable to their individual and collective success. It is not always the product that matters most; processes have implications, too. Hopefully, *A Handbook for Community College Deans* will scaffold both.

3. **Institutional Implications.** Better prepared deans mean a stronger instructional team, which leads to a healthier college. The implications and positive benefits of developing better prepared academic leadership in times of recurring crisis have been explored in many of the sections of the text above. The resources developed to onboard deans within Instruction might also be used or modified by my institution's Teaching and Learning Center to train and onboard others on campus as well. The inverse has also been true. The costs in time, effort, and money because of new and inexperienced academic leaders with few experienced colleagues and few resources to turn to have been clearly illustrated in this time of transition at my institution. This is not an attempt to fix blame but rather to illustrate and fix a problem: frustrated leaders who do not have places to turn are as much the victims of administrative turnover as our institutions and students. Intentionally designed and supportively implemented onboarding supports can only lead to a healthier and more employee-centered, student-centered institution.
4. **System-wide Implications.** As outlined in the “Leading with Racial Equity” and “Structuring Along Guided Pathways” sections above, schools within the system in my state are legislatively mandated to develop systems to advance and implement change in both areas. Resources and professional learning opportunities in these areas are available at the state and local college levels, but not as part of a formal dean-level onboarding

process for new administrators. Schools in the state system are unified through many processes, one of these being the state-wide council system, where transfer, professional technical, basic skills, libraries, and many other Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and Executive Cabinet (EC) level leaders represent their institutions in cohorts of peers who similar jobs at similar institutions. Resources, once evaluated and revised at my institution, could be shared through the council system as professional learning opportunities. This could create a norming, updating, and distribution process that could have broad-ranging implications for my institution and the state-wide system.

5. **Broader Implications.** While *Leading with Racial Equity and Structuring Along Guided Pathways* are not required foundational elements of the community college systems in all states, the concepts and reforms represented by these two are certainly of national interest. With significant polish and revision, *A Handbook for Community College Deans* could be developed as a resource for any who might find it valuable. The text is currently available as an Open Educational Resource (OER), and the *Deans' Canvas Resource Center* will be available soon.
6. **One Additional Group: Implications for Our Students.** Let us not forget the implications of more effective *Leading with Racial Equity and Structuring Along Guided Pathways* informed leadership on the systems that impact our students most directly. Better leadership means the destruction of barrier systems and the construction of better systems; better systems mean better colleges facilitating better student experiences; and better student experiences mean better teaching and learning. We owe it to our students to be the best we can be in whatever role we play within our institutions.

The implications of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* and its availability as a professional learning resource have the potential to be deeply impactful and far-reaching for many groups.

### **Limitations**

The first and probably most obvious limitation of this study, which quickly became apparent when this project moved from the concept and outline phase to the research and writing stage, is that it simply covers too much ground for the author to speak with doctoral-level authority on every issue. Beyond creating a deeply taxing and time-consuming development process, the research and writing of this study was also a deeply humbling reflective experience. Despite years of development and hundreds of cataloged resources, the spanning nature of the project forced me to stop hugging the literature-research shore and set full sail for the deeper and often more turbulent waters of professional self-assessment and reflection (Eurich, 2017). Like many long-time practitioners in my field, who are afforded the privilege of the opportunity and time to evaluate their professional surroundings and their place within their career arc, I began the wholly healthy-but-painful process of reflecting on and questioning whether I was certain of many of the personal and professional assumptions I had come to accept as self-evident. This process of reflection, reassessment, and growth revealed one of the great powers of the writing process, as one of my great teaching composition heroes has long contended (Elbow, 1981, 1998).

This discovery-assessment-reassessment process, being a process, is also one of the limitations of this study, or perhaps, this is also simply one of the great lessons of dissertation writing: dissertations end, but the questions are seldom settled. This seems particularly true of this study, where so many questions are raised and so many foundations, frameworks, and

resources are offered for consideration. Inevitably, I will have gotten many things wrong or more likely, not quite right. This is, however, also one of the great values of being a leader, scholar, and practitioner in any field: my workplace is also my laboratory; leaning into incompetence and learning to fail are every bit as valuable to the learning process of an adaptive administrative leader (Heifetz et al., 2009) as they are to an adaptive dissertation writer.

Challenges related to positional privilege and future professional learning implementation were addressed in the “Limitation of Research Design and Ethical Considerations” section earlier. When I began drafting *A Handbook for Community College Deans*, I was serving as a dean at my community college and had served in this position for several years. Knowing that several of the senior deans would soon be leaving the institution for retirement, my intention with this project was to provide a resource for onboarding new deans. I have since been promoted to a position as my institution’s Chief Academic Officer, making me the direct supervisor to the deans. While this positional shift may create a certain level of interest in this project among my new dean direct reports, the positional shift does impact the way this resource will likely be received. As a result, the original plan of this resource being a starting place for frank conversations among deans within the context of weekly Deans Workgroup (DWG) meetings, where VPIs are not welcome, may need to change. For research and practice implications outlined below, it may be better to shift the professional learning opportunities to the larger Instructional Council (IC) meetings, which include director-level administrators as well. Soliciting the help of my institution’s newly reestablished Teaching and Learning Center may help offset the positional dynamic and the way in which resources are received and engaged.

I also recognized the limitations of my lived experience as a white person as I reflected on and wrote about the importance of equity-minded thought and action and the central place *Leading with Racial Equity* holds in my day-to-day practice as an academic leader and member of my broader community. I have sought to listen, learn, and act as a racial-equity leader with diligence and humility, but I also know that my lived experience does not provide me with the authority or standing of my colleagues of color as we lean into the work together. As I offer a guide for administrators new to the work, I am also aware that I have much more to understand and experience on this long journey, and my hope is that we will live, learn, and grow as we travel the path together.

### **Implications for Research and Practice**

While the leadership industry in the United States is alive, well, and data-informed, the research implications for *A Handbook for Community College Deans* are most likely local with the potential for application within the state-wide system, at least for the foreseeable future. The *Leading with Racial Equity* work of scholars, researchers, and practitioners like Bensimon (2020), Bonilla-Silva (2006, 2014), Kendi (2019), Long (2016), West (2017), and many others will undoubtedly continue to influence the local and national social justice landscape and our institutions, and the ever-influential work of the Community College Research Center (CCRC) has established itself in Guided Pathways conversations far and wide and will likely continue to do so. However, the research and practice implications of the product of this dissertation study will need to address the local onboarding challenge through these important lenses first and foremost, and this will both help reveal and address several local institution-specific challenges as it helps establish firm theoretical foundations and steady conceptual frameworks for new academic administrators at my institution.

