

THE EXAMINATION OF EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION PLANNING  
STRATEGIES IN GEORGIA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

Craig B. Jackson

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Business Administration

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## Abstract

The problem addressed observed the lack of succession planning at two-year colleges in Georgia in identifying future leaders in higher education. Due to escalating impending retirements, resignation, and discharge, it is vital that succession plans are implemented within the college for promotions. Leadership succession planning has seldom been incorporated into community college's strategic planning. The emphasis of this research study was to examine how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in Georgia. Challenged by increased enrollments, diminishing state funding, accountability for student success, and increased public oversight, this study intended to provide awareness into the leadership challenges facing community colleges. This study focused on the lived experiences of individuals and groups' data collected by means of interviews and observation. With the use of existing literature on succession planning, higher education and other organizational settings are used to check the emerging patterns and recommendations for the necessary process, strategies, and methods required to establish a successful succession plan within the executive leadership at community colleges. Succession planning is nothing new as one great example is described in the Bible with the story of Moses and his successor Joshua. Moses became a mentor to Joshua and provided him the opportunity to complete various leadership tasks to further his development. The same principles of succession planning that were used in the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua are still applicable to today's transitions in leadership.

*Keywords:* succession planning, leadership development, mentor, executive leadership

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Dr. Gene R. Sullivan, Dissertation Chair

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Dr. David R. Calland, Dissertation Committee Member

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Dr. Gene R. Sullivan, DBA Director

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Dr. David R Calland, Dean, School of Business

## Dedication

The dedication of this study goes to the love of my life, Dr. Tatrabian Jackson, the wife who was truly God sent. The love, support, and encouragement you have provided has been impeccable as we traveled this journey together. Living and sharing each day with you is a gift that I treasure. To my mother, Jurrie J. Carey, thank you for instilling in me the principles of serving God, having high integrity, being respectful of others, being a gentleman, and serving those that are less fortunate. These are principles that you not only taught me, but continue to live each day. You have always been my biggest cheerleader from running track to running the race of life. I love you dearly. A couple of Omega men that inspired me to always reach for the highest goals and to be the best man I could be, the late Dr. William D. Moorehead, Sr. and Bro. Oscar Jackson. Both men served as educators and thought enough of me to take the time and share their words of wisdom. Also to the leaders in higher education who choose to share their leadership experiences and make a difference in the communities for which they serve.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Leadership is vital with any organization to the success and longevity of employees and stakeholders who serve. Succession planning plays an important role in developing, retaining, and supplying leaders. Succession planning is often handled with far less focus and specificity, which typically results in crisis management when no crisis is necessary or in confusion of leadership when clarity is easily obtained (Calareso, 2013). Colleges and universities across the country teach students the importance of planning and understanding the necessity of succession plans in business practices, particularly in the business arena. Educators instill the importance of succession planning, but within the confines of higher education, succession management plans are rare (Long, Johnson, Faught, & Street, 2013). Succession planning is vital to the progression and stability of the institutions in higher education and to serving the student and community population with strong leadership following the ongoing retirements that are anticipated for the next decade. The study intended to examine how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in Georgia and provide awareness into the leadership challenges facing community colleges administrators as they prepare to move into the next level of community college leadership.

### **Background of the Problem**

Challenged by increased enrollments, diminishing state funding, accountability for student success, and increased public oversight, community colleges must restructure their praxes for preparing and appointing leaders to keep up with demand and heightened expectations (DeSantis, 2013). Barriers to formalized succession planning found in previous research included, but were not limited to, lack of communication, lack of knowledge regarding the

creation of a formalized succession plan, gender inequality, resistance of leadership, low priority, and lack of talent (Grossman, 2014).

The lack of strategic succession planning contributes to a weak organizational structure of a college. The rapid organizational restructuring required to survive financially strains the capability of succession planning to fill quickly the large number of leadership gaps that are created (Kleinsorge, 2010). There is a need for current college leaders and systems in higher education to look critically at potential leaders inside and outside the institution, developing programs and making necessary changes to ensure future leaders are available to fill the impending void (Strom, Sanchez, & Downey-Schilling, 2011).

Many community colleges across the country face the daunting task of preparing students to be leaders of tomorrow while searching for a new leader of its own (Thompson, 2013). Further research shows the trend will continue through at least 2016 (Phillippe & Tekle, 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

The problem addressed was the lack of succession planning at two-year colleges in Georgia to identify future leaders in higher education. Succession planning comes as an afterthought in the form of contingency or emergency planning for leadership rather than as an orderly progression of leadership preparation (Calareso, 2013). Due to the void created by retirement, resignation, and discharge, it is vital that succession plans are implemented within the college for promotions.

Community colleges across the nation are facing a critical void in leadership due to the retirements of baby boomer presidents and vice presidents who started their careers some decades ago (Benard & Piland, 2014). About 75% of community college CEOs participating in an American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) survey plan to retire within the next

10 years, with another 15% eyeing retirement in 11–15 years (AACC, 2015). In addition, there are concerns employees in the traditional leadership pipeline are also aging and retiring and those individuals who move up the ladder create new vacancies at their current levels and need to be replaced (Shults, 2001).

Community colleges are faced with the option of bringing into leadership roles those who may have little to no experience in the arena of higher education or identifying potential leaders and provide adequate training to prepare them for senior administrative roles (Rice & O’Keefe, 2014). While some may call for casting the net wide for leadership recruitment, others embrace succession planning as the key to assuring college sustainability (Rice & O’Keefe, 2014).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in Georgia. The study intended to provide awareness into the leadership challenges facing community colleges senior administrators and the resources they need to prepare them to move into the next level of community college leadership. Succession planning develops a pool of people to consider for promotion, or talent management, which focuses on attracting, developing, deploying, and retaining the best people (Rothwell, 2011).

### **Nature of the Study**

A qualitative case study is used to explore the experiences of succession planning of leaders in community colleges. Primarily qualitative research is exploratory in nature, intended to gain an understanding of fundamental logic, attitudes, and motivations of participants (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research is also used to expose trends in perception and attitudes, and examine more thoroughly into a problem. Qualitative research method has the potential to

foster better two-way communication and reflect the implementation and practice in the engagement and planning efforts of community colleges. A study conducted to examine the degree of succession planning for the top position in private higher education institutions in Wisconsin used a qualitative approach to explore the current state of presidential succession planning (Klein & Salk, 2013). A qualitative approach relies primarily on human perception, personal experience, intuition, and skepticism (Stake, 2010).

The quantitative research method relies heavily on linear attributes, measurements and statistical analysis referring to how things work with a more exact science (Stake, 2010). This is not the preferred method when human understanding and personal experience is involved. Most quantitative research depends on comparison and correlational studies with a mixture of some experimentation (Stake, 2010). Mixed methods research technique combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches into one research study (Creswell, 2014). In a mixed methods research method approach the researcher will integrate both quantitative and qualitative research methods into the collection of data as well as the presentation of the research study findings and outcomes. Creswell (2014) posited mixed methods approach to research studies to be fairly new and garnered its origin in an effort to dismay biases and weakness of using a single research method. Mixed methods approach to research study encompasses both predetermined and emerging themes and theory of the phenomenon of study (Creswell, 2014).

This research study focused on the lived experiences of individuals or groups and collected data by means of observation and interviews. Open-ended questions were used in order to reveal emerging themes from the research study. The findings of the research study were presented in descriptive text and image analysis to reveal and deliver all emerging themes and patterns. Therefore, mixed methods approach was an inappropriate method for this research

study as the researcher did not rely on statistical data, nor delivered the findings in a statistical manner and allowed the theory and themes to emerge from the collected data from participants of the research study (Stake, 2010).

