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Editor's Choice: A Community College Leadership Academy: Developing Leaders For Massachusetts

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Introduction

Community colleges are facing the serious challenge of finding adequate leadership for the future. Two studies sponsored by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) found a rapid upward trend in the age profile among presidents and senior administrative staff in community colleges, and these studies reported that nearly half of those in senior leadership positions plan to retire during the current decade (Weisman & Vaughan 2001; Shults 2001). The scale and imminence of the leadership turnover can be called a "crisis" for community colleges and creates a pressing need to find talented new leaders (Campbell, 2002; Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002).

The AACC has recognized the crisis by adding attention to leadership development to its mission statement and by creating Leading Forward, a new and well-funded initiative to encourage leadership development programs. Leading Forward held four Leadership Summits throughout the country in 2003 and 2004 to explore with community college leaders and university faculty the best content and approaches for leadership development on the scale required by the crisis (Vincent, 2004), and it maintains a database of leadership development programs. The Leading Forward project has called for new strategies to ensure that qualified leaders are ready to fill senior positions (Vincent, 2004).

* This article is published as an Editor's Choice selection. Editor's Choice articles are selected by the editorial staff of the *Community College Review* and have not gone through the peer review process.

The presidents of Massachusetts' community colleges and their executive office have also recognized the leadership crisis and have responded with a new and different approach: the Community College Leadership Academy (CCLA). CCLA was established to help prepare senior administrators and faculty members for the many leadership positions becoming available at community colleges throughout the state. CCLA provides a year-long experience for a select group of Fellows drawn from senior and middle management and faculty positions from community colleges throughout Massachusetts. It features a series of day-long monthly seminars; extensive additional reading, writing, and activity expectations for Fellows to develop and hone leadership skills; and a week-long summer residency college.

This article describes CCLA after its first full year of operation. The first section will tell the story of the development of CCLA and describe its major structures. Subsequent sections will describe the Fellows, curriculum, expectations, and evaluation results for the first year. A concluding section will discuss implications for other colleges and leadership development. The authors all served on planning and instructional teams for CCLA during its first year and believe that there are valuable lessons to be learned for other community colleges grappling with the problem of leadership renewal. This article should be of interest as well to those seeking to occupy leadership positions and those affiliated with college and university graduate and other programs concerned with leadership preparation and development.

The Development of the CCLA Model

The presidents of all 15 community colleges in Massachusetts meet regularly in a Community College Presidents' Council to discuss matters of common concern and to forge a common voice on matters of community college policy in the state. They are assisted by an executive office, whose director, Jan Motta, manages the flow of issues, policy discussions, and follow-up activity on behalf of the presidents. Director Motta's office also interacts with other governance bodies (Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, the state legislature, and the governor's office) and other higher education sectors (universities and state colleges). By 2002, Motta and all 15 presidents were aware of the problem of pending retirements among senior administrators and the need to find large numbers of

able people for leadership positions. They also recognized that there was talent, energy, and enthusiasm within the existing ranks of administrators and faculty members and wanted to support a "recruit from within" strategy. CCLA was developed in response to both of these needs.

Motta started the ball rolling in fall 2002. She called together a small planning group, intentionally bringing together a community college president, Bob Pura, with experience in and commitment to the idea of leadership development and Patricia Crosson, a recently retired faculty member in higher education from the University of Massachusetts (UMASS) Amherst, who had taught many administrators from community colleges and also currently served as a community college trustee. Together, Motta, Pura, and Crosson talked through the issues and prepared a model for a program that was to become CCLA. The model was enthusiastically endorsed by the Community College Presidents' Council, which became the official sponsor of CCLA, and was supported as well by the UMASS Amherst, which became a partner in the enterprise.

