



From: *Leadership Theory and the Community College: Applying Theory to Practice*

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CHAPTER 11

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership denotes a two-phase process. First, followers are guided and encouraged to meet expectations as identified by formal performance agreements (transactional). Second, because of the leader's ability to increase the motivations, morality, and shared meaning of institutional affiliates, achievement beyond expectations is reached (transformational) (Avolio & Bass, 1988; Conger, 1999; Kark & Shamir, 2002). Nevarez and Wood (2010) distinguish this process as "the act of empowering individuals to fulfill their contractual obligations, meet the needs of the organization, and go beyond the 'call of duty' for the betterment of the institution" (p. 59). Transformational leaders are primarily driven by an astute awareness of individual and group psychology. Further, these leaders guide institutional affiliates with a sense of care, support, and are truly committed to the self-actualization of institutional affiliates in order to accomplish the institutional mission (serving the community, teaching and learning, student success, lifelong learning). To accomplish this, leaders utilize an array of skills, roles, and behaviors to influence institutional affiliates:

Work ethic. First and foremost, transformational leaders lead by example through their work ethic, selfless working style, people skills, ability to network, and proficiency in getting the work done (Kark, Shamir & Chen, 2003; Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). This in

turn, establishes a strong sense of legitimacy considering the leader is noted as having ‘been there’ or ‘done that’. The materialized work ethic of the leader and the perceptions of the leaders’ work ethic by followers afford the leader the ability to gain the commitment and unequivocal support of institutional affiliates. The work commitment displayed, for example, by a community college vice president is made readily available to institutional affiliates. This involves walking the halls, continual meetings with stakeholders, efforts to facilitate institutional outcomes, and other activities, which illustrate the leader is fully committed to the institution and its mission.

Transformational leaders are great communicators. Transformational leaders instill within themselves and the institution a set of grandiose values articulated around an idealistic vision. The leader’s ability to garnish the support of institutional affiliates around a unified mission is based on the leader’s portrayal of an individual who has a strong sense of self-worth and higher moral judgment. These values affirm and guide institutional affiliates to exceed individual expectations for the greater good of the institution (Avolio, Bass & Jung, 1999; Pillai & Williams, 2004; Popper & Mayseless, 2003); . One example of a transformational leader is a campus president who employs stories and metaphors in their speech to illustrate the importance of a particular moment. The purpose of doing so is to motivate institutional affiliates, frequently through emotion, to take action in a certain direction. Often, when this is done, the stories emphasize the importance of heroism, of an institution and its affiliates overcoming great obstacles to actualize its mission. In all, transformational leaders are positive, optimistic, and lead with a sense of hope in accomplishing goals beyond established expectations (Waldman, & Bass, 1991; Wang, & Rode, 2010).

Leading the way. Bennis and Nanus (1985) described successful transformational leaders as having the skills to achieve institutional goals through the development of a vision and a clear communication of this vision. To be successful, these leaders must secure the trust of institutional affiliates. This trust is needed to guide affiliates in carrying out the institutional vision. Moreover, these leaders develop through professional development activities to ensure the vision is deployed and enacted within the institution. Buy-in among institutional affiliates is achieved through the leader's genuine efforts to include and sustain the aspirations, thoughts, perceptions, and values of institutional affiliates (Avolio et al., 1999; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Wang & Rode, 2010). This in turn, assures the full commitment of institutional affiliates to meet and exceed the institution's needs, goals, and objectives. For instance, a transformational leader is a college dean that uses every opportunity (e.g., college council meetings, commencement addresses, community forums) to engage participants in understanding and aspiring to reach and exceed a set of college/institutional goals. In the case of community colleges, these goals are multifaceted, reflecting the diverse mission of the community college (e.g., open access, student success, comprehensive educational programming, local community needs).