In order to gain a better insight of succession planning in the community college, it appeared the case study design provided a stronger outlook. The case study research design is one of several forms of social science research, which include experiments, surveys, histories and archival analyses such as economic or statistical modeling (Yin, 2014). Based on information from Yin (2014), the case study is the preferred design when studying present day events and relies on interviews of persons involved in the events.

The ethnography approach is a design where one is immersed in the culture as an active participant and records extensive field notes. As in grounded theory, there is no preset limiting of what will be observed and no real ending point in the study (Trochim, 2005). Ethnography approach will not work with study of succession planning because team members are not active participants within the organization's framework. The phenomenological research examines human experiences through the descriptions provided by individuals involved (Nieswiadomy, 2012). The phenomenological design was not beneficial in this case study because respondents were not asked to describe their experiences as they perceived them. Historical studies focus on the identification, location, evaluation, and synthesis of data from the past. Historical research seeks not only to discover the events of the past but also to relate these past happenings to the present and to the future (Nieswiadomy, 2012). There is a lack of historical data, documents, or artifacts to examine succession planning of leaders in community colleges.

This researcher used existing literature on succession planning higher educational and other organizational settings to check the emerging patterns and recommendations for the

necessary process, strategies, and methods required to establish a successful succession plan within in executive leadership at community colleges.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided and focused on the importance of succession planning in community colleges with a couple of questions to be considered. With the attrition of community college leaders, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How will community colleges in Georgia plan for the succession of executive leadership positions?
2. How will community colleges in Georgia develop leadership programs that align with succession planning?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The development of a conceptual model for best practices for succession planning in community colleges synthesized best practices identified by numerous scholars and practitioners into a comprehensive succession program (McMaster, 2012). Leadership succession is often the result of a broken system, which often results in the loss of leadership gains from the exiting leader and leaving the incoming leader without proper support or training for success (Peters, 2011). It is important that a process is in place for leaders to become successful (see Figure 1; Malki, 2014).

There are several components to the leadership succession that leads to effective planning and it is suggested that these actions are not linear but occur simultaneously (Peters, 2011). The research study was guided by three theories of succession planning which were (a) trait theory of leadership, (b) transformational leadership, and (c) path-goal theory. According to the trait theory of leadership, personality traits influence leader emergence and effectiveness (Colbert,

Judge, Choi, & Wang, 2012). Transformational leadership theory is the process that changes and transforms people with emphasis placed on emotions, values, ethic, standards, and long-term goals (Northouse, 2016). Path-goal theory focuses on how leaders motivate followers to accomplish designated goals and to enhance follower performance and follower satisfaction by focusing on follower motivation (Northouse, 2016).

Leaders influence followers to achieve common tasks to meet the goals of organizations (Malos, 2011). There may not be an ideal leadership style or trait, but it is noted that leaders accomplish work through the efforts of others (Hannay, 2009). In 2008, the leadership characteristics of President Obama were commonly associated with the behavior traits of a charismatic nature. However, many individuals demonstrate various levels of leadership traits at many levels of an organization (Green & Roberts, 2012). Charismatic and self-confidence are only a couple of the many leadership traits that exist (Dambe & Moorad, 2008). The focus of the research is on effective leadership, which leads to effective succession plans based on behavior traits. Although there are several a few that are discussed include emotional intelligence, self-confidence and integrity.

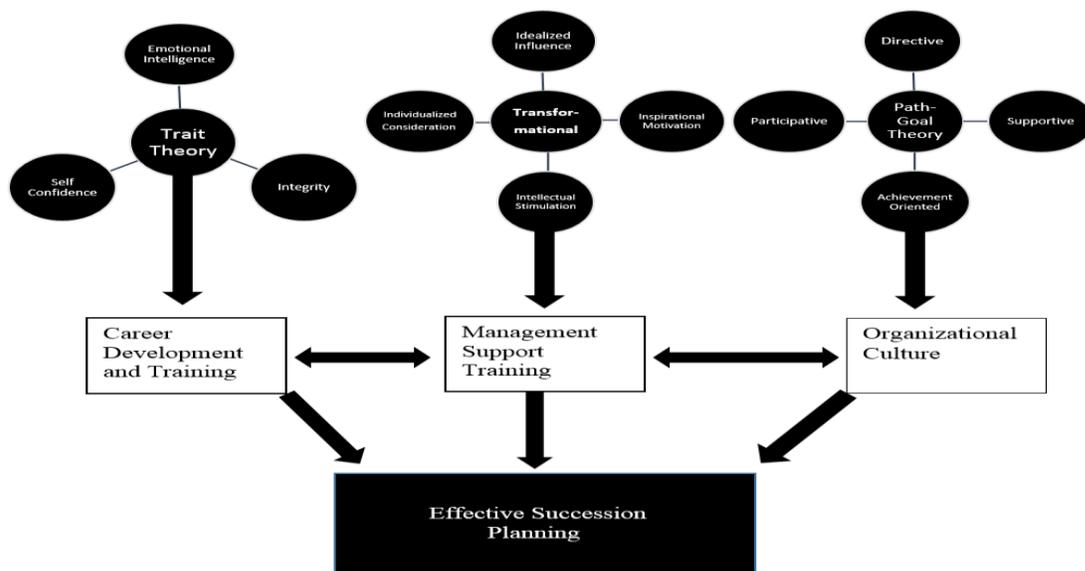


Figure 1. Effective succession planning.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to perceive and express emotions, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to understand and reason with emotions, and to effectively manage emotions within oneself and in relationships with others (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2000). Basically, EI is broken down to our emotions which is our affective domain and thinking which is our cognitive domain. Whereas intelligence is concerned with our ability to learn information and apply it, EI is concerned with our ability to understand emotions and apply this understanding in life (Northouse, 2016). The ability to identify emotions allows leaders to be aware of their own feelings and emotions. This ability is also helpful to the leader to accurately identify the emotions of the group and of the individual followers to express emotion accurately and to differentiate between honest and deceptive emotional expressions (Riggio, Murphy, & Pirozzolo, 2002).

Emotional intelligence plays a critical role in leadership effectiveness and can promote effectiveness at all levels in an organization (George, 2000). Examining the link between EI and leadership style involved a self-report administering emotional intelligence measure to 43 managers to evaluate the link between EI and leadership style, which found significant correlations with several components of the transformational leadership model (Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001). Studies provide empirical justification and great validity for the relationship between EI and effective leadership (Barling, Slater, & Kevin Kelloway, 2000; Palmer et al., 2003; Coetzee & Schaap, 2005).

Self-confidence provides one with the ability to be sure about competencies and skills, which include a sense of self-esteem, self-assurance, and the belief that one can make a difference in the organization (Northouse, 2016). To be a leader in any situation an individual must give the impression that they can make positive contributions to the group (Wagh, 2016).

Research has found that leaders in organizations tend to be more self-confident, having stronger beliefs in their own abilities and opinions, allowing them to more effectively guide and manage employees (Bandura, 1988; Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Schyns & Sczesny, 2010). Greater self-confidence can lead people to more effectively manage their social relations. The management of social relations does not indicate they are managed towards a specific objective, but more effective management would build trust and foster greater influence compared to those who mismanage their social relations (Greenacre, Tung, & Chapman, 2014).