The mission of CCLA is to provide an avenue through which community colleges can prepare their future leaders while supporting existing talent. CCLA was developed with several starting assumptions related to community college leadership, including the following:

- Community colleges need experienced and dedicated leaders in all senior management positions and among the faculty. CCLA was planned for a group of Fellows, drawn from senior or middle-level positions in Massachusetts community colleges, who showed the capacity for leadership in senior positions including the presidency.
- Leaders for community colleges need knowledge. Planners envisioned an academic experience that would explore in depth the community college movement and the many issues, problems, and opportunities facing community colleges today. CCLA would draw upon research, literature, and best practices; bring Fellows in contact with experienced scholars and practitioners; and instill in Fellows an appreciation for continued intellectual engagement and renewal.
- Community college leaders need excellent skills in written and oral communication, the capacity to work effectively with a wide array of individuals and groups internal and external to their college, a talent for team work and problem solving, and the ability to be sophisticated users of the research and literature on community colleges.

CCLA would provide for the development of these skills and abilities including opportunities for individual Fellows to assess and work on their own professional development needs.

- Community colleges must constantly change to respond effectively to their unique mission of responding to student and community needs and providing open access to higher education. CCLA would help Fellows recognize the imperative for change and provide access to a network of Fellows who could be helpful over the years—creating a community of committed and talented leaders for the future of all community colleges in Massachusetts.

To realize the vision for CCLA, the original planning group developed a model for a year-long Academy including monthly seminars and a residency college for a select group of Fellows. Each year, a new Academy would be offered to a different group of Fellows.

The problem, of course, was funding. There was no separate source of funds in the community colleges system or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to support such an ambitious undertaking as a separate and fully-staffed Community College Leadership Academy.

The original planning group, therefore, created a model based on partnership, collaboration, and sharing the burden of program development, implementation, and financial support. The model endorsed by the community college presidents established a collaboration among existing entities (the Community College Presidents' Council, the Massachusetts Community Colleges Executive Office, each of the fifteen community colleges in Massachusetts, and UMASS Amherst) and created two new groups (the planning board and the instructional team). This allowed for the creation of a substantial new program without undo managerial or financial strain on any one entity. The major structural components include the following:

- *The Community College Presidents' Council.* By sponsoring CCLA, the Presidents' Council invests in leadership development, sends an important message to community college personnel, and provides an important authority umbrella. The Presidents' Council selects the host college for each year, seeks nominations from presidents for Academy Fellows, and approves the members of the planning board. Presidents also get personally involved in the Academy through their own

college's Fellows and through participation in Academy seminars and celebrations. Active support and involvement of the presidents are the key factors in the success of the Academy.

- *The Massachusetts Community Colleges Executive Office.* The executive office provides general oversight for the Academy, maintains the CCLA web site, disseminates descriptive information, and manages the flow of information and decision making among the Presidents' Council, host college, planning board, and instructional team. In general, the executive office serves as the public face of CCLA.
- *Host College.* Each year a different community college has responsibility for hosting and managing the Academy. The president of the host college takes on the leadership role for the Academy during that year, managing the selection of Fellows, planning for curriculum development and instruction, and managing the collection and disbursement of funds to support the Academy. The host college president also arranges special beginning and completion ceremonies for Fellows, chairs the planning board, works with the instructional team, and keeps the Presidents' Council and the executive office informed about developments related to the Academy. Hosting CCLA is time-consuming work for the president and others from the host college, but it is made easier by the rotating model. Greenfield Community College and President Bob Pura, a member of the initial planning group, hosted CCLA for the all-important first year of implementation. Pura was thus a key player in creating a successful working collaboration and first-year Academy.
- *University Affiliation.* The initial planning group and the Presidents' Council looked to affiliation with UMASS Amherst as a partner in the development of the model and curriculum for the CCLA as well as for instructional involvement. The partnership made it possible for Fellows to be able to earn graduate credit for the experience and, where it was appropriate for Fellows, to link to ongoing graduate study. While other universities could have been chosen for this role, UMASS Amherst had a long history of working with community colleges and had personnel willing to help develop the idea. UMASS Amherst, through its Department of Education Policy, Research and Administration and specialization in higher education within the School of Education, provides support for CCLA through involvement on

the original planning group, the planning board, and the instructional team. It is a successful working partnership and a clear asset for the Academy and for the Fellows.

