CRITICAL ISSUES FACING AMERICA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUTURES ASSEMBLY 2011 MIXED METHODS/APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY RESEARCH PROJECT

Matthew J. Basham, Ph.D., Associate Professor
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

Dale F. Campbell, Ph.D., Professor and Interim Director
School of Human Development & Organizational Studies in Education,
University of Florida
College of Education
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, USA

Hajara Mahmood, Doctoral Student
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

Kenyatta Martin, Doctoral Student
College of Education and Behavioral Sciences,
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

ABSTRACT

For almost 20 years the Community College Futures Assembly (CCFA) has met annually in Orlando, Florida to serve as a showcase of best practices in community college administration and to serve as a think-tank for research and policy. Through the years the research methodology has evolved. The 2011 CCFA used a mixed-methods approach: qualitative research was collected in several focus groups to produce quantitative categories for voting in the beginning and end of the conference on those critical issues facing community colleges. Between voting sessions the participants attended the showcases of the best practices as well as a presentation demonstrating the sustainability of the winning programs from the past year. Final voting was intended to determine if a relationship exists between the voting sessions based upon the presentations. The descriptive statistics reveal the participants feel very strongly about some sort of redefinition of "education completion" needing to be developed. Moreover, the findings also show a statistically significant difference on opinions of the critical issues facing community colleges based upon the generation of the subject. The findings, including opportunities and challenges, potential implications for community college administrators, and future research topics are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

For the past few years' changes, wanted or otherwise, have been occurring both within and without education, especially in the economy and nearly every industry around the world. In the face of so much gloom and doom it can be very easy just to turn over and let nature "take it course." However, as educational administrators we must continue to persevere in the best interests of our students and our communities. In doing so it is important for us to focus upon best practices and "what works best" for all of us. Ap-

preciative Inquiry (AI) is a research technique, which allows us to investigate the very best processes of organizational management in this difficult time. This paper will present an AI-mixed methods research project investigating the best practices in community college administration.

LITERATURE REVIEWED

For the purposes of this research, Appreciative Inquiry was selected as the foundational research methodology. As such, a brief overview of the inception of Appreciative Inquiry is presented. After which an overview of the history of the Community College Futures Assembly will provide the reader with an understanding of the constructs of the conference and the formative basis for the research project. Together, these discussions will lead into the research portion of this paper.

Appreciative Inquiry

In the mid-1980's qualitative researchers were generally in agreement with the seeming futility and direction of action research. In response a refinement of Action Research called "Appreciative Inquiry (AI)" was suggested as the "next generation of Action Research" by David L. Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva (1987). Their newer brand of action research was based upon a "socio-rationalist" view of social research. They built an argument for this newer method upon the comments of Kurt Lewin, Abraham Maslow, Aristotle, and others to point out that action research was created to link science to practice. However, they felt the passion behind the structure and reasoning was severely linking. Appreciative Inquiry was developed to put that passion into the research linking science to practice. "Human beings have the capacity for symbolic interaction and, through language, they have the ability to collaborate in the investigation of their own world. Because of our human capacity for symbolic interaction, the introduction of new knowledge concerning aspects of our world carries with it the strong likelihood of changing that world itself" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p. 15). In brief, the foundation of Appreciative Inquiry maintains the will of the group and the passion for the most critical issues will surface

within a group. It is that passion which can guide teams to create change for the common good of an organization. Inevitably, the vision for a group can be set through that passion, grounded with integrity, cohesiveness and focus, of the collective group.

Thus, Appreciative Inquiry research seeks out the passion of the group to determine its future directions by identifying the "array of concrete problems an organization faces" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p. 18). The process is simple and straight-forward. First, start with an Action-Research framework:

> Action-Research begins with an identified problem. Data are then gathered in a way that allows a diagnosis which can produce a tentative solution, which is then implemented with the assumption that it is likely to cause new or unforeseen problems that will, in turn, need to be evaluated, diagnosed, and so forth. This action-research method assumes a constantly evolving interplay between solutions, results, and new solution...this model is a general one applicable to solving any kind of problem in an ongoing organization (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, 148 citing Cohen, Fink, et al., 1984, 359-360).

During that process the moderator should be trying to help the group identify "stressful situations" or those situations, which may be disrupting the organization or the people in the organization.

> Typical questions in [action-research] data gathering or "problem sensing" would include: What problems do you see in your group, including problems between people that are interfering with getting the job done the way you would like to see it done? And what problems do you see in the broader organization? (Cooperrider & Srivasta, 1987, 148, citing French, 1969, pp. 183-185).

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) also cite the University of Michigan's Social Institute in Social Research's factors as a way to help deduce a process for creating change by incorporating questions, which may evoke passion in the group:

Three factors need to be taken into account in an organization development action-research effort: The behaviors that are problematic, the conditions that create those behaviors, and the interventions or activities that will correct the conditions creating the problems. What is it that people are doing or not doing, that is a problem? Why are they doing or not doing these particular things? Which of a large number of possible interventions or activities would be most likely to solve the problems by focusing on why problems exist?" (Cooper & Srivasta, 1987, citing Hausser, Pecorella, & Wissler, 1977, p. 2).

Thus, AI uses this framework to identify the "broken" elements for consideration for change in the organization. Once diagnosis has been made then the resolutions can be put forth. This is where Appreciative Inquiry adds systematically to Action Research. However, Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) caution the researcher can dramatically alter the flow and direction of the answers and must be careful how they influence the group, since the group should command this action. Other researchers agree with this tenet as well (Whitney, 1998).