Integrity is a valuable leadership trait for it displays a quality of honesty and trustworthiness. Leaders with integrity are considered to be loyal, dependable and worthy of our trust and not deceptive (Northouse, 2016). Integrity is the foundational trait for leadership which builds up a trust relationship. Integrity can be defined as simply oneness of self (Perego, 2016). Scholarly literature on the meaning of integrity can be broadly separated into two streams: the normative view which clearly includes morality and ethics and the objectivist view which describes integrity as a morally and ethically neutral term (Monga, 2016). A theoretical contribution is made with implications for organizations and human resource managers through highlighting the critical status of person and organization values fit and the idea of including integrity tests in the staff selection processes (Monga, 2016). Personality traits are often identified and associated with potential leaders who are being considered for executive roles.

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that causes a change in individuals and social systems. The style creates valuable and positive change in “followers” with a potential result that these followers become the leaders. When skillfully executed, transformational leadership focuses on the followers, motivates them to achieve a higher performance level, and helps develop the leader within each individual (Kendrick, 2011).

Transformational leadership involves four factors: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individual consideration (Kendrick, 2011).

Although transformational leaders and servant leaders possess many similar characteristics, the primary difference is that transformational leaders direct their efforts toward the goals of the organization, whereas the servant leader focuses on the service delivered by individuals in the organization (Hannay, 2009).

Transactional leadership is the power of the leader over the subordinate compared to the empowerment strategy of transformational leaders. The power can be legitimate or legal, coercive, expert, or referent (Dambe & Moorad, 2008). There is an ongoing debate over the value of transformational leadership within the university presidency (Altbach, Gumport, & Berdahl, 2011). On the other hand, it is argued that leadership in higher education needs to be restructured to a more transformative approach (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

The path-goal theory shares how a leader can provide support to employees on the path to goals by using specific behavior based on employees needs and work settings or situations in which they are operating. As the theory suggests, different leader behaviors have a different kind of influence on employees' motivation (Malik, 2013). Path-goal theory is a cognitive approach to understanding motivation where employees gauge effort-to-performance and performance-to-outcome probabilities. The most effective leader will ensure/provide availability of valued rewards (goal) by helping them in finding best ways to reach their path (Bickle, 2017; Malik, 2013). There are two situational contingencies in the path-goal theory: (a) the personal characteristics of group members and (b) the work environment (Daft, 2015).

The path-goal theory suggests that leaders may not only use varying behaviors with different employees, but might use different behaviors with the same employees in different

situations (Bickle, 2017; Malik, 2013). Depending upon the employee and the situation, path-goal theory suggests that different leadership behaviors will increase acceptance of the leader by employees; level of satisfaction; and motivation to high performance (Malik, 2013). Based on situational factors, path-goal suggests a fourfold classification of leader behaviors, as described:

1. Directive leader who provides guidance and psychological structure;
2. Supportive leader who provides nurturance;
3. Participative leader who provides involvement; and
4. Achievement-oriented leader who provides challenges (Malik, 2013).

The three leadership theories are used simultaneously and effectively to assist organizations with creating a path for career development and training, management support, and determining a strong organizational culture to lead to an effective succession plan.

### **Definition of Terms**

In order to provide readers clarity, understanding and interpretation of significant terms used in the study. A few definitions were provided to bring uniformity.

**Community college:** A community college (also known as a junior college or technical college) is a higher education institution that provides a two-year curriculum that can include leading to an associate's degree. Other programs in place include a transfer program towards a four-year degree and occupational programs (one and two year programs of study). Besides coursework focusing on academic programs, courses are also often offered at the community college for personal growth or development (Community College Review, 2015).

**Leadership:** A process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2016).

**Organizational culture:** Organizational culture is basically a system of shared beliefs that members of the organization have, which determines how members in an organization act when confronted with decision-making responsibilities (Jain & Jain, 2013). Organizational culture can also be described a unique system of collective values that dominates behaviors and principles to achieve organizational goals; these shared values have a strong influence in the organization and dictate how people act and perform their jobs (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

**Organizational structure:** Organizational structure is defined as a system used to determine a hierarchy within an organization. It identifies each position, the function of each job, and where it reports to within the organization. This structure is developed to establish how an organization operates and assists an organization in obtaining its goals to allow for future growth (Friend, 2014).

**Pipeline:** Internal employees who are readily available to fill open positions within the organization; internal employees who have traditionally advanced to higher positions from a specific department.

**Succession planning:** While practiced on a more limited basis in higher education, succession planning is a common and widespread practice in business and industry, but a common and traditional definition is that succession planning is the ongoing process of identifying future leaders in an organization and developing them so that they are ready to move into leadership roles (Calareso, 2013).

### **Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations**

The study focused on strategies for succession planning for community colleges in Georgia. In the research, potential implied biases were identified by the researcher stating

assumptions and limitations. When considering assumptions, they are so basic that without them, the research problem itself could not exist (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

### **Assumptions**

It was assumed that all of those who participated in this study did so willingly, knowing that participation was done voluntarily and participants were not mandated to participate. The assumption was also made that participants answered honestly. Leaders that were ethical kept their promises and acted consistently, in a predictable way and were labeled with integrity. This validity of ethical leadership behavior can be measured with the Ethical Leadership at Work questionnaire (ELW; Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011a). In order to prevent inaccurate representation, a select group of participants who were knowledgeable, respected for their integrity, and dedicated to the community college arena were selected.

The study assumed all participants were knowledgeable about succession planning and leadership development. The risk was if they were not knowledgeable about succession planning the answers given may not have adequately dispelled the true essences of succession planning at their institution. There was a risk if participants had no knowledge about succession planning or leadership development at their institution. The results found may not be used effectively to examine the strategic leadership succession plan of a community college.

### **Limitations**

Limitations can occur in a study if there are restrictions beyond the control of the researcher (Yin, 2012). Limitations that could occur in this study were the community colleges studied were limited to those in the state of Georgia and were willing to participate. The specific leaders or administrators that were made available for interviews by the researcher were

determined by the community college. The data were limited, based on the number of administrators choosing to complete the survey and participate in the study.

### **Delimitations**

According to Yin (2012), delimitations are defined as a researcher's self-limitation to a study. This study was limited to community colleges that were part of the Technical College System of Georgia (TSCG) in order to keep the study manageable and within the limited time constraints. Only executive leaders from TSCG were considered for participation in the study.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of succession planning in higher education is vital when energy is focused on the future growth and sustainability of an institution, and is also helpful in laying a foundation of good practices of leadership and long-term planning within the halls of academia (Wright, 2012). A review of succession planning literature suggested a gap in succession planning research respective of the community college sector of higher education (Barden, 2009; Bornstein, 2010). This study closed the gap by addressing the lack of succession planning at two-year colleges in Georgia and identifying future leaders in higher education. This study also brings an awareness to the leadership challenges facing community colleges senior administrators and the resources required to have an effective succession plan. Organizations that commit to succession planning are beneficial to employees that remain dedicated and committed to their current college (Basham & Mathur, 2010).

The study can be beneficial to both individuals and the organization as a whole. Individuals will have increased knowledge on strategically mapping out their professional goals for promotional opportunities while community college governing boards will be able to plan for future vacancies and have a sufficient depth of talent in house. Employee loyalty and

commitment are endorsed by succession planning as the process provides a defined path for professional growth and the associated benefits within an organization (Calareso, 2013).

### **Reduction of Gaps**

The study examined procedures that can be implemented in community colleges for leadership development of senior administrators to prepare for an effective succession plan. The research closed the gap on the leadership challenges facing community college leaders who are preparing for the next level of leadership. The adoption of a succession plan will have a major impression on the culture and structure of the organization. Having stakeholders who know the intricacies and vision of the community college, and who are willing to carry out succession planning, builds a strong position for institutional sustainability (Rothwell, 2010). Planned succession of internal employees is less disruptive to morale and helps to maintain the culture (Valentine, 2011).