- *Planning Board.* The planning board is the major policy-making body for CCLA responsible for admissions, withdrawal, fiscal, curricular, and speaker policies in consultation with the instructional team. It advises the host college president, executive office director, and Presidents' Council on matters related to the Academy. Planning board members are drawn from senior administrative positions such as chief academic officer, chief fiscal officer, chief student affairs officer in Massachusetts community colleges, and it includes the members of the instructional team. The planning board is chaired by the president of the host college each year, but the 3-year terms with differing start dates for its members provides continuity for the Academy over time. This ensures that while the planning board is concerned with how the Academy is going for the current year, it is also thinking for the long term, ensuring the viability and sustainability of CCLA.
- *Instructional Team.* The instructional team provides the substance of the Academy for Fellows. The team is responsible for organizing and leading the monthly seminars and residency college and for working with Fellows as mentors and advisers. For the instructional team, collaboration is again the model, bringing together community college and university personnel. For the first year of the Academy, President Pura included in the instructional team Patricia Crosson from the original planning group; Kate Douglas, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs at Greenfield Community College (GCC) and GCC liaison to the Academy; Kerry Ann O'Meara, Assistant Professor at UMASS Amherst; and Charmian Sperling, Provost Emerita and Vice President for Educational Development at Middlesex Community College.

Several imperatives led to the share the burden model for financial arrangements: the Academy needed to be affordable for Fellows and community colleges; the number of Fellows each year had to be small enough to allow for productive academic experiences and interactions; and the Academy had to be sustainable year after year. Two Fellows from each

of the 15 community colleges were determined to be the feasible number of Fellows from a programmatic, instructional, and fiscal point of view. Each of the 15 community colleges paid the per-Fellow fee of \$2,000 to cover the costs of instruction, materials, publicity, and such during the initial year (the fee increased to \$2,500 for the second year), and each college committed to provide release time for Fellows to participate in the Academy. The host college takes responsibility for covering the fees for its own Fellows, provides the services of an administrator or liaison for all logistical arrangements, and covers the costs of many extras, including opening and closing ceremonies. Monthly seminars are held at different community colleges (for one seminar, the State House) throughout the year and the community college hosting the seminar covers lunch and other costs for the day. Fellows pay for their own travel expenses for seminars and the residency college and pay any tuition and fee expenses related to university credit. Sharing the burden produced enough resources to operate CCLA. Planners are convinced that it is the only viable and sustainable way to accomplish a program of the scope and magnitude of CCLA in Massachusetts.

Important lessons were learned from the first-year implementation of the Academy that relate to the share the burden philosophy. The team approach to planning and curricular development helped bring in many community college personnel and allowed for an effective community college-university partnership, but it is time consuming for all concerned and the absence of a single responsible person can sometimes allow important details to be missed. An instructional or program director for the Academy could alleviate this problem. The financial arrangements worked but would not have done so without sizeable volunteer commitments on the part of two members of the instructional team, the host college president, planning board members, and others. There is an ongoing tension between keeping fees and expenses as low as possible to be affordable for community colleges and Fellows and between garnering the resources needed to run a high quality program that is sustainable over time. Community college presidents must balance the tension to ensure the continuing success of CCLA.

CCLA Fellows

The Academy sought Fellows as representatives of a select group of community college professionals identified by their presidents for their accomplishments and potential for senior leadership in academic and administrative roles. Many of these individuals aspired to presidencies or senior-level leadership positions. The planning board envisioned Fellows as having a current level of experience at the department chair level or above since planning board members believed that that level of experience and responsibility would provide a strong context for further leadership development.

The guiding principles established by the planning board were that the application process be driven by individual presidents, that it be competitive, and that it include a written statement addressing why applicants wished to participate, what their long term professional goals were, and what they considered their strengths. Academy applicants sent their forms directly to their president. The planning board limited enrollment in the 2003-2004 Academy to 30 Fellows. This was driven by the competing interests of cultivating a quality learning environment and, as a tuition-driven model, the generation of adequate revenues. In support of the locally based decisions of individual presidents and to encourage their mentoring role with Fellows, the planning board accepted each president's nomination of two Fellows.