What are institutions of higher education to do, considering the turnover in administrative leadership ranks and the lack of local mentoring options for the onboarding of new deans? While administrative turnover is a constant in large colleges and educational systems, my institution has experienced an extraordinary level of turnover at the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and Executive Cabinet (EC) levels over the past few years, and that which is true of my institution and its leadership structures is also true of other colleges in my system. The faculty, staff, and administrators at my institution tend to understand that the only constant is change and that change creates opportunities through which continuous improvement is possible. Developing a system to assess local professional-learning interventions, like *A Handbook for Community College Deans* and its associated professional learning opportunities, would be understood as a necessary step in ensuring that resources and training are effective, time is used wisely, and funds are allocated judiciously.

A Root Cause Analysis (RCA) of the administrative turnover challenges at my institution might focus on the campus climate issues brought about by retirements, attrition, COVID-19, or other factors. A continuous improvement plan might also focus on assessing and addressing the community college-specific leadership foundations, frameworks, and day-to-day resource needs left previously unaddressed for dean stepping into new roles. None of the current administrators at my institution, new or in long-held positions, received any sort of onboarding or training to prepare them for the leadership challenges common to all leaders in higher education or specific to the state-wide system in which I serve. Again, what is true of my institution is true of all colleges in the state-wide system: there simply are no professional development programs specifically designed to prepare the system's community college leaders for the challenges of their jobs. One significant implication for research and practice of *A Handbook for Community*

*College Deans* would be to articulate and establish the need for such a professional development program and then suggest a strategy for systematically assessing the efficacy of the program as it prepares leaders for the unique demands of their jobs.

While the details of the administrative leadership program that would scaffold *A Handbook for Community College Deans* are yet to be determined, leaders at my institution and across the state-wide system typically recognize several key domains of competence for leaders working within system schools that would help improve job performance. All are addressed in one fashion or another by this study, either at the foundation, framework, or resource level: Leading with Racial Equity, Structuring Along Guided Pathways, relational intelligence, sound communication, budgetary management, program assessment, and institutional assessment. Other conversations focus on the development of broader yet more institutionally calibrated leadership toolkits: strategic enrollment management, providing meaningful evaluations within the guidelines of the collective bargaining agreement, managing complaint processes as established through local policies and procedures, and the like. Resources crafted toward the intentional development of core competencies in each of these areas would not only improve leadership efficacy, but these resources would also have a significant impact on campus climate and the retention of leaders, at my institution and across the system if the improvement programs and resources are relevant to current institutional needs and adopted broadly.

The development of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* professional learning series addresses very real, very tangible problems of practice and has significant implications for my institution and its employees. Providing intentional and relevant onboarding for new leaders and skill and dispositional updating for those long in the system would also have the added benefit of reducing the workload of senior administrators as they mentor and train new deans and

directors, potentially reducing burnout and inconsistency of knowledge-base acquisition. With the hiring of new permanent deans and the reorganization of instructional units following quickly behind, the norming of skills and knowledge bases for new administrators is not a luxury the college can do without. The goal would be to have 100 percent of instructional administrators complete the first phase of the professional development cycle in their first full year on the job with improvements in performance and perception data following in the second year. This training expectation is not unrealistic as the Vice President of Instruction (VPI) can encourage or require participation in training as a stipulation of each instructional administrator's yearly professional development and goal planning process. The creation and maintenance of the professional learning program is not unrealistic either, as the creation of a baseline resource, *A Handbook for Community College Deans*, is a goal of this administrator's doctoral project and the reestablishment and development of the Teaching and Learning Center is a priority for the President and VPI currently and through upcoming reorganization.

While the specific implications for research at my institution are yet to be defined, determining performance baselines and milestone markers for success will require time, work, and some flexibility. As my institution is currently not gathering data regarding administrative onboarding and professional development for new deans, baselines and performance indicators will need to be determined. The efficacy of the *handbook* as an onboarding and performance improvement intervention will come as indicator baselines are established and methods of assessment developed. Perception data may be an important element of this approach. It is challenging to meaningfully demonstrate improvement for a resource and program that do not currently exist as institutional processes; however, it is not a great leap of logic to assume that focused and well-scaffold professional learning in one's field will bring about improvements in



job performance and personal perceptions of one's efficacy and comfort in a new role. Agreeing on and developing multiple-yet-sustainable means of assessing efficacy will be an important next step in the process.

The implications for *A Handbook for Community College Deans*, the professional learning opportunities, and the associated improvement projects will be assessed over time, with the upcoming academic year committed to the development of the professional development program and its assessment methods and instruments. The development and implementation of the assessment instruments should, ideally, take place early enough in the process so that they can be used before the development program is implemented. Ideally, this would provide local researchers in the college's Assessment and Institutional Research (AIR) office a year of baseline data before the program is implemented. Complicating factors might also include the sheer number of new hires taking place at my institution as the baseline data is gathered, so care should be taken in assessing pre- and post-points for assessment comparisons. An assessment methodology could potentially employ a multi-method study design, incorporating questionnaires focusing on the administrator's perception of their own skill and knowledge baseline levels and sense of professional development early in the onboarding process and, later, on the administrator's perceptions of the relevance and efficacy of the training content to that development and their current state of self-perceived proficiency in their new job.

Assessment possibilities and challenges abound and have implications for peer and self-assessment of professional proficiency. A 360-degree assessment of an individual administrator's leadership skill and ability as perceived by administrative peers, like that developed by Kouzes and Posner (2017), could be used to assess onboarding program efficacy. A 360-evaluation process is being implemented for yearly goal-setting purposes for all

instructional administrators, director level and above, at my institution in the upcoming year, and this process and resulting data could have positive implications in establishing the efficacy of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* and the associated professional learning opportunities. The administrative supervisors and the new dean would have access to this data, but ethical considerations would need to be explored for its use within a quality assurance, quality improvement context. If the 360-degree assessment instrument and personal data are not available to local researchers or prove ethically problematic to collect, an anonymous in-house survey tool could be developed to assess the instructional administrators' perceptions of general leadership behaviors, skills and abilities, and potential training needs.