### **Implications for Biblical Integration**

One of the key components to having a successful and sustaining business or organization is the ability to have a vision of how the organization should look and operate ten years or more down the road. As the creator of the universe, God had a vision of how the world should be. It starts with Genesis 1:1 when in the beginning God created the heaven and the Earth. God created the world and placed humans in the center of his creation with the intent to enjoy the creation and live in a loving intimacy with humankind forever (Van Duzer, 2010). Just as God had to have a vision and go through a process, leaders and organizations have a process they must go through. Having an effective succession plan requires teaching, molding, and shaping individuals through a culture process. God's succession plan was developed and lead by Jesus who reminds us that leadership was first an act of service, which he spent three years

teaching God's leadership point of view to His disciples (Blanchard & Hodges, 2008). This teaching of the disciples allowed them to become a part of the culture that went out amongst the people to spread the teachings of Christ.

One of the greatest examples of succession planning in the Bible is the story of Moses and his successor Joshua. First, Moses had to realize he would need a successor and he asked God to provide one. Numbers 27:15-16 states that Moses spoke to the Lord and asked the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation. Moses did not choose his own successor, but God directed Moses to Joshua, whom he had already prepared for the task. Moses recognized Joshua's abilities and potential long before he would need someone to succeed him. Moses became a mentor for Joshua and gave him various leadership tasks to further his development. Prior to his death, Moses formally ordained Joshua to leadership as scripture tells us in Numbers 27: 22-23; when Moses did as the Lord commanded and took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation and gave him a charge. Great leaders like Moses begin developing successors long before they expect to leave office. Succession planning requires taking ownership of both the current executive like Moses and those who exercise complementary authority like boards of trustees or in this case Eleazar. The same principles of succession planning that were used in the transfer of leadership from Moses to Joshua are still applicable to today's transitions in leadership.

Basically, God is in charge and has always been in charge of succession planning. Recognizing and developing emerging leaders will continue to be a task of current leadership. However, the choice of successor remains in God's hands to fulfill His purposes through His chosen leaders (Beery, 2015). Christian leaders should study and practice the succession principles found in God's words to prepare for the transition of a new leader.

## **Relationship to Field of Study**

There are several definitions of leadership, starting with Webster's Dictionary, as the power or ability to lead other people. President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated, "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants to do it." Bill Gates sees leaders "As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others." Leadership expert John C. Maxwell shares his definition stating "Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another." Some people think leadership means managing others to complete a particular task, while others believe it means motivating the members of a team to perform at their best. While the definitions may vary, the general sentiments remain the same: Leaders are people who know how to achieve goals and inspire other people along the way (Helmrich, 2016).

Succession planning relates to leadership for the roles to coincide. Leaders must have followers or successors in order to develop or fulfill a succession plan. Succession planning can be defined as a process for identifying and developing key leaders within an organization with the primary purpose to increase engagement and retention by providing a career ladder (Gray, 2014). Looking at how an organization's leadership needs will evolve in the future, identifying future leaders and identifying activities to strengthen leadership capacity are the core of succession planning (The Bridgespan Group, 2016).

## **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in Georgia. A brief history of community colleges was given to define the mission. The literature review supports three main theories: (a) trait theory leadership, (b) transformational leadership, and (c) path-goal

theory leadership, along with leader development and succession planning. The researcher provided literature to address the lack of succession planning in the two-year colleges with a review of past and current studies. Focus is placed on identifying future leaders and developing and implementing an effective succession plan.

### **History of Community Colleges**

It is important to have an understanding of the formation and mission of community colleges in order to provide a background for the governance structures and pressures of having an effective succession plan. Community colleges continued to be popular and there became a need for resilient leaders to come in and advance the mission. In 1960, to address the need for administrators, 12 universities developed junior college leadership programs that later graduated hundreds of deans and presidents from the Kellogg Junior College Leadership Programs (Floyd, Haley, Eddy, & Antczak, 2009). Concerns began to emerge among community college leaders about a shortage of administrators who truly understood the mission of the community college and how to partner with the local community to establish new schools (Floyd et al., 2009). The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) offers an Executive Leadership Academy (ELA) which offers an in-house leadership training program for mid-level and upper-level administrators to improve leadership and management skills. Often times the individuals selected to participate in the program display specific traits that stand out to the selection committee.

### **Trait Theory of Leadership**

The trait theory of leadership proposes that certain traits differentiate leaders from other individuals. Tests of trait theory and searching for the traits of effective leaders dominated leadership research during the first half of the twentieth century (Colbert et al., 2012). The

theory proposes that the greatest predictors of effectiveness and success of leaders are indeed the traits in which these individuals are endowed at birth or develop early on in life. The key significant traits are drive, motivation integrity, self-confidence, intelligence and knowledge (Malki, 2014). Personality traits are vital in the succession planning process.

Analysis of trait personality inventories revealed that personality traits can be categorized into five main factors: (a) neuroticism, (b) extraversion, (c) openness to experience, (d) agreeableness, and (e) conscientiousness. These factors have been commonly named The Big Five personality traits and have been shown to be predictors of diverse criteria of interest in the field of industrial psychology, organizational psychology and job performance (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991). With the use of the five-factor model of personality, a meta-analyzed study examining the relationship between personality and leadership found that conscientiousness and emotional stability related positively with ethical leadership while openness to experience and extraversion were unrelated to ethical leadership (Kalshoven, Den Hartog, & De Hoogh, 2011b). As a group, the Big Five personality traits predicted both leadership emergence and leadership effectiveness (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002). Self-reports of personality may be biased due to self-deception; also, the relationship between personality and outcomes may be higher when other means of assessing personality are used (Hopper & Sackett, 2008; Paulhus & Reid, 1984). For instance, the compared validity of self and observer ratings of personality in predicting job performance found that the validities of the Big Five are higher when observer ratings of personalities are used (Oh, Wang, & Mount, 2011).

### **Emotional Intelligence**

The subject of emotional intelligence has strategic implications within the field of higher education. The ability to manage one's emotions and those of others is known as emotional

intelligence and at high levels of the organization, leaders need to understand their emotions, recognize the emotions in others, and have the insight on how their emotions can affect others (Polston-Murdoch, 2013; Goleman, 1995). Also conceptualized in Goleman's (1995) research, emotional intelligence is predictor for successful performance in the work place and it takes much more to be a successful leader than just exceptional managerial skills (Dai, Tang, & De Meuse, 2011). This concept of emotional intelligence is supported and serves as a fundamental key to successful job performance. It also contributes to establishing a trusting work culture for positive interactions (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Joseph and Newman (2010) proposed and then tested a theoretical model that integrated several factors to include the relative roles of emotion perception, emotion understanding, conceptual redundancy, Big Five personality, and application of emotion intelligence and emotion regulation facets in explaining job performance. Then they specified a progressive (cascading) pattern among ability-based emotional intelligence facets, in which emotion perception must causally precede emotion understanding, which in turn precedes conscious emotion regulation and job performance (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

An important point with regard to leadership and emotional intelligence is to determine the internal thoughts of a leader and how those thoughts influence successful results in the workplace, along with components of emotional intelligence that contribute to positive relationships between individuals in the work place (Miller, 2015). Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in effective leadership as it directly relates to a leader's ability to be influential to others emotional state.