The application and decision-making processes on campus varied widely among the 15 community colleges. The most open was implemented by a president who advertised the opportunity among all divisions of the college and encouraged all interested parties to apply. Upon receiving 15 applications, she brought them to her cabinet for collaborative consideration of the individual application statements, the potential of each applicant, and the priorities set out in the college's strategic plan.

Once accepted, applicants were informed of the commitment required in a congratulatory letter from the instructional team. They needed to be willing to fulfill reading, writing, and presentation expectations along with leading a campus-based college project. They would also be expected to participate actively in monthly seminars and the residency college. The final cohort of 30 Fellows included 2 faculty department chairs, 10 mid-level administrators from academic affairs, 6 student affairs professionals, 8 administrative services professionals, and 4 deans or vice-

presidents of continuing education. In addition to this broad representation from across the divisions that make up an organization of higher education, the planning board and instructional team were pleased that approximately 25% of the Fellows nominated by the presidents were minorities.

In general it seemed that the more initiative taken on the part of the individual Fellow in the application process, the greater the investment in individual learning over the course of the Academy year. This assumption became particularly significant as the more challenging written assignments became due. In the final analysis, the Fellows who demonstrated initiative through their applications and ongoing efforts within the Academy seemed to maximize the Academy opportunity as a whole.

The Curriculum

To contribute to the CCLA's purpose of developing well-prepared leaders for the Massachusetts community colleges, the Academy curriculum was structured to achieve a specific set of goals. Curricular goals, listed below, provide both direction and context for the Academy's academic content and design:

- Enhance understanding of important community college issues and their leadership implications.
- Deepen understanding of leadership in general and the Fellows' own leadership in particular.
- Link theory and practice through the research, planning, and implementation of a significant college project.
- Facilitate professional networking.
- Provide an opportunity for graduate credit and possible access to EdD study.

Guided by these goals, the instructional team worked to create a set of learning experiences that would consistently link theory to practice and would capitalize on the intersections between important community college issues and effective leadership. The integration of these topics, typically separated through different courses of study, seemed ideally suited to the needs of experienced mid-level administrators who sought advancement within the community college sector. Our experience led us to believe that a continuing focus on the question "leadership for what?" would

guide a curriculum that would consistently consider leadership within, rather than outside, the context of the community college history and ongoing challenges. The syllabus, once finalized and approved by the CCLA planning board, was submitted to and approved by UMASS Amherst as a four-credit course in higher education for those Fellows who chose to have their work evaluated by standards that would typically apply to doctoral-level courses.

The Academy was designed to have several components. The primary forum for didactic instruction was the monthly seminar. Seven 1-day seminars, each offered on a different community college campus, focused in turn on the following topics:

- History, Current Context, and Future Prospects for Community Colleges
- Leadership Theories, Concepts, and Practices
- Teaching and Learning: Intersections of Theory and Practice
- Understanding and Leading Complex Academic and Public Organizations
- Getting to Know Community College Students: Enacting a Commitment to Diversity
- Resource Development, Management, and Allocation
- Assessment and Accountability

Each instructional team member took responsibility for planning and leading one or more of the seminars. This activity involved our own teaching as well as bringing in outside experts. Each seminar was preceded by faculty-selected readings, periodically enhanced by supplementary activities (e.g., web-based discussions, writing assignments, investigation of relevant information on Fellows' own campuses). Seminar formats varied, with many involving guest speakers or panels on related topics. Sometimes the speakers or panels included local experts (e.g., accrediting agency leadership staff, college fiscal officers, faculty). At other times, more distant higher education notables were called upon to share their expertise and perspectives. For example, in the Academy's first year, AACC President George Boggs and LaGuardia Community College President Gail Mellow were guest speakers at monthly seminars. Specific activities flowed from the issues at hand and typically included collaborative group work, self-assessments, case studies, and/or discus-

sion. Some strategies proved more effective than others. By and large, Fellows preferred short, directly relevant readings and appreciated extensive interactive learning.

At each seminar, the campus president joined with the Fellows for a leadership luncheon—a time to engage in a personal way with Fellows about leadership. Each college leader presented a unique persona and perspective, giving Fellows an appreciation for the diversity of styles, priorities, and thinking among presidents of community colleges in Massachusetts. While the luncheons did decrease the amount of time Fellows had for networking and community building within their own group, Fellows noted the opportunity for candid discussion with the presidents as an important feature of the Academy.