If *A Handbook for Community College Deans* professional learning opportunities are only offered to dean-level administrators, limited population size could be a significant issue and have implications for assessing the efficacy of the handbook and professional learning. With only 10 administrative leaders on the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) , offering the training to deans and directors at the Instructional Council (IC) level would increase the number of potential participants from 10 to 25; see "Appendix C: Professional Learning Series Sample Plan" for an example of what a professional learning opportunity might look like if offered at the IC level, if population sizes prove an issue or if the efficacy of the program warrants expansion. While only indirectly a focal point of a study of the onboarding efficacy of *A Handbook for Community College Deans* and associated professional learning opportunities, employee retention data could also be gathered to assess whether the current retention trend improves as the program is implemented.

Data analysis will likely focus on perception questionnaire responses, 360-evaluation data, and survey data. The instrumentation to be used might include the Outcomes Assessment

Toolbox (OAT), originally an outcomes-assessment platform now used more generally, which houses program data and can be permission guarded. Google forms could be used for surveys and questionnaires. Broader perceptions data could be collected annually to correspond with yearly supervisory evaluations, and training specific surveys would be gathered at the end of each training session. Since most of the data will be qualitative in nature, it will be themed, coded, and processed for question type, scaling, data analysis, and presentation results with consideration toward revising the instrument as needed; the work of one of my institution's data analysts is focused specifically on the preparation and analysis of qualitative data. This project may likely have workload implications for the analyst. More specific or manageable data analysis techniques will be explored as the project and its instruments are developed, but focusing on measures of central tendency and variability for survey data and following established coding techniques for open-ended perceptions questions seems most reasonable. Input from campus and project stakeholders will be aggressively sought throughout the instrument development and analysis process. As Leading with Racial Equity is a foundational tenet of this work, disaggregated demographic data will be sought whenever available, but sample size may prevent the disaggregation of data for analysis through demographic frames.

Ethical considerations are critical in all research, but the collection of data for this project is especially fraught, as *A Handbook for Community College Deans* and the associated professional learning opportunities are resources designed to help improve perceptions of job comfort and performance, which potentially involves the assessment of job performance from those in positions of authority outside of the currently established methods of performance evaluation. Collecting perception data on one's self-assessment of familiarity with important administrative leadership knowledge bases and requisite skill domains seems within the umbrella

of quality assurance and quality improvement guidelines. However, a new dean might self-reflect on their ability to Lead with Racial Equity and their supervisor may assess whether that is happening in an annual review or professional development plan, but to have a 360-degree assessment be part of a broader research project may not be helpful or permissible. The implications of various peer and self-assessment processes must be explored further.

The need for the sort of institution and system-specific onboarding resources provided for new and continuing administrators in *A Handbook for Community College Deans* would seem self-evident. The process of assessing how effectively my institution has onboarded new deans and closed the gap from the current baseline-zero status to one where new administrators are receiving what they need to be successful is more complicated and is certain to have implications for research and practice at my institution and beyond.

### **Concluding Reflections: My Work as Community College Leader**

My work implementing and participating in initiatives that promote racial and cultural equity seem more, at times, descriptions of a life's work than they do the description of a position held or an educational intervention implemented. Nietzsche's (1989) famous quote about consistent commitment to a cause over time comes to mind: "The essential thing *in heaven and earth* is...that there should be long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living" (Sec. 188, p. 77). My long obedience has focused, in many forms inside and outside the classroom, on the dismantling of educational structures that have created barriers for *unprepared* or *remedial* students and, thereby, perpetuated systems of white supremacy culture (Okun & Jones, 2000) in higher education at the community college level.

The problem is complex and deeply entrenched, especially as we understood it before the Guided Pathways initiatives began to take hold, and it would take many more pages to describe the challenges, nuances, impacts, and interventions in full. Many have been articulated above, but it is healthy to remind ourselves of what the challenges are for most community college students. In short, approximately two-thirds of incoming community college students do not place into college-level coursework in math and English based on their institution's placement processes and benchmarks (Bailey et al., 2015), with nearly one-fifth of community college students advising into sequences of three-or-more remedial courses (Bailey et al., 2010). Community college students, particularly students from historically under-represented groups (Brathwaite & Edgecombe, 2018), place into pre-college and college-level courses based on inaccurate or inherently biased methods of evaluation (Bailey et al., 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2018). Once placed, extended developmental course sequences designed to prepare students for college-level coursework are often based on an underestimation of student learning potential (Dweck, 2006; Hammond, 2015) and faulty understandings of instructional design and efficacy (Bailey et al., 2010).

Traditional deficit or gatekeeper frameworks of what it means to be college-ready perpetuate these barriers to student success (Edgecombe, 2019) and too often prevent students from earning degrees and certificates (Henson et al., 2017). There is early evidence that developmental reforms such as directed and informed self-placement, co-requisite supported college-level courses, skill-transfer curricular designs, and degree-specific math and English pathways improve college-level credit attainment for students (Ran & Lin, 2019). While it is still unclear whether these reforms alone improve credential attainment and additional extended extra-curricular supports are likely necessary (Daugherty et al., 2018), the earning of college-

level credits in math and English in the student's first year is a powerful indicator of academic momentum and predictive of student success (Strumbos et al., 2018).

That is quite a daunting nutshell above, especially when assessed from the perspective that the students entering this stacked system are 70 percent first generation (Bailey et al., 2015) with no higher education knowledge and no support systems in place to help them navigate the institutional gauntlet that sits squarely between them and a degree and living-wage job. The paragraph above describes the problem, context, population, and interventions, but what did we do at my institution to address the barriers and deficit thinking, and how did we make the decisions to do better by our students? The short answer, especially early on, was that we assessed root causes and just made the changes, but I only wish it were that simple. The situation was and is, of course, much more complex than that and has taken the effort of many people over a long period of time to bring about equity-minded change. There are, however, some common denominators in terms of the social justice dilemmas identified and interventions implemented. The most striking of these commonalities is that "pre-college" students come from systemically non-dominant groups to a much greater extent than their "college-ready" counterparts, which makes curricular reform a social justice issue. The research reviewed above would suggest that the old thinking about multi-level preparation courses is failing our students, especially our BIPOC students. The solution implementation dilemma is a common story as well: change, even social justice change, requires discomfort, courage, a willingness to move into the unknown, and significant financial resources. These are not small barriers to meaningful change, even change with such glaringly positive social justice implications, and it takes significant commitment to remove them.