Multi-skilled leader. One of the cornerstones of this approach focuses on the ability of the leader to transform institutional affiliates, so they can accomplish tasks beyond what is expected of them (Bass, 1998; Bass & Avolio, 1994). In doing so, the leader has a high degree of knowledge, socio-emotional intelligence, and is well-versed in a variety of abilities, styles, and roles. Many of the behaviors and characteristics embodied in charismatic leaders (e.g., self-confident, moral judgment, self-worth, role models, and people skills) are tantamount with behaviors displayed by transformational leaders. Charismatic leaders are able to instill upon institutional affiliates a sense of trust in the philosophy they espouse through a heightened sense

of association. More simply, the leader's personal identity is unified with their professional identity. These leaders have the ability to use a multitude of skills and behaviors to reach the point where institutional affiliates, view work as an expression of their personal being (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Barling, Weber & Kelloway, 1996). Multi-skilled community college leaders are lifelong learners. They regularly seek out professional development opportunities, are immersed in the scholarly literature in their respective areas, and are analytical with respect to reflecting upon and critiquing their own experiences. These leaders are committed to examining both, 'what works', and areas where they or their institutions are in need of further development.

Affiliate development. The transformational leadership approach seeks to motivate and inspire institutional affiliates to exceed expectations. This is inclusive of the affiliates' expectations for themselves as well as the organization's/leader's expectations for the affiliates (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In doing so, leaders provide a variety of venues, opportunities, and support structures to ensure affiliates have the proper skills, abilities, disposition, and training to reach their full potential and beyond. In particular, a team-based approach is used to guide efforts. Affiliates full potential is sought in three primary ways: 1) leaders build the conceptual and problem solving skills of affiliates by encouraging innovation and creativity in solving institutional problems; 2) leaders are attuned to the social-emotional well-being of their affiliates. They constantly monitor affiliate behavior and work performance, creating a clear path toward goal accomplishment through a variety of supportive behaviors (e.g., providing advice, allocating resources for professional development, one-on-one mentoring); and 3) leaders convey high expectations for affiliates. This is primarily accomplished through inspirational motivation. For example, many college leaders consistently encourage institutional affiliates (e.g., faculty, staff) to go beyond their personal self-interest for the betterment of the institution.

Discussion Questions:

Consider the following questions in your analysis of the leadership theory presented in this chapter. In addition, pose your own analytical questions which aid you in better articulating, analyzing, and critiquing the intricacies of this leadership theory.

- What are the strengths and limitations of transformational leadership?
- What is the relationship between the leader and the follower in transformational leadership?
- How is influence gained, maintained, and extended in transformational leadership?
- How can transformational leadership inform the resolution of critical issues faced by community college leaders?
- In what ways have you seen a transformational leadership approach employed within your organizational setting?
- How does your preferred leadership style compare to a transformational leadership frame?
- In what ways (if any) could your personal leadership be enhanced by transformational leadership?
- In what way does transformational leadership theory compare to and differ from other leadership theories presented in this book?

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Big Fish in a Small Pond: Leadership Succession at a Rural Community College

Replacing community college leaders remains a central issue for community colleges and their boards as the demographics in the sector point to a massive turnover of leadership over the next decade. Indeed, almost half of current community college presidents are 61 years of age or older. Accompanying the mass exodus of presidents are retirements of chief academic officers, which compound leadership succession challenges as many presidents ascend from Chief Academic Officer (CAO) positions. Likewise, seasoned faculty members are retiring in mass, further exacerbating the candidate pools for all levels of leadership positions. Complicating recruitment of new leaders are contextual challenges facing campuses. All colleges are facing fiscal pressures and corresponding demands to increase fund development and entrepreneurial activities. Yet, the differentiated demands on leaders emerge by location, as rural leaders face problems unique to their locale when compared to their urban counterparts.

Rural community college presidents lead in regions of the country that suffer from low-income per capita, aging populations, fewer business and manufacturing opportunities, and lower levels of participation in college attendance among residents. Yet, it is often the college that is looked to for help with economic development and to be a leader in supporting job creation within the region. Moreover, rural community colleges make up the majority of all community colleges in the nation, with 60% of all community colleges located in rural regions. It is often difficult to recruit leaders for these colleges as the regions offer little in terms of culture relative to cities and are often geographically isolated. This context is often a tough sell for potential

leaders used to more urban living or with partners that are also professionals seeking employment and are challenged by the limited employment options. Fit matters for both the college and the new leader. Rural communities are tight knit and may distrust “city” people coming in who do not understand local networks or traditions, and who are unfamiliar with rural living.