Engagement with the literature on leadership was an important curricular component of the Academy. Fellows selected from a list of leadership-focused books chosen by the instructional team to introduce or reinforce different perspectives on leadership in higher education (Addy and Baker books combined as one reading choice). During the Academy's initial year, the choices were the following:

- Addy, Cathryn L. (1995). *The President's Journey*. Bolton, MA: Anker.
- Baker, George A. (1998). *Managing Change: A Model for Community College Leaders*, Washington, DC: Community College Press.
- Birnbaum, Robert. (1992). *How Academic Leadership Works*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. (2003). *Rosabeth Moss Kanter on the Frontiers of Management*. Boston: Harvard Business School.
- Kouzes, James M., & Posener, Barry Z. (2002). *The Leadership Challenge (3rd edition)*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Senge, Peter. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday.

Fellows engaged these readings through book discussion groups throughout the academic year, a leadership book reflection paper submitted in the spring, and a book group presentation to the full group of Fellows and instructional team members at the residency college. Fellows enjoyed these classic books on leadership and organizational behavior and did a commendable job of developing discussion questions to relate the books' concepts to the community college setting for the rest of the group.

Another key component of the curriculum was the college project. In consultation with their community college president, each Fellow worked independently throughout the Academy on a college project. The college project was an opportunity for Fellows to demonstrate leadership within their college community. Examples of projects are chairing an important committee, researching and implementing a new initiative, or developing a new curricular program.

The instructional team designed the 5-day June residency college as a capstone experience for the Academy. While the experience was initially perceived by some Fellows as an add-on to the “real” Academy, it was for many the portion of the Academy that carried the greatest value and impact. Occupying almost half of the entire Academy’s teaching hours, the residency college brought together all of the CCLA elements. It carried the additional advantage of providing concentrated time together, thus facilitating personal bonds and professional collegiality among the Fellows themselves as well as between and among Fellows and their mentors, other instructional team members, and major leaders in higher education who served as guest speakers and seminar leaders.

The residency college was planned to incorporate every component of the Academy. It included presentations and small-group sessions with noted university and community college leaders such as the Director of the University of Texas at Austin Community College Leadership Program John Roueche, Massachusetts Board of Higher Education Chancellor Judith Gill, UMASS Amherst Chancellor John Lombardi, and Tunxis Community-Technical College President Cathryn Addy. All Fellows who had read common leadership books met to discuss their books further and to plan group presentations for their CCLA colleagues who had focused on other leadership books. All of the Fellows participated in each of the book discussions. While some Fellows were occupied in book group meetings or small group sessions with visiting lecturers, others met with their mentors for individual coaching sessions.

An academic mini-conference during the residency college featured the Fellows’ college projects. Two project presentations were scheduled for each concurrent session, spread over 4 days of the residency college. The structure gave each Fellow the opportunity to present to approximately half of the CCLA cohort and to attend 12 other presentations.

Both Fellows and instructors alike were tremendously impressed by the high quality of their colleagues’ work and saw the mini-conference as a rich professional exchange of research and best practices. The presentations also were, by design, a dress rehearsal for on-campus presentations.

While the curriculum anticipated the residency college as a powerful culmination of the Academy, each Fellow and instructor considered the impact of the residency college to be far greater than the sum of its parts. Continual informal networking and professional dialogue and exchange contributed to the true learning community that evolved over the 5 days—described by one Fellow “as the chance we’ve longed for...to bond, to rely on each other, and learn from each other.” Others highlighted the value of their new network’s potential influence on their personal and professional lives in the years to come.

Expectations for Fellows

We know from research on the undergraduate student experience that when faculty communicate high expectations to their students, their students perform at greater levels than they otherwise would (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Similarly, all of the best leadership programs nationally have noted that they begin with high expectations for participation, engagement with the subject matter, writing, reading, and presentation. A significant investment was made by each president in each Fellow’s success in CCLA. Thus, the instructional team set high expectations for the Fellows in CCLA.