A comprehensive qualitative case study was conducted by Parrish (2011) of 11 participants from three Australian universities who consisted of full time employed academic leadership professionals to explore the relevance of the leadership in higher education being

competent emotional intelligent leaders. A twofold approach was used with special interest on qualitative data collected by conducting interviews of participants during a pre-and- post application of emotional intelligence development program to study the participants' level of job satisfaction (Parrish, 2011). The results revealed that all leadership participants identified emotional intelligence as a needed requirement for effective emotional intelligent leadership in higher education. Parrish (2011) also argued that two significant discoveries were worth mentioning: (a) leader's leadership performance and capability can be enhanced by the awareness of emotional intelligence, and (b) effective emotional intelligence development is effectively condensed when it is based upon strong, dependable, ongoing and affordable emotional intelligence training.

### **Self-Confidence**

The trait of self-confidence is important to have in order to be an effective leader. Self-confidence is the ability to be assured about one's own competencies and skills to include a sense of self-esteem and self-assurance and the belief that one can really make a difference (Northouse, 2016). Research has found that organizations made up of leaders that tend to be more self-confident and have strong beliefs in their own abilities are better at effectively guiding and managing employees (Bandura, 1988; Luthans & Peterson, 2002; Schyns & Sczesny, 2010). The perception of self-confidence is positively related to perceptions of interpersonal influence. Studies have examined whether there is a greater (lesser) perceived level of influence among those with greater (lesser) social self-confidence (Greenacre et al., 2014). Studies have found support for the hypothesis that there is an organic relationship between social self-confidence and interpersonal influence with regard to purchase decisions. These studies demonstrate that

higher levels of social self-confidence lead a person to emerge as a natural leader with an ability to influence the decisions of others (Greenacre et al., 2014).

## **Integrity**

In the discipline of leadership, integrity plays a major role and represents a very important trait to becoming a successful leader. The most desirable organizational attribute for the workforce is having ethical business practices; basically choosing leaders with integrity which includes truthfulness, responsibility, and accountability (Heydlauff, 2013). Brown (2014) noted in her studies that integrity is listed as one of Maxwell's *21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* which states that the ultimate quality for a leader is unquestionably integrity. Without it there is no real success achievable. The character trait of integrity captures the authenticity, honesty and values in which people are true to themselves, accurately representing privately and publicly their internal states, intentions, and commitments (Thomason, 2013). Integrity is considered to be a pattern of behavior that is consistent with one's adopted values (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). People with integrity are considered to be ethical leaders and they are perceived as being honest and trustworthy; which is necessary for healthy working relationships that have positive impacts on work outcomes (Brown & Treviño, 2006). A leader with integrity is more likely to be consistent in his/her behavior. If the behavior is established on principles and values that are acceptable to the follower, the follower will relate and build a sense of trust for the leader and the leader's behavior in the future (Engelbrecht, Heine, & Mahembe, 2015). In the field of leadership, measuring integrity of leaders and followers has become an important area of research. A leader with integrity will be perceived as trustworthy, which will lead to trust in that leader and therefore enhance trust in the organization that will promote a healthy relationship.

The trait theory leadership suggests that personality traits effect a leader's development and effectiveness (Colbert et al., 2012). To have an understanding of what leaders do when interacting with others which causes them to emerge as leaders will assist in determining which personality traits affect leadership (Colbert et al., 2012). Leadership experience is discovered in many capacities throughout an individual's life time. There are possible implications on the selection of a variety of leaders based on knowing which traits people find important in a leader (Nichols, 2016). Positive outcomes result from leaders whose personality more closely relates to the personality desired by subordinates (Nichols & Cottrell, 2014).

### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership is considered to be one of the new leadership models that gives more attention to the charismatic and affective elements of leadership (Bryman, 1992). Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people while the concern is placed on values, emotions, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It involves an extraordinary form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is normally expected of them (Northouse, 2016). Since its inception in 1978, transformational leadership gained acceptance as a prominent theory in leadership studies (Yukl, 2010). Bass (1985) expanded on transformational leadership theory and described it as an inspirational leadership approach in which leader's influence followers to increase performance through positive change and innovation which can yield positive outcomes. Transformational leadership is value driven where the leader sets high standards and purposes for followers, engaging them through inspiration, exemplary practice, collaboration, and trust. Transformational leadership aims at responding to change quickly and bringing the best out in people (Basham, 2012).

According to Northouse (2009), transformational leaders were found to serve as role models, promoting a shared vision that can be achieved by paying attention to the followers' needs and by intellectually stimulating and enabling each of them to want to work for the future benefit of the company which created a sense of ownership that eventually helps the company in the process of succession planning. The four dimensions of transformational leadership were established by Bass (1997), which included idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The emotional component of transformational leadership is idealized influence and it involves leading by example (Hockmeyer, 2015). Idealized influence is also referred to as charisma or charismatic leadership which involves addressing the needs of followers first and doing the "right thing" to achieve influence as a role model (Afshari, Kamariah, Wong, & Siraj, 2012). Charismatic leaders are confident and have the ability to influence followers on an emotional level to increase performance and achieve higher outcomes (Bass & Avolio, 2003). When a leader has the ability to set examples as a role model, behave in a highly ethical manner, and work on behalf of the organization that is a display of idealized influence (Alyn, 2011; Avolio & Yammarino, 2008). Leaders who exhibit idealized influence possess character traits of honesty, loyalty, competency, and humility (Alyn, 2011). Charismatic leaders who practice idealized influence were found to be admirable, which in turn caused followers to identify with their behavior and personality (Bodla & Nawaz, 2010).

Inspirational motivation is defined as the inspirational component of transformational leadership and involves inspiring followers to achieve ambitious goals (Hockmeyer, 2015). Inspirational motivation involves creating a common vision and using that future common vision to motivate and inspire followers (Afshari et al., 2012). Inspirational motivation is used by

transformational leaders to challenge followers and gain support of programs, causes, and ideas (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Inspirational leaders are able to establish and communicate a common vision with followers and create optimism and enthusiasm about work to create an accepted purpose and attain a higher meaning (Bass & Bass, 2008; Shibru & Darshan, 2011). Leaders routinely use inspirational motivation to create an air of excitement and provide meaning to achieving organizational goals. Motivational leaders continue to gain followers commitment and establish an appealing vision, create awareness about the procedures that are required to achieve the vision, and provide followers with the encouragement and support necessary to successfully reach the desired vision (Bass, 1985).

Intellectual stimulation is the process of inspiring followers to operate at higher levels by encouraging innovation and creativity (Afshari et al., 2012). The creative aspect of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation which involves questioning the status quo to develop innovative solutions to problems (Hockmeyer, 2015). Leaders often use intellectual stimulation to address organizational deficiencies or concerns and encourage followers to take a critical view of the organizations policies and procedures. Those leaders who practice intellectual stimulation continue to encourage followers to take risks and use their creativity to generate new ideas within the organization (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Intellectual stimulation is most certainly related to team performance while challenging the leader to develop assumptions, to be a risk taker and to gather follower ideas. On the other hand, employees must be willing to challenge the status quo, not avoid the risks and be willing to share an understanding of consumer needs and the changing environments (Lee, Cheng, Yeung, & Lai, 2011).

Individualized consideration is more of the customized portion of transformational leadership that involves providing individual support to self-actualize (Avolio & Yammarino,

2008). It also involves considering the individual needs of each follower and the larger group as a whole and ensuring that individual and group needs are addressed (Afshari et al., 2012).