The Case of Petticoat Community College¹

Petticoat Community College (PCC) is a small rural college with a student population of 1,500 students. Like many rural colleges, the bulk of its faculty members are full-time, as are students; the typical full-time student enrolls in 12-15 credit-hours per term. The college opened in 1960 as a branch campus of a nearby four-year university and recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. The current president, Joe Carson, has worked at the college for 43 years, starting as one of the early college faculty and moving up through the ranks. Carson has served as president for 16 years. Steve Elliott, the current Vice President of Administration likewise has had a long career at the college. Elliott has served as VP for the past five years, initially starting his career alongside Carson as a faculty member and also serving a stint as Dean of Academics. These two leaders serve as the institution’s prime source of collective memory and have been instrumental in growing and expanding college operations over time. The two believe strongly in the institution’s commitment to access. Carson recently announced his retirement and Elliott indicated that he would be retiring the following year to allow for some transition time for the new president. The college has undergone operational changes in addition to the upcoming personnel changes.

¹ All names in this case study are pseudonyms.

Four years ago, the college opened its first set of residence halls. This new campus option allowed for recruitment of students from a wider service area and came at a time when demand for two-year colleges was exceeding capacity. However, the opening of the halls got off to a bumpy start. In the first year, the lack of experience with operations of the residence facilities meant that no restrictions were placed on who could live in the new building. One outcome was the placement of 35% of the student body in residence on academic probation, withdrawal from the college, or removal from the hall for disciplinary actions after the first term. New policies emerged requiring a minimum GPA of 2.5 and a zero-tolerance rule for disciplinary infractions. Today, the halls remain full and have witnessed little trouble since this first year. Local students as well as those from across the state see the residence halls as an opportunity to have a “real” college experience. However, students still complain that the shift to a residential campus has not been entirely successful as few events or services are available on the weekends or evenings, and much of the commuter culture and environment remains. Some campus members also have the concern that the opening of the residence halls signals a movement towards more selectivity for admissions and a pressure to offer a community college baccalaureate.

The most recent state assessment of the college highlighted several areas in which the college missed targets. First, graduation rates have been on the decline despite increases in enrollment. The all-time high of 250 graduates occurred a decade ago and each subsequent semester showed a steady decline. The three-year graduation rate is currently 25%, which still ranks it in the top quarter of rates for all community colleges in the state. Second, student participation in remedial courses was increasing. Some faculty correlated this increased need for remediation with the opening of the residence halls, asserting that lowering of admission

standards occurred in the quest to fill beds in the halls. Finally, internal institutional assessment and data tracking was lacking. Campus leaders did not know how well PCC students were doing regarding transfer, how remedial education was impacting persistence or graduation rates, or how a newly created academic support course and office attributed to student success. A survey on student engagement highlighted less engagement with faculty by commuter students and that all students were not engaged in collaborative learning outside of class. The lack of faculty mentorship and advising impacted student transfer experiences as well. The college was under pressure by the state to increase graduation rates and to increase enrollment.

Leadership Succession

The announcement of the retirement of Joe Carson provided the board of trustees with an opportunity for change. The concern was determining how to find the “right” leader for the position. Higher education is notorious for its lack of planning for leadership succession compared to the business sector. Nationally, 35% of college presidents obtain their promotions from within the institution. Despite this significant percentage, it remains unknown how much intentional grooming for leadership occurs. Anecdotally, rural colleges tend to promote even greater numbers from within the institution given the college’s location and difficulty in attracting national candidates. The emergence of grow-your-own leadership development programs in response to difficulties with leadership hiring, however, remains understudied regarding outcomes of the job placement. Leaders that emerge from within the institution are able to hit the ground running, know where all the skeletons are located, and have built-in relationships with major stakeholders.

A year before announcing his retirement, Joe Carson moved Kate Bradley from director of fund development and outreach to the position of Provost and Dean of the Faculty without a

national search. She has now served in this position for two years, but retained many of her responsibilities for fund raising as well. Campus members saw this move as positioning of Bradley to succeed Carson as president. Bradley is a homegrown leader, having started as a student at the college when it first opened in the 1960s and she worked solely at the college for her entire 30-year career. She understands the issues facing the college and has a strong loyalty base with community and state leaders, key college donors, and the faculty.