From here, the Appreciative Inquiry framework has been refined and revised to be a four-step process: discover, dream, design, and delivery (Lehner & Hight, 2006; Michael, 2005; Elleven, 2004; Alewine, 2003; Whitney, 1998). Delivery is sometimes called "destiny" also (Atkin & Lawson, 2006). The discovery phase inquires about processes or issues, which may need to be changed in an organization. The dream phase allows the passion to come forth, to allow the participants to dream on how to overcome those obstacles in a perfect world. In short, this allows them to "think out of the box." The design phase allows the participants to create plans for the organization in a collaborative process. Finally, the delivery phase allows the participants to create an action plan based upon the elements identified.

Participants have reported optimistic feedback with the AI process "it is easy to be negative, being positive makes you want to work" (Johnson and Leavitt, 2001, p. 131).

In the context of this foundational framework there have been many applications of Appreciative Inquiry since the 1980's in a variety of disciplines and fields such as marketing research (Whitney, 1998), tourism (Koster & Lemelin, 2009; Raymond & Hall, 2008), nursing and healthcare (Deason, Adhikari, Clopton, Oches, & Jensen, 2010; Chapman & Giles, 2009; Richer, M.C., Ritchie, J. & Marchionni, C., 2009; Maclean, 2007; Atkin & Lawson, 2006; Whitney, 1998), manufacturing (Reed, Jones & Irvine, 2005; Whitney, 1998), libraries (Sullivan, 2004; Alewine, 2003) organizational management (Langer & Thorup, 2006; Van Oosten, 2006), community planning (Boyd & Bright, 2007; Browne, 2004; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Whitney, 1998), human resources (Whitney, 1998) and education (San Martin & Calabrese, 2011; Calabrese, Hester, Frieson & Burkhalter, 2010; Kozik, Cooney, Vinciguerra, Gradel, & Black, 2009; Calabrese, Roberts, McLeod, Niles, Christopherson, Singh, & Berry, 2008; Doveston & Keenaghan, 2006; Lehner & Hight, 2006; Carnell, 2005; del la Ossa, 2005; Kemp, 2001). Therefore, the soundness of the methodology, as demonstrated for almost 30 years, logically appears to the researchers to be a sound framework from which to conduct this research herein. Moreover, this research method has been used before in community college organization research (Yoder, 2005). Before we progress to the research methods used in this project, a discussion of the environment in which the AI framework will be implemented is warranted first.

History of the Community College Futures Assembly

The Community College Futures Assembly (CCFA) has been held annually in Orlando, Florida since 1995 and has been hosted by the University of Florida, College of Education. Hundreds of community colleges have sent in applications for the national conference representing almost every state in the United States. Its purpose is to serve as an independent policy think tank, to educe the critical issues facing community college administration, and to serve as a showcase for best practices in community college administration (Morris & Campbell, 2008). Every year a different theme is chosen in

which the research will be designed. The Bellwether criteria are developed based upon current events directly affecting community college administration. As with other conferences there are sometimes some pre-seminar sessions to assist in professional development.

The keynote speech opens the conference on Saturday night. The keynote speaker is selected most often from a discipline outside of education to provide context for policy discussion. There have been a number of very popular themes and keynote speakers at the CCFA. For example, the 2010 conference theme showcased Michael Fullan and his latest book on "Turnaround Leadership" (Campbell & Basham, 2010) the 2009 keynote speaker was Jacqui Banaszynski, the Knight Chair in Editing at the Missouri School of Journalism who discussed "how technology should have been a wake up call to journalists" (Basham, Campbell & Garcia, 2010; (Mendoza, Basham, Campbell, O'Daniels, Malcolm, Felton, Lebesch, & Douma, 2009, November), and the 2008 keynote speaker was Alan Deutschman and his book "Change or Die" (Morris & Campbell, 2008).

Sunday sessions are intended to serve as the formative basis of policy research at CCFA. The details of those sessions are included in the research design phase. From these sessions policy papers are written and shared at several other conferences and key community college advocate groups including the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges, the Academic Chairs Conference International, the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), and the National Council of Instructional Administration (NCIA), the National Council on Continuing Education and Training (NCCET) and others.

On Monday the 30 finalists selected are given an hour to present their best practices project to the attendees. The presentations are arranged according to their category in Instructional Programming and Services (IPS), Planning, Governance, and Finance (PGF), and Workforce Development (WD).

Those best practices are also invited to set up displays to showcase their practices for more personalized conversations on Tuesday morning. During that time the three winning programs from the previous year also present updates from their programs. A focus is placed upon sustainability of projects. Finally at the closing luncheon on Tuesday, final voting in the research project is accomplished before the winning programs are announced.

As an addendum, unlike other conferences there are no sponsors or advertisers at the conference. The intent of the conference is to provide a comfortable environment in which to allow creativity to flourish at the highest level without the pressure of salespersons co-mingling.

Thus far this paper has presented the literature reviewed on Appreciative Inquiry and the history of the Community College Futures Assembly as a basis for designing the research for this project. In the next section, the qualitative research methodology will be presented.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

On Sunday, January 30, 2011 several focus groups were held at the annual Community College Futures Assembly (http://www.coe.ufl.edu/futures/). The focus group members consisted of Board of Trustee members, Community College Presidents, central administrators and faculty members. The 75 participants were divided as equally as possibly into four focus groups. The focus group participants were then asked to reflect on the comments from the keynote speaker, Jeanne Meister, and her research on the 2020 Workforce with respect to leadership challenges for community college administrators (Meister, 2011). The onus of her speech included skills for tomorrow's leaders: to be able to work in a multicultural environment, to be able to work in more flattened hierarchical organizational structures, to be more skilled with efficient use of technology, and to be able to work more efficiently with multigenerational colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

For the qualitative research design we selected Appreciative Inquiry to serve as our foundational research framework. This framework was selected over other more traditional qualitative research methods since AI seems to be more robust than content analysis, grounded research,

ethnography or any other qualitative research method. Moreover, AI is especially well suited for leadership inquiry and analysis (Walker & Carr-Stewart, 2004; Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003). Historically, AI has proven to yield very insightful research for the audience at CCFA (Basham, Campbell, & Garcia, 2010; Campbell & Basham, 2010a; Campbell & Basham, 2010b; Mendoza, Basham, Campbell, O'Daniels, Malcolm, Felton, Lebesch, & Douma, 2009; Basham, Campbell, & Mendoza, 2008; Campbell, D.F. & Basham, 2007). Thus, it was determined that AI should be the research framework for the qualitative research portion of the mixed methods research used at CCFA.