So, what did we do, and what will we continue to do to address the challenges as we find them? Most simply stated, we focused on the disaggregated data concerning student success and we got up to speed on the research. The early work of the Community College Research Center (CCRC) led us to ask early questions about the efficacy of our pre-college curricular designs (Bailey et al., 2010), and this led us to eliminate our Developmental Education (DVED) Department in 2013, and lest you think this is the work of an over-zealous and heavy-handed dean, I will point out that I was a tenured faculty member in the Developmental Education Department at that time and a willing advocate of the decision to both reduce the number of student-confusing pathways and collapse the number of pre-college levels of reading, writing, and math on our campus. Many faculty members from many departments were involved in this work at that time, and we were keenly aware of 1) the potential loss of significant FTE to our department and the college and 2) the racial equity justifications for and implications of doing the right thing anyway.

We did not have the *Equitable Decision-Making Tool* (2020) or *A Handbook for Community College Deans* at that time, of course, but our question-asking process was upfront and understood by all. On good days we might ask questions like, “How will this decision reduce disparate impacts on systemically non-dominant groups?” There were, however, meetings focusing on the accrual of student debt in the face of a zero percent chance of degree attainment, where the situation was assessed a bit more crassly: “Hey, if we’re okay with screwing over immigrants, refugees, and people of color, then let’s keep our jobs and just go ahead and leave things as they are.” As wild as it may seem, one of the broader points was that we had all developed the interpersonal, relational infrastructure long before these moments, so once we were in the heart of difficult conversations, we all knew that our commitment to something

greater than ourselves and each other would carry the day. This collaborative, communicative, honest process has repeated itself many times as we have developed new co-requisite curricular designs to replace the old pre-requisites, and these experiences have taught us that intentional communication in the context of equity-focused relationships is a key to creating meaningful systemic change.

It was not all about restructuring systems at that time, however; for many of us, there was a real personal sense of joy in the work, knowing that the barriers we had helped create could be un-created, and this joy is not surprising. As Dennett (2012, 5:06) explains, “The secret of happiness is: Find something more important than you are and dedicate your life to it.” Earlier on, we found ourselves committed to racial justice and social equity in ad hoc ways; today, we have developed still incomplete but more intentional tools for communicating and ensuring we stay focused and keep the main thing, the main thing. Amid all this and with the more recent curricular reforms in other parts of the unit and campus, we have attempted to keep the students’ greatest needs at the center of our work, and this has given us a focal point for our decision-making and granted increased significance to our work.

As I sit at my computer and consider how best to present my life’s work as a racial equity practitioner and community college leader, I think about a message I recently received from one of my daughters, who is both a nursing graduate from the institution where I serve and a surgery intern at a well-respected research hospital, “Just got out of a 4-hour surgery with a...surgeon who doesn’t believe systemic racism exists, so that’s been...my day. He’s been talking about it for...well...going on 4 hours now.” Privilege so often seems more blind to self and its own status than it does to the colors it claims not to see. What I had to learn over time, seems so obvious to our students and those following us. Our work as educators rests somewhere in the



middle ground between Nietzsche's high-flown philosophy and the day-to-day stress and distress of dealing with hidden and not-so-hidden racism in the workplace and everyday life. Equity-mindedness and the removal of barriers for our most vulnerable student populations has informed my practice in every phase of my professional life; from my early work with immigrant and refugee populations in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, to the data-driven dissolution of my own pre-college department in 2013, to an insistence on equitable hiring practices and anti-racist curricular reforms in my current role, engaging in action-oriented conversations and then *action* about access, success, and completion for students from systemically marginalized groups has been a core motivator and satisfier throughout my career and will continue to be so into the future.

There is quite a bit to reflect on in the pages above, for me and for those reading. For all the foundations, frameworks, and resources offered in these pages, community college leaders must still get up on Monday morning and meet the week as it comes, and the week never follows the plan so artfully arranged in over-full Outlook calendars. I would, therefore, be remiss to conclude this exploration without offering one more poem. I cannot imagine a doctoral student completing a dissertation or an administrator arriving at the end of another long week who has not felt just a little bit like Walt Whitman's narrator in *WHEN I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer*.

### A Poem

#### **WHEN I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer – Walt Whitman**

WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,  
 When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and  
 measure them,

When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much  
applause in the lecture-room,

How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,

Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,

In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,

Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

(Whitman, 1982)

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## APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Cohort Model:** “Grouping students together in two or more courses to provide a stronger communal experience with a much greater focus on shared learning. The cohort model may be used as part of corequisite remediation, wherein the same group of students enrolls in both an introductory college-level course and an academic support course” (Bickerstaff et al., 2022, p. 12).

**Co-Requisite Course:** Instructional model where formerly “remedial” students are placed into college-level courses and provided additional “just-in-time” support to meet course outcomes, typically requiring additional tuition-free instructional hours. “A model of developmental support avoiding prerequisite developmental coursework in which students enroll in an introductory college-level math or English course while also receiving additional course-related academic support. Corequisite remediation has many variations. In one approach, students enroll in designated sections of the introductory college-level course as well as in a one- to three-unit linked support course designed to provide instructional support for the college-level course. In another variant, students receive additional support by enrolling in a higher-credit version of the introductory level course (e.g., a 4-credit course rather than a 3-credit course)” (Bickerstaff et al., 2022, p. 12).

**Culturally Responsive Practices:** “Instructional practices that, along with culturally sustaining curricula, explicitly recognize and validate the identity and experiences of diverse student groups. By using an asset-based orientation and making reference to experiences, cultures, and identities of specific populations of students, the practices aim to provide more meaningful connection to and support for minoritized students

inside classrooms” (Bickerstaff et al., 2022, p. 12).

Degree-Specific Pathways: Math sequencing design focusing on the appropriate and typically contextualized math for the student’s certificate or degree pathway (read: not everyone needs calculus).