The first years of Bradley's tenure involved a steep learning curve due to her lack of experience in academic leadership. She was well equipped for the administrative functions of creating a schedule, dealing with student advisement, and record keeping, but less prepared for being an academic leader. It had been 15 years since she completed her doctorate and she had not kept up with national trends in teaching and learning or recent work on student engagement and developmental education. Her single campus experience rooted her in the traditions of the college and one form of operations. Bradley's modus operandi was not to rock the boat. Yet, she has the ability to get things done, in particular with working with faculty to make changes.

As the Board of Trustees began its search for a new leader, much uncertainty occurred on campus. Several current faculty members lobbied for Bradley to assume the presidency, a position that Carson and Elliott also supported. Bradley would provide a known commodity for campus members and provide a good bridge from the long-serving tenures of Carson and Elliott to the future. The search committee created by the Board of Trustees consists of members from the local region as well as members in common with the nearby four-year university board of trustees from which it sprang. These fiduciaries desire to bring in a leader who can transition PCC into a leading college ready to address demands of the 21st century and to change the perception of the college from a sleepy regional college to a leader in the state. Driving the need

for change are state and national pressures to have students obtain degrees or successfully transfer to a four-year university. As at other colleges, Petticoat Community College also is struggling with the best approach to address developmental education. The contextual demands placed on the college require hiring a leader that can manage a delicate balancing act—bringing about change, dealing with a traditional and loyal community base, and addressing resource issues. The Board of Trustees ultimately wants to have a change agent on campus to shepherd the process of improving student progress and completion. The question at the center of the search is if this is best accomplished going with someone who can hit the ground running and who knows the internal landscape or hiring someone from outside that brings a fresh perspective.

Tensions surround the search process. On the one hand, campus members are rooted in college traditions and are supportive of Kate Bradley assuming the presidency. On the other hand, the search committee has sent clear messages that change must occur given current demands. The committee would like to hire a change-agent president equipped to navigate the college through the anticipated rocky times facing the state. Evidence of declining graduation rates and increasing student enrollment in developmental courses raises concerns over meeting state and national objectives for college completion. But, bringing in an external leader does not assure positive outcomes and hiring from the outside may be difficult. Recruiting leaders to rural areas is a challenge given lower pay, fewer cultural amenities, and low levels of campus funding and generally poorer regional economies. PCC is at a crossroads and a critical element influencing future outcomes is the selection of the next president.

Questions

- How should the search committee craft the posting for opening for president at Petticoat Community College? In what ways do the leadership competencies outlined by the American Association for Community Colleges influence this job posting?
- What is implied in the Board of Trustees' desire to bring in a change agent? Is there a particular leadership style that would best support this frame of leading?
- Given the challenges of attracting candidates to positions of rural leadership, how might college administrators plan for leadership succession? How does a rural context influence leadership?

Nevarez & Wood - Transformational Leadership Inventory (NW- TLI)

This leadership inventory is designed to provide a personal profile of their adherence to a transformational leadership frame. Current leaders should reflect upon actions that they typically take and perceptions that they hold. Aspiring leaders should consider the actions that they would take if they held a formal leadership position within an organization. Please mark the appropriate response below, and if you find statements difficult to answer, trust your instinct and judgment in selecting the most appropriate for you. Remember there are not right answers. Key: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree; 3= Somewhat Disagree; 4= Somewhat Agree; 5=Agree; and 6=Strongly Agree.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I am known for being a great communicator	1					
4. I have established a clear vision and strategic plan	2					
5. My working ethic motivates others	3					
8. I am know for 'getting the job done'	4					
9. I have many abilities and talents	5					
11. I am attuned to the needs of my staff	6					
12. I model the level of dedication I expect from my staff	7					
13. I have a high degree of socio-emotional intelligence	8					
14. My staff regularly exceeds established goals	9					
15. I encourage the personal development of my employees	10					
16. I am a lifelong learner	11					
17. I inspire others with a sense of hope and optimism	12					
18. I establish high expectations for all my employees	13					
19. Others are eager to hear what I have to say	14					
20. My staff works earnestly towards the vision I have established	15					