Given that a major part of the curriculum was comprised of monthly seminar sessions, every Fellow was expected to attend each monthly seminar. While each campus president had agreed to the Fellow’s participation in these sessions, many Fellows did not see a corresponding reduction in their workload. Therefore, while all the Fellows who completed the Academy attended an average of all but one of the sessions, many found it difficult and sometimes stressful to get away from campus. Despite this, they all met expectations for lively discussion and for engaging with speakers and topics. Instructional team members received compliments from presidents and from national speakers on the quality of the questions and issues Fellows raised in each seminar meeting.

Fellows were given a packet of 30 to 40 pages to read for each seminar (in addition to the leadership books described in the previous section). The readings were intended to provide Fellows with the history and current trends related to each topic discussed and to provoke questions and discussion. Overall, Fellows found these readings to be extremely helpful and timely, relating directly to issues they were experiencing on campus. During the fall it was evident that Fellows were extremely conscientious with doing assigned readings but, as the year progressed, many shared that it became more difficult to complete seminar readings and to complete writing assignments at the same time.

Fellows were given several written assignments during the Academy. They were asked to prepare an analysis of their choice of the leadership books, a college project report and literature review, and a report of an independent professional development project. As part of the college project assignment, Fellows provided an initial plan and a mid-year report to the instructional team, submitted a review of the literature and best practices on the topic of their college project, presented the project results in professional presentations at the academic mini-conference during the residency college, and submitted a lengthy final report.

Somewhat unexpectedly, we had a number of problems related to the literature review aspect of this assignment. First, while all the Fellows were accustomed to writing short reports and briefing papers for their positions, those who had not pursued graduate work or who had pursued it in scientific or math-related fields found the concept of a literature review somewhat challenging. There were many unanswered questions related to style and form as well as to how much literature should be reviewed and how it should be presented. Second, some Fellows felt that while consulting relevant campus models might be important, writing up an analysis of that reading was extraneous and something one only did in the context of graduate work. Third, the literature reviews were due in January at a time when many of the Fellows were extremely busy with campus work. As a result, literature reviews were turned in late, and either because of misunderstandings regarding what a literature review was or because of the quality of the work, a good percentage of Fellows were asked to revise their submissions. Fellows were held to this expectation, however, and all Fellows who completed the program did finally submit an approved literature review. In the end, although the process

had been painful for all concerned, many Fellows thanked us for this assignment, noting that they felt they were forced to learn things related to their college projects that ultimately supported its success. Other Fellows encouraged us to build more time into the program for writing support, a suggestion the following year's instructional team took to heart.

The instructional team learned several things from this experience. First, it is important to provide Fellows with concrete models of literature reviews and to provide significant support in writing throughout the project. Second, college presidents need to stress the importance of grounding college projects in current research, campus models, and literature in order for Fellows to see its importance. Third, and consistent with all of the expectations, college presidents need to ensure that Fellows are provided sufficient work reduction or release time to complete assignments and meet fairly rigorous requirements.

For the most part, the lengthy final college project reports were very good. Overall, the college project assignment provided opportunities for Fellows to shine; many poured their hearts into their work to make real change or create something new on their campuses. They demonstrated campus leadership. Several Fellows shared, however, that they were disappointed that they did not have more mentoring from their college presidents on the design or implementation of their projects and wished for more support and face-time between Fellows and presidents.

During the January break, each Fellow was expected to participate in an individual professional development activity. The purpose of this activity was for individuals to identify a skill or area of knowledge to improve upon as part of their professional growth and development as leaders and to develop a plan for pursuing growth in this area. Examples included gaining budgeting experience, improving computer skills, or researching an administrative area. This activity went exceedingly well, as many of the Fellows were eager to choose their own development activities tailored to personally identified needs. Fellows submitted brief reports on these experiences which were overwhelmingly positive.