Developmental Education (DVED); Prerequisite Developmental Course Model: “Providing developmental education in math, reading, or writing through a sequence of one to three semester-length courses, depending on perceived need, traditionally assessed through standardized testing. Students are required or encouraged to complete the sequence before enrolling in an introductory college-level math or English course. Public institutions once offered an average of two to three course levels of remediation in math, reading, and writing, but the number of course levels offered and the ubiquity of the prerequisite model have declined across states in recent years (Bickerstaff et al., 2022, p.12).

Directed/Informed Self-Placement (D/ISP) within Multiple Measures – Process of English placement where students self-place into courses based on self-assessment of skills and experiences, and an understanding of requirements of each course. GPA is the constant variable, but there are multiple measures for placement as will be explained in a later slide.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: [A DEI Glossary](#). An updated DEI Glossary specifically designed for my institution is in development and will be included as a reference in a future version of my institution’s localization of *A Handbook for Community College Deans*.

Equity-Centered Strategic Plan: [Equity-Centered Strategic Plan](#). An institution’s guiding document, grounded and infused on the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

Guided Pathways: A nationwide community college initiative introduced by leaders and researchers for the Community College Research Center at Columbia University that emphasizes clearly defined pathways for students seeking degrees and certificates, holistic wrap-around support for students throughout their college experiences, and the restructuring of traditional pre-college curriculum and placement procedures. “An increasingly popular whole college reform approach that aims to support students throughout their college experience. It emphasizes well-designed programs of study, academic and career exploration and planning, and student supports and advising designed to help students choose a path, stay on a path, graduate or transfer, and enter a career” (Bickerstaff et al., 2022, p.12).

Integrated Reading and Writing: “A developmental approach in which both reading and writing skills are taught in the same course; students learn both sets of competencies and use writing to demonstrate their reading comprehension” (Bickerstaff et al., 2022, p. 12).

Knowledge-Transfer Course Design: English courses focusing on:

- Multimodal Assessment: Outcomes met through methods other than traditional writing assignments.
- Reading Apprenticeship: Active-reading technique that improves students’ interactions with “texts.”
- Writing for Transfer: Curricular focus on contextualized writing outside of the traditional expository essay.

Math Pathways: “A curricular model in which students are encouraged to enroll in and complete an introductory college-level math course in their first academic year through the provision of course options that are aligned to a student’s program of study. Students may enroll in courses such as statistics or quantitative reasoning, assuming that those courses,

rather than college algebra, satisfy program requirements for their chosen program of study” (Bickerstaff et al., 2022, p. 12).

Multiple Measures Assessment (MMA): “Using two or more criteria — and almost always using recent high school GPA when available — for assessment and placement of incoming students into developmental or college-level courses. Under MMA, standardized testing is no longer the primary means of assessing whether a student is prepared for college-level coursework” (Bickerstaff et al., 2022, p.12).

Strategic Plan: See Equity-Centered Strategic Plan.

## APPENDIX B: EMBEDDED DOCUMENTS

Key resources discussed in this dissertation are linked below; if the link is not active, document access is available upon request from the author ([jwilkins-luton@clark.edu](mailto:jwilkins-luton@clark.edu)).

[1940 Statement on Academic Freedom](#)

[Advancing Social Justice Framework Clark College](#)

[AHE Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)

[Clark College 2022 NWCCU Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report](#)

[DEI Glossary](#)

[Duties of an Academic Dean](#)

[Equitable Decision-Making Tool](#)

[Grade Change/Academic Appeal Policy Form](#)

[Instructional Org Chart 12.1.22](#)

[Roles and Responsibilities for Assessment](#)

[Shared Governance and You](#)

[Strategic Plan](#)

[Supervisory Evaluation Form for Face-to-Face](#)

[Tenure Position Information Form 11.10.21](#)

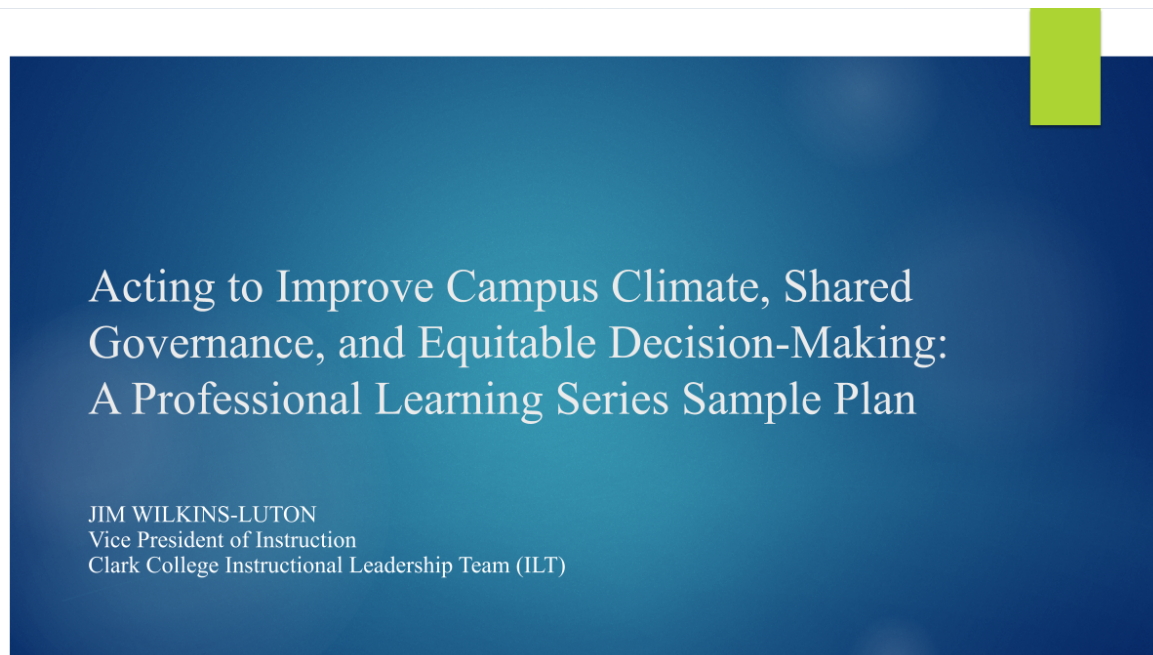
[WPEA Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)

## APPENDIX C: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SERIES SAMPLE PLAN

The link below provides an example resource for facilitating professional learning sessions for Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) based on content provided in *A Handbook for Community College Deans*. The purpose of this professional learning leadership series is to assess community needs as described in a recent campus climate survey, create a professional learning space for instructional leaders on my institution's Instructional Council (IC) that focuses on two significant elements of *A Handbook for Community College Deans*, and then move to action with the co-creation and adoption of a shared decision-making tool and an action plan for improving campus climate.