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Scoring

There are five primary aspects of transformational leaders: work ethic, great communication, leading the way, multi-skilled leadership, and affiliate development. To score your responses, do the following: add up the total sum of your responses for all of the questions in the inventory. This is your total transformational leadership score. Higher scores indicated greater levels of transformational orientation. In contrast, lower scores indicate lower levels of transformational orientation. The maximum score possible is 90.

_____ Total Transformational Leadership Score

To better understand how your score relates to the primary components of transformational leadership: 1) add up your responses for questions 3, 4, and 7. This is your total work ethic score; 2) add your response for questions 1, 12, and 14. This is your total great communication score; 3) add your response for questions 2, 9, and 15. This is your total leading the way score; 4) add your response for questions 5, 8, and 11. This is your total multi-skilled leadership score; and 5) add your response for questions 6, 10, and 13. This is your total affiliate development score. The maximum score for each sub-scale is 18.

_____ Work Ethic _____ Great Communication _____ Leading the Way

_____ Multi-Skilled Leadership _____ Affiliate Development

Definitions

Work ethic - leading by example through a strong work ethic, selfless working style, people skills, ability to network, and proficiency in getting the work done.

Great communication – leading by instilling a set of grandiose values articulated around an idealistic vision

Leading the way- leading with a clear plan and buy-in from institutional affiliates.

Multi-skilled leader- Leading by exceeding expectations and illustrating a high degree of knowledge, socio-emotional intelligence

Affiliate Development – Leading by providing affiliates with opportunities to develop themselves personally and professionally, which enables affiliates to exceed expectations

Score Meaning

While the maximum score is 90 and 18 for each subscale, many leaders may desire to understand their usage of this framework in comparison to other leaders. To facilitate this interest, scores from prior inventory participants were divided into percentile ranges. These percentile ranges

allow leaders to understand their score in relation to other leaders. The percentile ranges are as follows: Low transformational orientation (33rd percentile or lower); Medium transformational orientation (34th percentile to 66th percentile), and High transformational orientation (66th percentile to 99th percentile).

Low transformational orientation: 15 to 74 points

Medium transformational orientation: 75 to 81 points

High transformational orientation: 82 to 90 points

Interpretation of subscales can be interpreted simplistically as low scores and high scores. Based upon scores from previous participants, scores of 13 or below are low subscale scores while 14 or greater represents high usage of the sub-elements (e.g., work ethic, great communication, affiliate development).

Improve Your Transformational Leadership Score

Work Ethic. Work hard. Transformational leaders lead by example through their work ethic, selfless working style, people skills, ability to network, and get the work done.

Inspiring Communication. Enhance your communication skills. Transformational leaders instill within themselves and the institution a set of values articulated around an idealistic vision.

Outline goals that will be necessary to achieve the vision of your institution and communicate this vision often. Use metaphoric language, stories, and analogies to emphasize your arguments. If needed, attend speech development programs to hone your impromptu communication (e.g., toastmasters).

Leading the Way. Be a role model. Buy-in among institutional affiliates is achieved through the leader's genuine efforts to include and sustain the aspirations, thoughts, perceptions, and values of institutional affiliates. Focus on emulating the behaviors, actions, and dispositions that you want to see in others.

Multi-skilled. Look for opportunities to learn new skills. Transformational leaders have a high degree of knowledge, socio-emotional intelligence, and are well-versed in a variety of abilities, styles, and roles. Be a 'life-long' learner by seeking out professional development opportunities offered through your organization, at conferences, and through formal academic coursework.

Reliability

The Cronbach's alpha for the total transformational leadership scale is .94. The following coefficient alphas are associated with each sub-construct: work ethic (.82), great communication (.84), leading the way (.85), multi-skilled leadership (.78), and affiliate development (.74). To view this inventory or learn more about using the inventory for research purposes, see www.communitycollegeleadership.net.

Suggested Citation

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