Fellows were offered the opportunity to submit their written work and participation in the Academy to one of the instructional team members who was also a faculty member in the School of Education at UMASS Amherst for four graduate credits. Fellows were accepted into the four-credit option by submitting their review of the literature 1 month early

and having it considered by the faculty member on a pass-fail basis. Participation and all written work was taken into consideration for the granting of credit at the end of the Academy. Only three Fellows decided to pursue this option, and the instructional team did some additional assessment as to why others did not. Based on the Fellows' feedback, due dates for assignments will be adjusted in future years of the Academy to increase the likelihood of Fellows taking this option. However, the instructional team believes that the amount of extra time and effort required will continue to be an issue for many, and adjusting due dates alone will not increase participation in doctoral-level study.

Assessment and reflection on the first year suggests that while we offered the degree-entry option, we never had explicit discussions or encouraged presidents to engage in discussion with Fellows about the importance of the doctorate for those who aspire to senior leadership positions in community colleges. While many Fellows know of those who have achieved senior positions without advanced degrees, the instructional team recognizes that, nationwide, advanced degrees are increasingly expected for senior leadership positions. Given that 25 of 30 Fellows in the 2004 class of Fellows did not hold doctorates, it is important to raise this issue formally early on through coaching sessions, presidential lunches, and discussions with Fellows.

Evaluation

In order to accomplish the goal of opening the Academy, CCLA planning and instructional teams focused on policy, curriculum development, and administrative logistics. The evaluation plan for the initial year included a brief mid-year feedback instrument, a comprehensive final evaluation conducted during the residency college, and plans for incorporating greater monitoring and evaluation throughout the second year.

The final evaluation instrument of the initial year was comprised of 50 questions. It employed a five-point Likert-type scale asking for an assessment of the extent to which CCLA had met its primary goals, the effectiveness of various pedagogical components and of the individual seminars, and the value of the various assignments and requirements. The 24 Fellows who completed the Academy and all four instructional team members returned the eight-page document for a response rate of 100%.

The Fellows who successfully completed the 2003-2004 CCLA gave the inaugural year learning experience an overall satisfaction rating of 4.6 on a 5.0 scale. Fellows cite the residency college and the development of system-wide networking as particularly meaningful components of their learning experience.

The 2003-2004 Fellows requested more time for discussion during the monthly seminars and greater exposure to their presidents throughout the activities that made up their college projects. They applauded the inaugural year as accomplishing its goals of improved understanding of community college issues and their leadership implications (4.6), deepening their understanding of leadership in general and their leadership in particular (4.4), developing well-prepared leaders for the Massachusetts community college system (4.2), linking theory and practice through research, planning, and implementation of a significant college project (4.2), and providing access to EdD study (3.8). The guest speakers at the residency college received the highest ranking of all CCLA components with a 4.9.

The primary lesson learned in the analysis of the final evaluation data was heard from both Fellows and faculty and is two fold. First, CCLA should maintain the academic rigor of the Academy. The readings were described as informative and as a helpful resource for learning with immediate applicability in their work. The written assignments were challenging and, in the final analysis, had advanced their learning beyond what was anticipated. The companion feedback to this is that Fellows felt they had insufficient time to follow through on assignments and requested further exploration of how community college administrators can be provided adequate time to complete Academy assignments successfully while following through responsibly with demanding jobs.

The second year of CCLA has incorporated revised timelines for major written assignments to offset more closely the demands of the administrative calendar. To minimize the need for revisions and the accompanying additional time, the second year's model pre-scheduled a voluntary literature review help session. More networking opportunities were addressed with a mini-residency as part of the opening seminar. Ongoing assessment includes an instrument at each monthly seminar and an expanded mid-year instrument, all focused on feedback for use in seminar planning. To facilitate improved access to doctoral study, CCLA has provided more information on doctoral programs and a later registration date for the four-credit option.

Conclusion

In summary, the CCLA model provides an excellent example for other state community college systems that are looking for ways to invest in the development of leaders within their own ranks. Merging theory and practice and drawing upon local expertise and national experts, this program provides hands-on leadership experience, as well as opportunities for study and research in areas important to community college leaders. Presidential involvement, mentoring, and peer networking among Fellows added to this leadership development program. As Massachusetts looks ahead to increased retirements and to the need for new leaders to take on senior positions within its community college system, talented, well-prepared, and highly motivated community college Fellows are ready and waiting to make a contribution.

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