### [Dean Handbook Professional Learning Series Sample Plan](#)

A slide deck of the *Dean Handbook Professional Learning Series Sample Plan* is provided in the pages below.



## Learning Series and Sample Session Overview

### Four-Part Series Scope and Sequence

- ▶ This professional learning series includes four two-hour sessions, which will take place during ILT's regularly scheduled Thursday morning meeting:
  - ▶ Session 1: Deep Dive Analysis of the *Clark College Climate Survey* (2020) facilitated by AIR and ODEI
  - ▶ Session 2: Clark College *Shared Governance & You* (2020) Decision-Making Framework
  - ▶ Session 3: Workshopping the *Clark College Equitable Decision-Making Tool* (2020)
  - ▶ Session 4: Co-creating the *ILT Decision-Making Framework* and *Climate Improvement Action Plan*

### Session 2 Scope and Sequence

- ▶ Session 2: Clark College *Shared Governance & You* (2020) Decision-Making Framework:
  - ▶ Equity and Representation
  - ▶ Transparency and Communication
  - ▶ Responsibility and Accountability
  - ▶ Before You Make a Decision
  - ▶ When a Decision May Affect You

## Learning Scope & Sequence: What?

- ▶ The purpose of this four-part professional learning series is to improve student experience and success by helping the Instructional Leadership Team to:
  - ▶ Develop a deeper sense of the needs of campus community members through an in-depth analysis of the *Clark College Climate Survey* (2020)
  - ▶ Integrate the College's shared governance framework, *Shared Governance & You* (2020), into the fabric of decision-making processes
  - ▶ Ensure equitable outcomes and the intentional disruption of White Supremacy Culture through the use of the *Equitable Decision-Making Tool* (2020)
  - ▶ Create a set of shared decision-making norms and an action plan for improving campus climate to be included in the *Annual Instructional Academic Plan*



## Learning Scope & Sequence: Why?

- ▶ **The Challenge** – According to the *Clark College Climate Survey* (2020), 46% of respondents felt that “There is no shared governance” or that they had “Issues with how decisions are made” (2020, p. 18). Despite administrative efforts (Core Theme Councils, College Climate Committee), there is currently no effective way for Clark College stakeholders to feel they are actively engaged in the college’s decision-making and problem-solving processes.
- ▶ **Historical Processes** – Decisions are currently made by the Instructional Leadership Team or Executive Cabinet, and there have historically been few venues for faculty and staff to actively engage in conversations about important issues and meaningfully impact change.
- ▶ **Readiness for Change** – If recent survey results and faculty action are an indication, the campus is in need of change. Broadly representative groups have created two guiding documents, which have been developed and approved by broadly representative cross-campus groups: *Shared Governance and You*, and the *Equitable Decision-Making Tool*.

## Climate Challenges – One Perspective

The idea that there is “shared governance” here at Clark is laughable. Everything -- from the goings-on with the administration to how decisions are made at the board level -- is locked up tight. Black box, black ops government site kind of locked up. Faculty have no say, no voice, no representation, and no power to hold those above to some form of accountability. Shared governance is a great idea, but that would require a power shift. And let's be honest: No one in a position of power wants and/or willingly chooses to treat those whose necks they are standing on and whose pocketbooks they are refusing to fill as true equals. (*Climate Survey*, 2020, p. 19)

## Learning Scope & Sequence: Who?

- ▶ **Instructional Leadership Team** – The ILT has been a highly functioning and collaborative body in the past (*Climate Survey*, 2020, pg. 38), incorporating broad feedback from faculty and staff into decision-making and problem-solving processes. With recent waves of budget reductions and leadership changes, campus relationships have been strained and communication with faculty and staff have suffered.
- ▶ **Current Functioning** – Campus climate and change in leadership at every level of the college have forced members of the ILT to develop new norms for communication, decision-making, and problem-solving.
- ▶ **Readiness for Change** – ILT members have recognized a need for change and voiced a willingness to work together to improve.
- ▶ **Organizational Norms** – Distrust, silence, end-running. New norms must be intentionally developed.

## Learning Scope & Sequence: How?

- ▶ This professional learning sequence incorporates a blend of several macro-level professional learning design features as recommended by Easton (2015):
  - ▶ “**PLCs or critical friend groups**. Have educators work together in groups to learn and apply their learning.”
  - ▶ “**Action research**. Invite member of the PLCs focusing on these purposes to start their own action research projects.”
  - ▶ “**Dialogue**. Invite educators to explore their own ideas and ideals related to community and global responsibilities.”

## Learning Scope & Sequence: How?

- ▶ Easton (2015) underscores the importance of several categories and subcategories of “How” responsibilities for successful professional learning at both the macro and micro levels:
  - ▶ Planning and Coordinating
  - ▶ Facilitating (defining roles, logistics, people grouping, behavior guidance, opening/closing session, planning next steps)
  - ▶ Recording and Scribing
  - ▶ Timekeeping
  - ▶ Process Observing
  - ▶ Participation and Engagement Monitoring

Each critical element is considered and embedded into a specific portion of this plan.

## Learning Scope & Sequence: When?

- ▶ This professional learning sequence will include four, two-hour sessions that will be conducted during ILT’s regularly scheduled Thursday morning meeting. The learning sessions will happen over four consecutive weeks. Elements include:
  - ▶ 1) An Analysis of the *Clark College Climate Survey* (2020) facilitated by the AIR and ODEI
  - ▶ 2) *Clark College Shared Governance & You* (2020) Decision-Making Framework
  - ▶ 3) Workshopping the *Clark College Equitable Decision-Making Tool* (2020)
  - ▶ 4) Creating an **ILT Decision-Making Framework and Climate Improvement Action Plan**

## Learning Scope & Sequence: Where?

- ▶ The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) has 20 members: VPI, AVPI, Deans, Associate Deans, and Directors. While this group has had well-established communication norms in the past, it will be important to disrupt implicit authority and communication structures in the room for these trainings. While ILT typically sits in a large square with members facing the center of the room (pre-pandemic), the learning sessions will require participants to sit in groups of four at one of six tables (five for the groups and one to hold extra supplies not provided at the table). The participants at each table will be preselected to ensure a mix of administrators of different focus areas and responsibility levels.
- ▶ Additional details about the physical space below.