Each group was to brainstorm as many ideas as possible, based upon the question being asked. The tasks:

Step 1 Consider the current state of your institution and identify current gaps in your institution based upon the presentations from yesterday on case studies and/or the keynote speech. Your task is to brainstorm as many ideas as possible.

Step 2 Consider the current state of your institution and identify PROJECTED gaps in your institution in 2020 based upon the presentations from yesterday on case studies and/or the keynote speech. Your task is to brainstorm as many ideas as possible.

Step 3 What actions do you need to take now to ensure that your college will be prepared to meet the needs of students to succeed in the 2020 workplace? Your task again is to brainstorm as many ideas as possible.

Step 4 What actions do you need to take now to ensure that your college will be prepared to meet the needs of the community to succeed in the 2020 workplace? Your task again is to brainstorm as many ideas as possible.

Each of the four groups then posted the brainstormed list around the conference room by question number. Throughout the day attendees were allowed to peruse all of the items and vote for their #1 choice in each of the four questions as to what they thought was the most critical issue

facing community colleges in America. The top 5-7 items would then be used to construct the items for voting. The focus group participants voted that afternoon on what the top critical issue should be for America's community colleges. After viewing the Bellwether finalist presentations on Monday and hearing feedback from the 2010 Bellwether winning presentations, the entire assembly would have the opportunity to vote upon the top critical issues facing America's community colleges during Tuesday's sessions. The final voting aggregate data was gathered using Turning Point Personal Response Systems (also known as "clickers").

Qualitative Research Findings

The groups brainstormed a variety of answers for each of the four questions presented. The collective responses are available by request from the authors. Throughout the day the participants were allowed to vote for their top selection in each of the four tasks. The top 5-7 answers for each task are presented in Table 1. In this section we will briefly present the context of the discussions for each of those top selections.

#1 What are your *current* institutional gaps?

The first task asked the group to brainstorm and identify the current institutional gaps. In no particular order, there was a lengthy discussion with respect to faculty-administration communication problems. This is not without historical support from previous CCFA research sessions. Moreover, from the industrial-organizational research conducted by the authors on many educational administrative groups in nearly all groups "communication" is the one attribute rating which historically is the lowest of the leadership competencies (Basham & Mathur, 2010; Basham, Stader, & Bishop, 2009; Basham, 2008). Professional development for all is also a recurring issue. Defining a "new vision of education" in the USA essentially encompassed the discussion on identifying or revising "completion" in the community college setting. Some discussion ensued on adopting the vocational model, linking occupational completion points at certain milestones throughout a students educational program. Therefore successes will be more easily

Question Answer	Sunday Voting		Tuesday Voting	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
#1 What are your current institutional gaps?	(N = 47)		(N = 81)	
Faculty-administration communication problems	1Ø	22%	6	7%
Professional development for all	8	15%	13	16%
Defining a "new vision of education" in the USA	18	39%	36	44%
Creating/maintaining internal/external partnerships	7	15%	14	17%
Creating/maintaining global partnership	4	9%	12	15%
#2 What are your projected institutional gaps?	(N = 46)		(N = 76)	
Employee selection	2	4%	9	12%
Connections with WFD/Industry	12	26%	19	26%
Leadership/HR	15	33%	12	16%
Teaching "to fit the needs"	11	24%	27	35%
Technology	6	13%	9	12%
#3 Actions on behalf of students?	(N = 48)		(N = 76)	
E-learning infrastructure development	4	8%	9	12%
Becoming more multicultural	2	4%	4	4%
Creating stronger community relations	5	10%	3	4%
Breaking those "silos" between departments	12	23%	13	16%
Employability skill training	8	19%	21	29%
Critical thinking skill training	17	35%	26	35%
#4 Actions on behalf of the community?	(N = 48)		(N = 76)	
Maintaining a continuous dialog with the community	3	8%	3	4%
Maintaining/developing regional partnerships	6	10%	9	12%
Telling the "CC/Economic development" story	8	17%	14	18%
Globalization	3	6%	11	14%
Understanding the role on economic development	13	23%	15	18%
Collaboration with business partners	15	33%	26	35%

TABLE 1
COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUTURES ASSEMBLY 2011
AGGREGATE VOTING DESCRIPTIVE DATA

measured by employability and not necessarily in the "arbitrary" educational model of obtaining a "degree" per se. Also included in the top were categories of creating, maintaining, and sustaining internal and external partnerships and creating, maintaining and sustaining global partnerships. These also have been discussed in previous CCFA research projects.

#2 What are your *projected* institutional gaps?

Again, in no particular order employee selection was identified as one of the top projected institutional gaps by the research group attendees. This category encompasses succession planning and all issues related to employee selection. This is not to be confused with the leadership/HR issue, which is more interested with being able to find leaders when the time arises. This is more relevant to "finding talent" rather than "selecting talent." Creating, maintaining and sustaining

connections with workforce development and industry were also identified. There was considerable discussion to collapse several items into one broad category called teaching to "fit the needs." The majority felt this projected gap mainly covers "how to teach programs for occupations which do not exist today" and "addressing workforce needs." Examples from the onset of nanotechnology and green jobs were presented. The final category also encompasses several: technology. This is to include adapting new technology, integrating technology, but also using technology effectively.