Leaders who normally display individual consideration have a true understanding of the importance of considering the unique abilities, aspirations, and needs of followers and treat members as unique individuals of the organization (Ashari et al., 2012). Transformational leaders who practice the art of individual consideration empower followers to achieve mutually beneficial goals by listening, communicating, and supporting the efforts of the organization (Eliyana, 2010; Shibru & Darshan, 2011). The unique factor with individual consideration is that each follower is treated as a unique contributor and coaching, mentoring, feedback, and growth opportunities are provided. Once given individual attention and allowed to grow, many followers go above and beyond the expected performance (Kendrick, 2011).

The individual elements of leaders that display the needs of followers provide forward movement and their cumulative effect can and has been shown to deliver performance that far surpasses previous types. The importance of measuring the different elements of transformational leadership was recognized by Bass and Avolio (2003) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was created to measure transformational leadership characteristics. Bass (1998) noted the significance of transformational leadership to industrial, military, and educational settings and demonstrated how leaders in multiple disciplines can use transformational leadership to improve performance outcomes.

By sharing a clear mission, vision, and by promoting personal empowerment, transformational leadership allows the implementation of structural interventions that result in increased autonomy, higher self-efficacy, and enhanced employee influence on work outcomes and successful succession planning (Sun, Zhangb, Qic, & Chen, 2012). With the empowerment,

appreciation, and involvement of followers, the decision-making process resulted in increased job satisfaction and higher performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Park & Rainey, 2008; Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011).

Transformational leadership is known for facilitating communication, allowing employees to speak freely to their peers and to their leaders without fear of retaliation (Liu, Siu, & Shi, 2010). Transformational leaders also promote an open climate for discussion that promotes trust both at the individual and the team level, resulting in a higher level of achievement in succession planning Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, and Frey (2013). Epitropaki and Martin (2013) found that transformational leaders foster smoother and more relaxed communications and negotiations, therefore a more viable succession planning initiative. When the leader displayed transformational traits, followers were more likely to use tactics that reciprocate the relations-oriented leadership style, such as ingratiation, rather than abrasive forms of influence such as coalition or direct confrontation (Epitropaki & Martin, 2013). Transformational leadership also mitigates the damaging effect that conflicts have on morale and performance and leaders are able to exploit the shared vision and their relationship orientation to resolve conflicts and re-focus their followers toward the intended goal (Ayoko & Konard, 2012).

Behling (2014) suggested that transformational leadership is well suited to leading faculty. Transformational leadership also focuses on valuing people and requires the institution to select leaders who display values that extend past individual self-interest (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Idealized influence is one of the characteristics of transformational leaders which consists of both behavioral and attributive dimensions. These leaders attempt to communicate their values and vision in a way that inspires their team members (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

Leaders that provided team members with challenges and meaning for engaging in shared leadership goals gave inspirational motivation, a characteristic of transformational leadership. Also, leaders with intellectual stimulation transformed team members to become agents that find new ways of solving problems and became interested in empowering others. Training and learning help to improve leadership skills, a leadership development program created by Avolio and Bass named the Full Range Leadership training is designed to train individuals, teams and organizations in transactional and transformational leadership (Boateng, 2014). Although training is valuable, the emotions one possesses is important to the type of leadership qualities that are displayed.

The emotional quotient is an issue seeking to explain and interpret the role of emotions and feelings in human capabilities (Hosseinzadeh, Nasiri, & Ghanbari, 2014). Effective leaders with emotional quotient who can obtain the objectives with the maximum productivity, satisfaction, and employees' commitment can be a good predictor of transformational leadership behaviors and the relationship between these two can be an indicator for the leader's effectiveness (Hosseinzadeh et al., 2014). Managers have higher abilities in the field of emotional quotient dimensions such as the social skills, self-awareness, and empathy, but low abilities in self-control and self-motivation. Barling et al. (2000) identified 60 managers to include vice presidents, general managers, middle managers, and supervisors of an organization to participate in a study on the associations of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. Participants were presented with three questionnaires and specific instructions; complete the Emotional Intelligence and Seligman Attributional Style Questionnaires, and distribute copies of the MLQ to eight subordinates. Fifty-seven managers completed both questionnaires to be included in the data. In addition, at least three subordinate reports for each

manager were required, resulting in 49 sets of data. The results of Barling et al.'s (2000) study showed that emotional intelligence is associated with mainly three aspects of transformational leadership: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, and (c) individualized consideration along with contingent reward. In contrast, Barling et al.'s (2000) results showed that active and passive management by exception, and laissez faire management were not associated with emotional intelligence. Drawing on the experiences of over 3,000 executives, in the Harvard Business Review article on *Leadership That Gets Results*, Goleman (2000) demonstrated the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership and concluded that leaders can increase their quotient of leadership styles by understanding which emotional intelligence competencies underlie the leadership styles they are lacking and working to develop them.

Mandell and Pherwani (2003) revealed that a momentous prognostic relationship existed between the transformational leadership style and emotional intelligence. The regression analysis of the proposed study presented that the transformational leadership style of leaders could be forecasted from their emotional intelligence scores. Mandell and Pherwani (2003) also emphasized several common characteristics between the two constructs of transformational leadership and emotional intelligence such as empathy, self-awareness, self-confidence, trust, and motivation.

Tonioni (2015) examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership style using a sample of 107 administrators, of which 39% were men and 61% were women, from four of Chicago's 16 metropolitan single community college systems in Illinois. Two instruments were administered to participants. The Genos Emotional Intelligence Inventory-Full Version (Genos EI Inventory-Full; Genos, 2014), measures the emotional intelligence of an

individual across seven factors. The Leadership Styles Questionnaire (LSQ; Northouse, 2012) measures the typical leadership style of a leader across three domains. The data analysis was centered on exploring possible correlations between variables, comparing group differences, and generating predictive models. The results found by Tonioni (2015) indicated a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and independent leadership style. Tonioni (2015) also revealed a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and laissez-faire leadership style. According to Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2013), specific emotional intelligence competencies such as self-confidence, self-awareness, transparency, and empathy would improve a leader's overall emotional intelligence specifically with transformational leadership when integrated into a leadership development program.

A nine-dimension model was built and proposed specifically for working with schools and then further refined to reflect four categories that include setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). A comprehensive review was conducted of the change process and transformational leadership that resulted in identifying ten domains that comprise an aggregate view of transformational leadership drawn from business and educational settings (Larick & White, 2012). The Transformational Leadership Skills Inventory (TLSI) provides a holistic framework of transformational leadership based on existing theory and research (Larick & White, 2012). The ten components of transformational leadership drawn from educational settings include visionary leadership, communication, problem-solving/decision-making, personal/interpersonal skills, character and integrity, collaboration and sustained innovation, managing change, diversity, team-building, and political intelligence. Although each were

important for the purpose of this review, emphasis was placed on collaboration and sustained innovation, managing change, and team building.

Implementation of collaborative systems may be achieved through shared leadership structures (Elmore, 2000). Collaboration and sustained innovation involves effective leaders demonstrating the ability to develop trust and a collaborative culture. Trusting relationships are developed in transformational leadership along with a culture of involved leaders who encourage creative problem-solving, communication, and conflict resolution (Larick & White, 2012). A culture that promotes creative solutions and reduces anticipated obstacles to change is created by transformational leaders (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). Collaboration and sustained innovation prepares an organization for change.

Managing change is a key component of transformational leadership which allows leaders the ability to manage rapid change that is required in organizations (Drucker, 1999). Leaders continue to play significant roles in facilitating organizational changes that create a positive environment. The ability to recognize the need for change and execute high levels of dedication to creating change is a strong characteristic of transformational leaders (Lazaroiu, 2013). Managing change requires the work and development of several employees coming together to formulate the team.