### Professional Learning Session: Room Arrangement

- ▶ This is the room ILT typically meets in. The tables would usually be arranged in a large square with all members facing the center of the room, but for this learning session, we will use a small group table format to increase member-to-member interaction and facilitate small group discussion.



## Learning Series and Sample Session Overview

### Four-Part Series Scope and Sequence

- ▶ This professional learning series includes four two-hour sessions, which will take place during ILT's regularly scheduled Thursday morning meeting:
  - ▶ Session 1: Deep Dive Analysis of the *Clark College Climate Survey* (2020) facilitated by AIR and ODEI
  - ▶ Session 2: Clark College *Shared Governance & You* (2020) Decision-Making Framework
  - ▶ Session 3: Workshopping the *Clark College Equitable Decision-Making Tool* (2020)
  - ▶ Session 4: Co-creating the *ILT Decision-Making Framework* and *Climate Improvement Action Plan*

### Session 2 Scope and Sequence

- ▶ Session 2: Clark College *Shared Governance & You* (2020) Decision-Making Framework:
  - ▶ Equity and Representation
  - ▶ Transparency and Communication
  - ▶ Responsibility and Accountability
  - ▶ Before You Make a Decision
  - ▶ When a Decision May Affect You

## Clark College's Mission, Vision & Core Themes (Approved by CC BOT 3/8/23)

### Mission

To cultivate an inclusive, equitable, and vibrant community, Clark College educates, empowers, and elevates individuals to achieve their personal and professional goals.

### Vision

Rooted in social justice, Clark College is a beacon of hope, opportunities, and transformation providing excellent and equitable education to create economic, cultural, and community growth.

### Values

Social Justice  
Partnerships  
Innovation  
Shared Governance  
Continuous Improvement  
Sustainability



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## Clark College Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Clark College's main campus is located on the ancestral lands of the federally recognized tribe of the Cowlitz and Lower Columbia Peoples. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference. We pay respects to the indigenous elders, past and present, as we respectfully consider the many legacies of violence, erasure, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together today.

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## Clark College Labor Acknowledgement

We also acknowledge that our nation has benefited and profited from the free enslaved labor of Black people. We honor the legacy of the African diaspora and Black life, and the knowledge, skills, and human spirit that persevere in spite of violence and White supremacy.

## Professional Learning Session 2: Learning Goals

- ▶ In today's *Shared Governance & You* professional learning session, Clark College's Instructional Leadership Team will:
  - ▶ Understand how **equity and representation** are key elements of effective shared governance
  - ▶ Understand how **transparency and communication** are critical to effective shared governance
  - ▶ Understand how **responsibility and accountability** make shared governance possible
  - ▶ Understand what to do **before you make a decision**
  - ▶ Understand what to do **when a decision may affect you**

## Professional Learning Session: *Shared Governance & You*

### Day's Schedule

- ▶ Clark College 's **Shared Governance & You and Decision-Making Framework**
  - ▶ 9:00 to 9:10 – Overview of Today's Work
  - ▶ 9:10 to 9:30 – Radical Interdependence TED TALK Video
  - ▶ 9:30 to 9:45 – Equity and Representation
  - ▶ 9:45 to 10:00 – Transparency and Communication
  - ▶ 10:00 to 10:15 – Responsibility and Accountability
  - ▶ 10:15 to 10:30 – Before You Make a Decision
  - ▶ 10:30 to 10:45 – When a Decision May Affect You
  - ▶ 10:45 to 11:15 – Discussion, Wrap-Up and Next Steps

### Learning Design Consideration: Be Action Oriented

Once you are free of the constraints of a new theory or past practice, you can explore multiple approaches, experiment, and above all learn from your experience. In this context, practice becomes a powerful tool for change. (Fullan, 2012, p. 3)

### Learning Design Consideration: Best Question

- **If You Could Only Ask One Question** (Brookfield & Preskill, 2016)
- This technique underscores the power of a single, well-crafted question to focus group energy and deepen communal understanding. The authors recommend beginning the meeting with a video of a well-asked question. After a brief discussion, the facilitator focuses the group's attention on a new, relevant topic and asks members to reflect individually on questions they might ask that would increase understanding of the topic. After a few minutes, small groups share questions and discuss. The best question from each group will be forwarded to the session facilitator to be written on the board at the front of the room, while the groups transition to the next topic for discussion.
- We will incorporate this practice in today's learning session with...



## Learning Design Consideration: Deep, Silent Waters

- ▶ **Structured Silence** (Brookfield & Preskill, 2016)
- ▶ We will use **Structured Silence** in tandem with **If You Could Only Ask One Question**. The session facilitator will pause the table discussion after 10 minutes or so and ask everyone to silently reflect for three minutes on a question they may have about our focus point (a list of model questions is on p. 156 of *The Discussion Book*, provided on the resource table if groups need a jumpstart). The questions will be anonymously written on 3x5 cards and placed in the center of the table. After a brief small group discussion, the most pressing question will be presented to the session facilitator and written on the board at the front of the room.

## Radical Interdependence



“Why does hero culture persist, and why don't we work together more?” Well, I don't know why everyone else does it, but I can tell you why I did it. Interdependence is a lot harder than being a hero. It requires us to be open and transparent and vulnerable, and that's not what traditional leaders have been trained to do. I thought being a hero would keep me safe. I thought that in the elevation and separation that comes from heroic leadership, that I would be untouchable. This is an illusion.

The joy and success that comes from interdependence and vulnerability is worth the effort and the risk. And if we're going to solve the challenges that the world is facing today, we have no alternative, so we had better start getting good at it” (Davis, 2019).