#3 What are actions you need to take now on *behalf of the students?*

Somewhat related to the technology category in #2, one category identified here is development and refinement of the E-learning infrastructure. There were discussions on the evolvement of E-learning into stand-alone departments and not necessarily those dominated by IT personnel, but those integrating learning management systems, enterprise systems, and learning platforms. The groups as a whole echoed the sentiments expressed by the keynote speaker in taking actions to become more multi-culturally engrained on campus. This includes professional development activities to provide multicultural training. Also in this category was integrating community relations into the curriculum, including community relations or service-based learning projects. Breaking down those silos between the departments was also identified as a critical issue on behalf of the students. Too many times faculty members do not stray out of their department to engage others (students and faculty alike) in different departments. The last two categories involve training to be incorporated in the curriculum: employability skills and critical thinking skills.

#4 What are actions you need to take now on *behalf of the community*?

In our final question, again in no particular order, maintaining a continuous dialog was identified as one of the top critical issues for acting on behalf of the community. Several group members strongly voiced this as a concern, however, they also conceded that with shrinking staff and re-

sources maintaining those dialogs are quickly disappearing from the priority lists, and they should not be. Similarly, maintaining and developing regional partnerships was also identified as a priority. As with years past, globalization has been identified as a critical issue. This will encompass including more global projects in the curriculum as well as with global service learning projects. The final three categories were the source of several discussions as to whether they should be combined into one category. The group members instead felt three categories would best represent the intent of the project. Group members felt very strongly about including telling the economic development-community college connection story to the community. They felt with all of the economic changes and retirements there are new people in the community who may not be aware of the roles and relationships of the community college with the local businesses and industries. In short, the community college administrators do not want to be "left out" of collaborations in the future from a lack of knowledge. The other two categories, similar to the telling of the story, were "understanding the role on economic development" and "collaboration with business partners."

The other portion of the qualitative research included the presentations from all 30 finalists. In the interest of preserving space only the three winning programs are briefly described next. A complete list is available from the authors.

Bellwether Winning Programs

More than 200 community colleges submitted proposals for consideration in the 2011 Community College Futures Assembly. There are three categories: (1) Instructional Programs and Services, (2) Planning, Governance and Finance, and (3) Workforce Development. The judging for this year's award was based upon flexible deliver methods, international partnerships, innovation and collaboration to develop resources, understanding social and global dynamics, partnerships and programs aiding the completion agenda. Peers in each of the three areas conducted the judging. In the Instructional Programs and Services (IPS) category, which are programs that have been designed and successfully implemented to foster or support teaching and learning in the community

college, senior leaders from the National Council for Instructional Administrators served as judges. In the Planning, Governance and Finance (PGF) category, which are programs that have been designed and successfully implemented to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the community college, senior leaders from the Council for Resource Development (CRD) served as judges. Finally in the Workforce Development (WD) category, which are public and/or private strategic alliances and partnerships that promote community and economic development, senior leaders from the National Council on Continuing Education and Training served as judges. Ten finalists in each category were invited to present and compete for the Bellwether Award.

The 2011 Bellwether Award in the Instructional, Programming and Services category was awarded to Sinclair Community College (SCC), in Dayton, Ohio, for their program *"Pioneering Online Science Labs."* The presentation by SCC described the successful development of an online science curriculum delivered using lab simulations. The strategies and technologies SCC used to develop and deliver online labs ensure that online students meet the same learning outcomes as traditional students. SCC has experienced great impact and student learning outcomes through their online science lab. Learn more about SCC's science programs at http://www.sinclair.edu/online/. (Community College Futures Assembly, 2011).

The 2011 Bellwether Award in the Planning, Governance, and Finance category was awarded to Prince George Community College (PGCC), Largo, Maryland, for their program *"Engaging Students and Empowering a Community: A Campus-Based Community Organization."* The presentation by PGCC's discussed PGCC's Community Financial Center support for economic improvement of Prince George's County residents through its Finance 411 education program, year-round free Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program, and financial information network. Through involvement of students, faculty, and community volunteers, PGCC provides needed financial resources and education, residential support and assistance by partnering with existing organizations. For more informa-

tion, visit the college Web site at www.pgcc.edu (Community College Futures Assembly, 2011).

The 2011 Bellwether Award winner in the Workforce Development category was awarded to Houston Community College (HCC), Houston, Texas, for their program *"Exporting Houston Community College."* The HCC presentation detailed the development of a fully American accredited associate degree programs offered in Vietnam, a pioneering consortium partnership in Brazil, and multiple accomplishments in the Middle East. Through international partnerships, HCC has reassessed and redefined its service community to educate adaptable and resilient students prepared for the global economy. To learn more about HCC's attempts to "think local and act global" visit their website, http://www.hccs.edu/portal/site/hccs (Community College Futures Assembly, 2011).

Each of the attendees at the conference had the opportunity to listen to up to 6 of the concurrent finalist sessions in between the voting sessions. The voting sessions comprised the quantitative portion of the mixed methods design and will be discussed next.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

Those top issues identified in the qualitative research formed the foundation for the quantitative research portion of this mixed methods research study. In what we feel is an unusual departure from traditional Appreciative Inquiry (AI) research we are also including quantitative research based upon the AI findings. In this section the research variables, research questions, research hypotheses, and findings are presented.

Research Variables

In this study there are four main dependent variables and four main independent variables. Each of the variables was treated as nominal, numeric variables. Current institutional gaps, projected institutional gaps, actions on behalf of students, and actions on behalf of the community served as the dependent variables while gender, generation, region, title, and day of the week served as the independent variables.

Research Questions

In contrast to years past, several research questions framed the research methodology described. The quantitative research questions guiding this quasi-experimental design project are:

RQ1   What is the relationship on the critical issues of the participants between Sunday and Tuesday, when presentations (treatment) are shown between testing increments when controlling for socioeconomic status variables?