Team-building plays a critical role in the component of transformational leadership through collaboration, encouragement, and a positive environment that build effective teams (Larick & White, 2012). As meaningful relationships are developed, members of the team are empowered to hold leadership roles during transformational leadership rather than solely depending on employees who have previously served in leadership roles (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). Although shared authentic leadership originates within individuals, research

indicates that authentic leadership may be beneficial when shared among team members within leadership teams (Hmieleski, Cole, & Baron, 2012).

Transformational leaders are known to have a vision for the future with a state of the organization, share the vision and focus followers' attention by clearly communicating their vision to followers, have confidence that followers will support the vision, and have a positive image of self and followers (Robison, 2014). Based on the study by Munirat and Nzelibe (2012), transformational leadership is essential to obtaining high levels of authenticity, self-esteem and self-actualization. Using social and spiritual values as a motivational level is powerful for them both which gives people an uplifting sense of being connected to a higher purpose with meaning and identity (Munirat & Nzelibe, 2012). This motivational level will work timely with the performance of the path-goal theory.

### **Path-Goal Theory**

Path-goal theory displays how leaders motivate followers to achieve designated goals; primarily this leadership theory is designed to enhance follower performance and follower satisfaction by focusing on follower motivation (Northouse, 2016). The path-goal theory attempts to clarify the reason behind the working of contingent rewards and how these rewards effect the subordinate's satisfaction and motivation (Bass & Bass, 2008). Barling et al. (2000) stated that path-goal theory had two main objectives: (a) identify roles and behaviors of effective leaders and (b) explore situational contingencies that modify those behaviors.

The path-goal theory describes how a leader can provide support to subordinates on the path to goals by using specific behavior based on subordinates needs and work environment or situations in which subordinates are operating (Malik, 2013). Path-goal is a cognitive approach to understanding motivation where subordinates compute effort-to-performance and

performance-to-outcome probabilities (Bickle, 2017; Malik, 2013). The most effective leader will ensure or provide availability of valued rewards or achieving goals by helping them find the best ways to reach their path (Malik, 2013). This task and leadership relation involves effort-to-performance and performance-to-reward expectancies. The two situational contingencies in the Path-Goal theory are: (a) the personal characteristics of group members and (b) the work environment (Daft, 2015). Leadership is viewed as an important predictor of organizational effectiveness and job satisfaction among employees; with studies showing a positive correlation between leadership and employee job satisfaction (Malik, Hassan, & Aziz, 2011; Seo, Ko, & Price, 2004; Nisa, 2003). Leader behavior has a significant relationship with employee job satisfaction of subordinates (Malik, 2013).

A study conducted by Malik (2013) utilized descriptive correlation design and cross sectional survey methodology that focused on three surveys for the collection of data. The collection of data used three surveys consisting of (a) leadership behavior, (b) job satisfaction, and (c) demographic characteristics, using stratified random sampling method. A total of 200 surveys were distributed with 165 surveys returned, which included 121 supervisors and 44 middle managers both male and female.

First concerning leadership behavior the conceptual framework derives from Robert House's Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (Malik, 2013). Malik (2013) collected data on leadership behavior through a set of 20 questions that measured four leader behaviors: five each measuring directive and participative leadership behavior, seven measuring supportive, and three measuring achievement-oriented leader behavior. Questions used to measure the perception of participants about their leader's behavior with the participants' responses were indicated on a five point Likert-type scale (Malik, 2013).

Secondly, a job satisfaction survey utilized the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Bowling Green State University, the instrument assess the level of job satisfaction among employees (Malik, 2013). The JDI yields five sub-scale scores: employees on their present job; a job in general; work on present job; salary; opportunities for promotion; and supervision. The responses were measured through words or phrases in which respondents had to reply based on how well each of the words or phrases describes the employees work by checking yes or no (Malik, 2013).

Finally, Malik (2013) utilized a demographic survey for respondents' biographical, educational information and working experience. Participants were given further explanations of the variables if requested. The results of Malik's (2013) study showed a positive correlation between employee job satisfaction and leadership behavior. Also, results of Malik's (2013) study showed that directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented leader behaviors have a significant relationship with supervision and job satisfaction in general; thus it was concluded that leaders affect subordinate job satisfaction. The strength of an organization's succession is the ability to have effective leaders that enhance employee performance and satisfaction, which leads to a more productive, knowledgeable, and prepared employee for promotion to the next level.

The path-goal theory states that it is important for a leader to be able to manifest four different styles of behavior: (a) the directive style is when the leader provides specific instructions to subordinates on how they should perform their tasks, (b) the supportive style is when the leader demonstrates concern for the subordinate's well-being and provides or displays support to individuals, (c) the participative style is when the leader solicits ideas and recommendations from subordinates and invites their input and participation in decisions that

directly affect them or the organization, and (d) the achievement oriented style is when the leader sets challenging goals that (Polston-Murdoch, 2013) place emphasis on improvement in work performance and encourage high levels of goal attainments (Muchinsky, 2006). According to path-goal leadership, the success of a leader is influenced by the interaction of the leader's behaviors which include the four styles. There are also two types of contingency factors that include subordinate characteristics and environment. These contingency factors are the situational variables that cause one leadership style to be more effective than another (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2007). The subordinate characteristics require a need for autonomy having that desire to be independent and in self-control; while environmental characteristics include a task structure in which the nature and the requirements of a particular task are specified (Malik, 2012).

According to a study by Malik (2012), the relationship between leader behavior using directive, supportive, participative and achievement-oriented leadership styles of corporate managers and subordinates' job expectancies using House's (1974) path-goal model of leadership revealed that leader behavior affects subordinates job expectations. The participants included 200 employees working in a variety of jobs in the cellular industry. For the leader there is a direct path to obtaining the goal by simply increasing personal pay-offs to subordinates. This work goal attainment is achieved when an easier path is clarified, obstacles are eliminated, and there are increased opportunities for personal growth.

The House path-goal theory uses the foundation that motivation is based on the premises that employees will exert effort and performance based on their perception of the leader's behavior (Polston-Murdoch, 2013). The main objective for the leader is to communicate clear expectations, describe the path to achieving a goal, and then to remove all barriers for employees as they attempt to execute in an effort to achieve the goal or complete the task at hand (Polston-

Murdoch, 2013). Leaders are developed to provide information, support, and resources for team members to be successful.

The four path-goal leadership styles that function to provide structure and/or reward to subordinates are directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented. They can be exercised by leaders in any combination with a variety of subordinates and within different organizational cultures and situations (Polston-Murdoch, 2013). The conceptual framework of leadership models states that leaders who practice certain leadership styles, according to subordinates, could influence the subordinate commitment to the superior (Polston-Murdoch, 2013).

### **Leader Development**

Leadership development and succession planning programs are educational endeavors that are designed to decrease organizational risk in the event of key position vacancy. In order for succession planning programs to be successful, participation in educational activities and taking advantage of opportunities of performance based activities to demonstrate increasing skill levels must be a part of the curriculum. Leaders must understand that mentorship of those selected to participate in leadership development must be continuous (Cole, 2012). Service organizations typically have been known for filling middle manager positions with internal team members and providing very little insight on training and developing leaders due to the high turnovers (Austin, Regan, Samples, Schwartz, & Carnochan, 2011). It is difficult for organizations to focus on leadership development and succession planning and sustain their growth in leadership (McDonagh, Prybil, & Totten, 2013). A leadership succession plan allows organizations to plan for continuity by strengthening their leadership support system (McDonagh et al., 2013).