## Professional Learning Session: Teaching Script

- ▶ **Clark College Shared Governance & You Decision-Making Framework – Creating Shared Understanding**
  - ▶ **9:00 to 9:10 – Review of Previous Session and Overview of Today's Work**
    - ▶ Welcome everyone.
    - ▶ Review what happened in last session on **Climate Survey** deep dive and share any feedback or reflections gathered over past week.
    - ▶ Go over the outcomes, schedule, and process for today's session. Review **Structured Silence** and **If You Could Only Ask One Question** (Brookfield & Preskill, 2016).
    - ▶ Ask the group to agree to faithfully adhere to the above process throughout the day's work.
  - ▶ **9:10 to 9:30 – Radical Interdependence TED TALK Video**
    - ▶ Introduce and watch video, encourage participants to quietly take note, especially in terms of any big idea question that come to mind.
    - ▶ Ask participants to silently reflect on the video for 3 minutes and then ask them to write one question on a 3x5 card without showing it to another person. Ask the participants to put the 3x5 card in a safe place for now.

## Professional Learning Session: Teaching Script

- ▶ **9:30 to 9:45 – Equity and Representation**
  - ▶ Ask the participants to focus on the **Shared Governance & You** document. They will have read the document for today's session ahead of time. Extra copies will be provided at the resource table for those who may have forgotten theirs.
  - ▶ Ask the small groups to read and discuss any interesting or concerning elements of the **Equity and Representation** section for 10 minutes. They may share stories of when **Equity and Representation** may have been modelled well or poorly in the past.
  - ▶ After group discussion, ask the participants to silently reflect – this will be a challenging transition for those who have been actively engaged in discussion, but insist on having the group adhere to the process and agreed upon norm for the day. You may designate a table Shhuusshher.
  - ▶ After each group has silently reflected, ask participants to write their best question on 3x5 cards and then ask groups to forward their best question to you. Each group's best question will be written on the board at the front of the room while the tables discuss the next section of the **Shared Governance & You** document.
- ▶ **9:45 to 10:00 – Transparency and Communication**
  - ▶ Ask the small groups to read and discuss any interesting or concerning elements of the **Transparency and Communication** section for 10 minutes. They may share stories of when these may have been modelled well or poorly in the past.
  - ▶ After group discussion, ask the participants to silently reflect.
  - ▶ After each group has silently reflected, ask participants to write their best question on 3x5 cards and then ask the groups to forward their best question to you. Each group's best question will be written on the board at the front of the room while the tables discuss the next section of the **Shared Governance & You** document.

## Professional Learning Session: Teaching Script

- ▶ **10:00 to 10:15 – Responsibility and Accountability**
  - ▶ Ask the small groups to read and discuss any interesting or concerning elements of the **Responsibility and Accountability** section for 10 minutes. They may share stories of when these may have been modelled well or poorly in the past.
  - ▶ After group discussion, ask the participants to silently reflect.
  - ▶ After each group has silently reflected, ask participants to write their best question on 3x5 cards and then ask the groups to forward their best question to you. Each group's best question will be written on the board at the front of the room while the tables discuss the next section of the *Shared Governance & You* document.
- ▶ **10:15 to 10:30 – Before You Make a Decision**
  - ▶ Ask the small groups to read and discuss any interesting or concerning elements of the **Before You Make a Decision** section for 10 minutes. They may share stories of when this may have been modelled well or poorly in the past.
  - ▶ After group discussion, ask the participants to silently reflect.
  - ▶ After each group has silently reflected, ask participants to write their best question on 3x5 cards and then ask the groups to forward their best question to you. Each group's best question will be written on the board at the front of the room while the tables discuss the next section of the *Shared Governance & You* document.

## Professional Learning Session: Teaching Script

- ▶ **10:30 to 10:45 – When a Decision May Affect You**
  - ▶ Ask the small groups to read and discuss any interesting or concerning elements of the **When a Decision May Affect You** section for 10 minutes. They may share stories of when this may have been modelled well or poorly in the past.
  - ▶ After group discussion, ask the participants to silently reflect.
  - ▶ After each group has silently reflected, ask participants to write their best question on 3x5 cards and then ask the groups to forward their best question to you. Each group's best question will be written on the board at the front of the room while the participants take a very quick water break.
- ▶ **10:45 to 11:15 – Discussion, Wrap-Up, and Next Steps**
  - ▶ Ask participants to come to the front of the room and place tick next to the two questions in each category on the board that they must want to discuss [They all need a good stretch by now anyway].
  - ▶ Remind participants that we are fostering engagement for the Creation of the **ILT Decision-Making Framework and Climate Improvement Action Plan**. Take notes on the whiteboard as the discussion progresses.
  - ▶ Read questions with the most ticks and facilitate discussion of each. Try to keep to a few minutes for each but know it is fine if you do not get to everything.
  - ▶ Ask participants to take out their question from the earlier TED TALK and ask if they would like to revise either their question or something on the board based on what we learned at the beginning. If meaningful conversation doesn't follow ask: Do the principles we've discussed in the *Shared Governance & You* document foster radical interdependence, and if not, how can we develop our new practices on this foundation? Facilitate discussion.

## Professional Learning Session: Supplies Needed

- Supplies Provided at Group Tables:
  - Copies of *Shared Governance & You* (2020), copies of summary descriptions of *Structured Silence* and *If You Could Only Ask One Question* activities, 3X5 cards, legal pads, pens, and Clark College Penguin stress toys
- Supplies Provided at Resource Table:
  - Pens, markers, highlighters, poster paper, sticky post tabs, tape, and a copy of *The Discussion Book* (Brookfield & Preskill, 2016)
- Supplies Provided at Snack Table:
  - Hot and cold water, coffee, tea, and snack tray from culinary program w/ vegan options

## References

- Brookfield, S., & Preskill, S. (2016). *The discussion book: 50 great ways to get people talking*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Clark College. (2020). *2020 Clark College climate survey*. Internal document (Clark College) unpublished.
- Clark College. (2020). *Equitable decision-making tool*. Internal document (Clark College) unpublished.
- Clark College. (2020). *Shared governance and you*. Internal document (Clark College) unpublished.
- Easton, L. B. (2015). *Powerful designs for professional learning* (3rd ed.). Oxford, OH: Learning Forward.
- Fullan, M. (2011). *Change leader: Learning to do what matters most*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Davis, L. (2019, September). *A guide to collaborative leadership* [Video File]. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/lorna\\_davis\\_a\\_guide\\_to\\_collaborative\\_leadership/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/lorna_davis_a_guide_to_collaborative_leadership/transcript)