RQ2   What is the relationship on the critical issues of the participants when controlling for generational differences?

In order to test for support of the second research question there are five null hypotheses:

H01:   There is no difference in the critical issues identified by the sample based upon generational categories.

H02:   There is no difference in the critical issues identified for current institutional gaps (Q1) based upon generational categories.

H03:   There is no difference in the critical issues identified for projected institutional gaps (Q2) based upon generational categories.

H04:   There is no difference in the critical issues identified on behalf of students (Q3) based upon generational categories.

H05:   There is no difference in the critical issues identified on behalf of the community (Q4) based upon generational categories.

These data collected to test support for these questions were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (v. 18). The significance for this study will be set at the a = 0.05 level. During the analysis missing data will be excluded from statistical procedures, therefore some sample numbers and population numbers will vary from item to item. The overall population for this study is *N = 81*.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative findings will be discussed in two sections: the descriptive statistics and the inferential statistics.

Descriptive Statistics

Since the variables were nominal we counted the responses and calculated the percentages for each answer (see Table 1). The first question identified the current critical issues within the organization. The most selected answer was defining a "new vision of education" or "completion" in the USA on Sunday (n = 18, 39%) and Tuesday (n = 36, 44%). The second most selected answer on Sunday (n = 10, 22%) was faculty-administration communication problems, which slipped down a bit (n = 7, 7%) on Tuesday while creating and maintaining internal and external relationships inched up a bit (from n = 7, 15% to n = 14, 17%).

The most selected answer identifying the projected gaps within an institution on Sunday was leadership/human relations (n = 15, 33%), which dropped down on Tuesday (n = 12, 16%) to third place. On Tuesday the most selected answer became teaching to fit the needs of workforce or industry (n = 27, 35%), which on Sunday only received (n = 11) 24% of the votes (third).

For the actions taken on behalf of students the most selected answer did not change from Sunday (n = 17, 35%) to Tuesday (n = 26, 35%): critical thinking skills. However, the second most selected answer on Sunday was breaking down those silos between departments (n = 12, 23%), which dropped to (n = 13) 16% on Tuesday (third). On the other hand, employability skills increased on Sunday (n = 8, 19%) to Tuesday (n = 21, 29%).

In the final dependent variable question we asked the assembly to vote upon those actions to be taken on behalf of the community. The most selected answer did not change from Sunday (n = 15, 33%) to Tuesday (n = 26, 33%): collaboration with business partners. The second most selected answer however, did change somewhat. The understanding of the community college's role on economic development dropped between Sunday (n = 13, 23%) and Tuesday (n = 15, 18%), while telling the community college/economic devel-

opment story increased between Sunday (n = 8, 17%) to Tuesday (n = 14, 18%).

The socioeconomic status variables show some discrepancies and not too much even distribution (see Table 2). The gender represents the composition of the student body in community colleges with about 60% female and 40% males. The clear majority of participants in the sample are from the Baby Boomer generation (n = 44, 61%), with the Generation X (n = 18, 25%) ranking second. Most of the participants in the sample work either in the North Central (n = 22, 31%) or in the Southern, or Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) region (n = 21, 30%).

This demographic is heavily dependent upon the finalist presentations. Finally the largest percentage of participants is "other administration" (n = 23, 33%) with senior administrators not too far behind (n = 21, 29%).

Inferential Statistics

A variety of inferential statistics were calculated to provide a more complete picture of the aggregate data. In most cases non-parametric procedures were used to compensate for small cell sizes in the samples. In this section the inferential statistics are presented. Thereafter the discussion and implications for practitioners will ensue.

TABLE 2 COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUTURES ASSEMBLY 2011 AGGREGATE SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (SES) DESCRIPTIVE DATA				
Question **Answer**	Sunday Voting		Tuesday Voting	
	n	%	n	%
#5 Gender	(N = 48)		(N = 73)	
Male	21	44%	35	48%
Female	26	56%	38	52%
#6 What is your generation?	(N = 51)		(N = 72)	
Traditional (pre-1946)	4	8%	5	7%
Baby boomer (1947-1964)	25	51%	44	61%
Generation X (1965-1977)	14	25%	18	25%
Millennials (1978-1997)	8	16%	5	7%
Workforce 2020 (1998+)	0	0%	0	0%
#7 From which accreditation region are you employed?	(N = 50)		(N = 71)	
Middle states	11	22%	14	20%
New England	0	0%	1	1%
North Central	8	16%	22	31%
North West	8	16%	9	13%
Southern	21	42%	21	30%
Western	2	4%	4	6%
#8 What is your closest title?	(N = 51)		(N = 71)	
Board member	1	2%	2	3%
President	8	16%	7	10%
Senior administration	14	27%	21	29%
Other administration	16	31%	23	33%
Faculty	7	14%	8	11%
Other	5	10%	10	14%

The first analysis used the non-parametric Pearson's Chi-Square/cross-tabulation procedures to educe support, or lack thereof, for the research questions and null hypotheses presented earlier in this paper.

Since we are using nominal data cross-tabulations were selected as the inferential statistical technique to discern if any differences existed globally on the four main dependent variables between the responses on Sunday and Tuesday. This data will be used to answer research question 1. In general no statistically significant support was found in the cross-tabulations (asymptotic 2-sided test) between the dependent variable from Sunday to Tuesday (see Table 3). However, to be more precise the researchers then repeated the cross-tabulations procedure and controlled for the socioeconomic status independent variables. When controlling for gender, there were no appreciable statistically significant differences (see Table 4). However, it should be noted statistical significance at the a = 0.10 level for projected institution gaps for females (X^2 = 10.052, p = 0.074) between Sunday and Tuesday, and for actions on behalf of students (X^2 = 10.571, p < 0.061) for gender as a whole between Sunday and Tuesday. These may just be spurious findings, but are still worth noting all the same. The cross-tabulations, when controlling for generation, found a statistically significant finding (X^2 = 11.564, p < 0.041) for actions on behalf of students (see Table 5). There indicates some effect of the socioeconomic status independent variable "generation" upon

TABLE 4 CROSS-TABULATION RESULTS FOR Q1-Q4 BY DAY (SUNDAY-TUESDAY) BY GENDER		Pearson X^2	df	Asy. p (2-sided)	N Sun.	N Tues.
Crosstab						
Var 1	**Var 2**					
Q1	Gender	3.771	4	0.438	47	73
	Male	3.157	5	0.676	21	35
	Female	7.155	5	0.209	26	38
Q2	Gender	2.192	5	0.822	47	73
	Male	1.977	5	0.852	21	35
	Female	10.052	5	0.074	26	38
Q3	Gender	10.571	5	0.061	47	73
	Male	5.673	6	0.461	21	35
	Female	7.040	6	0.317	26	38
Q4	Gender	4.792	6	0.571	47	73
	Male	7.116	6	0.310	21	35
	Female	4.732	6	0.579	26	38

TABLE 3 CROSS-TABULATION RESULTS FOR Q1-Q4 BY DAY (SUNDAY-TUESDAY)					
Crosstab	Pearson X^2	df	Asy. p (2-sided)	N Sun.	N Tues.
Q1	6.684	5	0.245	55	101
Q2	8.401	5	0.135	55	101
Q3	8.107	5	0.230	55	101
Q4	5.335	6	0.502	55	101

the four broad questions. What this indicates to us is while deriving a plan of action based upon these critical issues identified here, we should also be careful to create a "plan B" or some alternate plan in case there are massive retirements or movements of upper generational administrators.

When controlling by region (see Table 6), we find marginally statistically significant findings for current institutional gaps in general (X2 = 10.776, p < 0.056) and for the answers between Sunday and Tuesday in the Southern region (X^2 = 12.673, p < 0.027).

There is some effect of the socioeconomic status independent variable "region" upon the four broad questions. This is indicative of the region from which an employee resides and the potential or willingness to change. For example, those employed in the Southern region have a statistically significant difference when comparing their votes between Sunday and Tuesday. This may infer the presentation provided had an effect upon changing their opinion of what truly is critical for community colleges. This may also mean the other regions are better at decision making with which to begin.

There is some effect of the socioeconomic status independent variable "title" upon the four broad

Crosstab		Pearson X^2	df	Asy. p	N Sunday	N Tuesday
Var 1	**Var 2**					
Q1	Generation	2.337	5	0.801	50	72
	Traditional	3.938	4	0.415	4	5
	Baby Boomer	8.428	5	0.134	24	44
	Gen X	4.049	5	0.542	14	18
	Millenial	2.790	4	0.594	8	5
	WF2020	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	
Q2	Generation	4.307	5	0.506	51	72
	Traditional	3.600	4	0.463	4	5
	Baby Boomer	7.762	5	0.170	25	44
	Gen X	1.940	4	0.747	14	18
	Millenial	2.297	3	0.513	8	5
	WF2020	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0
Q3	Generation	11.564	5	0.041	51	72
	Traditional	3.938	4	0.415	4	5
	Baby Boomer	7.978	6	0.240	25	44
	Gen X	7.547	5	0.183	14	18
	Millenial	3.142	5	0.678	8	5
	WF2020	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0
Q4	Generation	9.942	5	0.77	51	72
	Traditional	4.140	4	0.387	4	5
	Baby Boomer	7.957	6	0.241	25	44
	Gen X	10.405	6	0.109	14	18
	Millenial	6.541	5	0.265	8	5
	WF2020	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0

TABLE 5
CROSS-TABULATION RESULTS FOR Q1-Q4 BY DAY (SUNDAY-TUESDAY) BY GENERATION

questions. We have found that junior administrators ($X2 = 13.644$, $p < 0.08$), like those personnel from the Southern region, may either be more amenable to change, or may not be as decisive as those with other titles (see Table 7).

To further investigate the null hypotheses we used only the data from Tuesday to determine if there was no relationship between generations and the answers of the dependent variables (see Table 8). Each of the five null hypotheses was found to be significant using non-parametric one sample Chi-square testing. The individual counts for Baby Boomer responses and Generation X responses were tabulated (see Table 9). We removed the responses from the Traditionalists and Millennials since each of those groups had very low numbers. No statistically significant differences were found between the responses.

Interestingly the highest counts for each group occurred for the same critical issue identified. We hypothesized creating an overall "plan of attack" based upon the assembly votes and then creating a "Plan B" to reflect any retirements, change of leadership, etc. We, however, are not able to do so in this instance.

It is also interesting to note there are changes, which have taken place when controlling for generations (see Table 9). Almost 57% of Baby Boomers selected "defining a new vision of education in the USA" as the top institutional gap whereas only 37.5% of Generation Xer's selected that item. On the other hand, creating, maintaining, and sustaining internal and external partnerships was selected 31.3% of the time by Generation Xer's but only 13.5% of the time by Baby Boomers. Does this reflect more time for

	TABLE 6					
	CROSS-TABULATION RESULTS FOR Q1-Q4 BY DAY (SUNDAY-TUESDAY) BY REGION					
Crosstab		Pearson X^2	df	Asy. p	N Sunday	N Tuesday
Var 1	Var 2					
Q1	Region	10.776	5	0.056	50	71
	Middle	6.809	5	0.235	11	14
	New England	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1
	North Central	5.186	5	0.394	8	22
	North West	4.032	3	0.258	8	9
	Southern	12.673	5	0.027	21	21
	Western	3.000	2	0.223	2	4
Q2	Region	2.760	5	0.737	50	71
	Middle	2.205	5	0.820	11	14
	New England	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1
	North Central	9.261	5	0.099	8	22
	North West	4.122	4	0.390	8	9
	Southern	4.500	5	0.480	21	21
	Western	0.000	1	1.000	2	4
Q3	Region	4.041	6	0.671	50	71
	Middle	3.650	5	0.601	11	14
	New England	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1
	North Central	7.094	5	0.214	8	22
	North West	3.907	4	0.419	8	9
	Southern	3.086	6	0.798	21	21
	Western	1.500	1	0.221	2	4
Q4	Region	9.917	5	0.078	50	71
	Middle	2.318	4	0.678	11	14
	New England	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1
	North Central	9.850	6	0.131	8	22
	North West	3.260	5	0.605	8	9
	Southern	5.933	6	0.431	21	21
	Western	1.500	2	0.472	2	4

"abstract" thinking? Does this reflect the daily work routines of the generational administrator? This argument could go either way. As such, we will leave it to you to decide.

For those projected institutional gaps and controlling for generations we also find some gaps to consider for our discussion (see Table 9). Of the Baby Boomers 18.9% chose employee selection whereas none of the Generation Xer's did. Likewise 25% of the Generation Xer's selected "technology" but only 10.8% of the Baby Boomers did. Does this reflect the intergenerational differences regarding technology use? Does this reflect differences in "broader" institutional thinking regarding succession planning? Again, this sets the stage for more discussions to be had at a future time.

For those actions taken on behalf of the students we find some gaps between the generations as well (see Table 9). While the Baby Boomers selected "creating stronger community relations" 20.9% of the time only 5.56% of the Generation Xer's did. This may point to a cognizance issue as

		TABLE 7 CROSS-TABULATION RESULTS FOR Q1-Q4 BY DAY (SUNDAY-TUESDAY) BY TITLE				
Crosstab		Pearson X^2	df	Asy. p	N Sunday	N Tuesday
Var 1	Var 2					
Q1	Title	7.581	4	0.108	51	71
	Board Mem.	3.000	2	0.223	1	2
	President	0.938	2	0.626	8	7
	Sr. Admin.	7.344	5	0.196	14	21
	Other Adm.	13.644	5	0.018	16	23
	Faculty	2.946	4	0.567	7	8
	Other	4.350	4	0.361	5	10
Q2	Title	4.106	5	0.534	51	71
	Board Mem.	0.750	1	0.386	1	2
	President	4.420	5	0.491	8	7
	Sr. Admin.	6.771	5	0.238	14	21
	Other Adm.	4.628	5	0.463	16	23
	Faculty	10.179	5	0.070	7	8
	Other	3.750	4	0.441	5	10
Q3	Title	5.008	5	0.415	51	71
	Board Mem.	3.000	2	0.223	1	2
	President	5.960	5	0.310	8	7
	Sr. Admin.	3.056	6	0.802	14	21
	Other Adm.	4.278	6	0.639	16	23
	Faculty	2.143	4	0.710	7	8
	Other	7.125	4	0.129	5	10
Q4	Title	10.146	5	0.071	51	71
	Board Mem.	3.000	2	0.223	1	2
	President	4.286	5	0.509	8	7
	Sr. Admin.	4.514	5	0.478	14	21
	Other Adm.	3.067	6	0.800	16	23
	Faculty	6.071	4	0.194	7	8
	Other	5.100	5	0.404	5	10

well, reflective of the daily routines of those administrators and faculty.

Finally we find some puzzling data on those actions taken on behalf of the community. On the one hand we find Baby Boomers selecting maintaining and developing community relations 17.9% and understanding the role on economic development 20.5% of the time over Generation Xer's 0% for both. On the other hand we find telling the economic development-community college story 27.8% of the time for Generation Xer's to 17.9% of the time for Baby Boomers. However, we feel this mirrors the earlier arguments within the groups to collapse these into one item or leave them as three.

Thus, we have concluded with our inferential statistics that we have found something, but really cannot be certain without further testing. The significance of the inferential findings alone warrants replication and scaling up to larger samples and different populations.

TABLE 8
NON-PARAMETRIC ONE-SAMPLE CHI-SQUARE TEST RESULTS FOR
Q1-Q4 FROM TUESDAY ONLY BY GENERATION

	Null Hypothesis	X^2	df	p	Decision
H01:	Generation categories occur with equal probabilities	56.333	3	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
H02:	The categories of #1 occur with equal probabilities	32.642	4	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
H03:	The categories of #2 occur with equal probabilities	15.842	4	0.003	Reject null hypothesis
H04:	The categories of #3 occur with equal probabilities	33.895	5	0.000	Reject null hypothesis
H05:	The categories of #4 occur with equal probabilities	22.615	5	0.000	Reject null hypothesis

TABLE 9
COUNTS FROM VOTING BY BABY BOOMERS AND GENERATION X ATTENDEES

Question	Baby Boomer n	Baby Boomer %	Generation X n	Generation X %
#1 What are your current institutional gaps?	(N = 37)		(N = 16)	
Faculty-administration communication problems	0	0.00	1	6.25
Professional development for all	7	18.9	2	12.5
Defining a "new vision of education" in the USA	21	56.8	6	37.5
Creating/maintaining internal/external partnerships	5	13.5	5	31.3
Creating/maintaining global partnership	4	10.8	2	12.5
#2 What are your projected institutional gaps?	(N = 37)		(N = 16)	
Employee selection	7	18.9	0	0.00
Connections with WFD/Industry	10	27.0	3	18.8
Leadership/HR	4	10.8	2	12.5
Teaching "to fit the needs"	12	32.4	6	37.5
Technology	4	10.8	4	25.0
#3 Actions on behalf of *students?*	(N = 39)		(N = 18)	
E-learning infrastructure development	3	7.69	2	11.1
Becoming more multicultural	2	5.13	0	0.00
Creating stronger community relations	8	20.5	1	5.56
Breaking those "silos" between departments	0	0.00	1	5.56
Employability skill training	10	25.6	7	38.9
Critical thinking skill training	16	41.0	7	38.9
#4 Actions on behalf of *the community?*	(N = 39)		(N = 18)	
Maintaining a continuous dialog with the community	1	2.57	2	11.1
Maintaining/developing regional partnerships	7	17.9	0	0.00
Telling the "CC/Economic development" story	7	17.9	5	27.8
Globalization	4	10.3	4	22.2
Understanding the role on economic development	8	20.5	0	0.00
Collaboration with business partners	12	30.8	7	38.9

DISCUSSION

To bring this research to a conclusion we will first discuss some of the limitations of this research before introducing our thoughts as to the broader implications of this research for both practitioners and researchers alike.

Limitations of Research

Unfortunately, as with most research, there are a number of limitations. In the future, the researchers could record individual personal response system numbers by respondent in order to conduct the research using pair-wise analysis. This should increase the insight into the data.

The sample size could be expanded. This would enhance the strength of the statistics procedures. Using non-parametric procedures yields some significance, but not particularly strong results. A larger sample size would help, however, the sample size is reflected and largely dictated by the number of participants at the conference. Over the years, as budgets tighten at community colleges, attendees are being more selective as to the conferences they will attend. The CCFA has seen its numbers shrink from over 200 down to around 100 or so in the past five years.

Since the keynote speech and speaker vary from year to year there is only weak or causal analysis, which can be inferred from longitudinal analysis of the data. We do not see this changing any time soon, however this is a limitation.

Of course, replicating this study with this group over time would also overcome some limitations of this study. However, this too, will probably not be done.

Finally, using only nominal variables creates some limitations for the study. It would be interesting to use some Likert scales to gauge intensity of categorical variables for each of the questions.

Implications for Practitioners

The implications for practitioners are interesting. On the one hand we see some responses, which seem to mirror daily activities and routines. On the other hand when we control by generations we can see a "shift" in thought processes. We have seen that practitioners wish to be very involved with maintaining relationships with business, industry, and the community in both a local and global sense. However, we also have heard concerns about the longer hours involved in serving as a community college administrator. And those longer hours leave little time for creating, maintaining or sustaining those relationships.

We definitely see a very heavy focus on workforce development. The explosion of nanotechnology and green jobs over the past few years has served community college administrators as a "wake up call" to be prepared to create workforce programs "on the fly" for occupations tomorrow which do not exist today. The advent of working from home, as mentioned by Meister, should serve as a catalyst for further discussions to investigate "future jobs" for researchers and practitioners alike.

It will be interesting to see some discussions evolving on the role of the community college in the new century. There are many external forces shaping the role of the "new century" community college, including E-learning, "for-profit" colleges (such as Kaplan, the University of Phoenix, and others), and baccalaureate granting community colleges. In many respects these forces all combine to create a very tenuous set of circumstances for community colleges. Defining that "new vision of education" certainly will take center stage in discussions for a few years.

Implications for Researchers

There is one glaring implication for researchers that would be remiss in our duties if we did not mention here. We selected Appreciative Inquiry to be the research framework for this study, however we cannot help but make parallels to the rise of AI with the rise of social media. There are numerous similarities, which bear further research. For example, Brogan (2010) says, "you can either speak *at* people or you can speak *with* people" (p. 1). Effective social media allows people to talk with other people. This too, is the hallmark of AI research: empowering the participants to create synergy and change. We feel more research comparing and contrasting AI and social media may yield further positive changes in AI as a research methodology (see also, Calabrese, et al., 2008).

Also, we have yet found a mixed methods study incorporating Appreciative Inquiry as the foun-

dational framework. This could be good or bad. It will be interesting to see if other researchers follow suit and attempt mixed methods projects using AI.

Implications for Leadership Programs

There are some implications for leadership programs found within this study. We have found several instances of communications problems in the categories. For example, we saw one item on "telling the economic development-community college story." This would be a good project to include in a leadership program. As we mentioned, communication skills almost always seems to rank near the bottom of the leadership competencies in our past studies. This alone should serve as a call for more inclusion in leadership programs. Our findings here echo that sentiment from past studies.

Moreover, we have seen suggestions for inclusion of service-based learning type items within curriculum. Leadership over curriculum has been gaining momentum in leadership programs over the years in both K-12 and higher education. We see no reason for this to slow anytime soon. The data also points to employability and critical thinking skills. These too, have been sources of conversations for more than a decade. What we have experienced in those curriculum discussions has been fairly consistent: "To include those items, something else needs to go...but everything else is crucial..." In many respects this is analogous to the "chicken and egg" debate. We feel educators should empower students to complete assignments or readings above and beyond the base curriculum whether as extra credit or for personal growth and development.

CONCLUSION

As the years go by and the research methodologies improve we are finding ourselves with deeper understanding of the data from the research and policy sessions. In the 2011 Community College Futures Assembly we have noted the strong presence of workforce development attributes in all areas of the research. This is certainly understandable given the current economic climate and emphasis on securing external funding. We see no reason why workforce development will not continue to be part of the discussion in the years to come. This is not to underestimate the importance of other factors in community college administration such as instructional programs, services, governance, planning and finance. As a final note we wish to include one conversation from the policy focus groups: what will our finances be like in 2015 when the enrollments drop because the economy recovers?

We wish to thank all of the assembly participants from the past and give special thanks to the focus group participants for the generous donation of their precious time in helping to move forward by identifying critical issues, provide vision and strategic planning for community college administrators. We look forward to the 2012 Community College Futures Assembly where critical issues will once again be discussed with respect to themes identified from a current book with community college administration implications.

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