Leaders must exemplify the behavior and professional characteristics they expect as the foundational concept in exemplifying excellence (Knight, 2014). The leader's behavior sets the tone for the culture of the organization. The leader's behavior should match the expectations being made of others, from effort to outcomes to personal interactions. Professional development becomes critical for the leader to engage all departmental and divisional activities into current base practices leadership and development (Knight, 2014).

Organizations, including community colleges, find it beneficial to implement leadership development as part of the succession plan. There are several benefits to leadership education, including: the identification of educational opportunities to develop employees in their current or future jobs; the increase in the number of employees that are eligible for promotion; the advancement of diverse groups; and improvement in morale and commitment to the organization's mission, values, and goals as employees tie their personal career paths to the organization's strategic plan (Rothwell, 2010). Mentoring plays a major role in the development of leaders.

Mentoring can best be described as a relationship between two individuals, in which an older, more experienced person (the mentor) provides support and guidance to a younger, less experienced person (the protégé), both of whom are working together in a mutually agreed-upon relationship within an organization (Rutti, Helms, & Rose, 2013). Seen as a nurturing process, mentoring allowed the more skilled or experienced person to serve as the role model and teaches, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or inexperienced person (Ismail, Ali, & Arokiasamy, 2012; Kelch-Oliver et al., 2013; Muir, 2014). The mentor-mentee pairings are crucial to the success of mentoring relationships and with informal mentoring the pairing process was spontaneous and voluntary (Bell & Treleaven, 2010). With the process of informal

mentoring, a senior staff member may offer a newer staff member a mentoring relationship, or the junior staff member may actually ask the senior staff member to serve as a mentor. The problem or limitation of this approach was the benefits of mentoring might not be available for a staff member who does not have access to senior staff members (Bell & Treleaven, 2010).

Organizations find themselves more competitive and equipped with the ability to develop leaders for the future when formal mentoring can be used in leadership development (Corner, 2014). Formal mentoring offers opportunities for leadership development by capitalizing on knowledge internally that is geared specific to the organization and is tailored to meet any organization's goals and objectives (Corner, 2014). A model to evaluate mentoring relationships was used to negate any barriers such as power dynamic, mentor attitude and setting expectations. The model consisted of six major parts: (a) mentee empowerment and training, (b) peer learning and mentor training, (c) aligning expectations, (d) mentee program advocate, (e) mentor self-reflection, and (f) mentee evaluation of mentor (Anderson, Silet, & Fleming, 2011). The six component strategy was different from former practices and it is suggested that organizations implement one component strategy at a time (Anderson et al., 2011).

Emerging leaders and their mentors stated their formal mentoring experience was essential to the development of their leader identity and provided a strong influence on the mentoring relationship (Muir, 2014). Administrators and mentors participated in a two-year mentoring program and shared lessons learned that included a major foundation that mentoring must be built on trust and building strong relationships (Collins, Lewis, Stracke, & Vanderheide, 2014). Also, the process of mentoring must allow for mistakes to be made and communication along with collaboration must include the context for mentoring (Collins et al., 2014). Other lessons included having the necessary time to impact teaching and enhance learning, become a

common practice in higher education, and incorporate diversity which requires a unique approach to mentoring (Collins et al., 2014).

To have an effective formal mentoring model there needs to a specified time, length of the relationship, and meeting schedules. Every mentoring model contains a selection processes such as applications, interviews, and criteria (Dawson, 2014). Organizations used a variety of resources and tools to support mentoring relationships, such as software and psychometric instruments, a range of mentoring training, online and offline training (Dawson, 2014). Three key areas were addressed by pharmacy colleges that started an effective mentoring program: (a) a mentoring program was created to fit the needs of the specific institution based on the institution's mission, resources and size; (b) the structure of the program involved pairing junior and senior level team members to share feedback on their relationship; and (c) the mentor-mentee pairing was assigned by a team leader initiated by the mentor or mentee (Metzger et al., 2013). The Adaptive Mentorship (AM) model was used in the research study and the researchers showed: (a) AM was a cross-disciplinary, developmental model that had been refined for application in different mentoring contexts; (b) the model focused on mentors adapting their mentoring reaction to match the existing developmental needs of the protégés; and (c) the AM model was shown to help mentoring dyads to have a better understanding of the entire mentorship process and guides their practice within the roles and responsibilities of the mentorship (Ruru, Sanga, Walker, & Ralph, 2013).

A Midwestern state selected college presidents, vice presidents, and deans from several rural community colleges to determine what factors played a major role in their leadership development. The participants in the research held a variety of positions throughout their careers and noted that on the job training is where most of their leadership skills honed in from (Eddy,

2013). One president noted that a lot was learned by trial and error, having made a lot of mistakes and learning from those mistakes (Eddy, 2013).

In Southern California, a qualitative case study was conducted using a “grow your own” (GYO) succession planning program to gain an understanding of participants career advancement behaviors and effectiveness in filling the leadership pipeline (Benard & Piland, 2014). The GYO training is provided through a series of workshops that are conducted over the course of a semester. The curriculum includes basic leadership development contextualized within the culture of the school district that focus on leadership skills, assessment of participant leadership profiles, and dealing with difficult situations and employees. The focus is an intensive training module that includes five components: (a) facilities, (b) business services, (c) student services, (d) instructional services, and (e) human resources (Benard & Piland, 2014). In addition to the training sessions, the program design also included an experiential learning opportunity that included leadership coaching/mentoring, experiential assignments, as well as counseling and review of possible career paths and the specific skills and abilities necessary for successful promotion (Benard & Piland, 2014). The GYO program proved beneficial to employees by building internal communities and networks within the district which are advantageous to the individual and the district. Participation in the program provided employees with a shared learning experience and the opportunity to make connections and network with other colleagues. These connections highlighted some career paths for participants who were interested in career advancement, helped to improve job performance and provided the employees with encouragement to pursue career goals from their colleagues and the program facilitators (Benard & Piland, 2014).

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) created an on-campus leadership development program for administrators. The senior leadership program includes a multi-tiered approach to the delivery of content. The first element is a workshop component that builds foundational concepts and competencies, which provides the functions of key areas within the university to include finance, budgeting, human resources, academic affairs, and student affairs. Second, the participant engages in a self-assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses along with gaps in knowledge. The third element involves applied experiences that involves working on team projects with fellow participants from across departmental areas; these projects focus on activities of importance to the university community and consistent with the institution's mission and strategic objectives (Trotta, 2013).

Castillo-Garrison (2012) studied a group of women and their careers along with a collaboration between a professional organization and a community college district over a six-year time frame to show the impact of leadership development. Participants in the study reported that by being in the leadership program provided a positive impact on their careers and the most relevant components of the program were perceived to be examples of executive leadership and the networking opportunities that existed during the program. Knott (2011) observed three in-house community college leadership development programs and came to the conclusion that the significant individual outcome was having an expanded social network and the significant organization outcomes was greater cohesion among employees and better informed employees.

Much of the literature and research on programs and methods designed to build future leaders from current employees focus on three areas: (a) on-the-job training or internships, (b) leadership training programs, and (c) graduate school programs (Strom et al., 2011). In a survey of over 350 incumbent community college presidents, several conclusions were made including

nearly 70% indicated a need to expand and improve in-house development programs (Hull & Keim, 2007). The survey also found 86% of colleges offered leadership workshops and seminars, 49% offered internships, and 18% offered other opportunities, including graduate studies. Size of the institution resulted in a statistically significant difference in leadership development opportunities where smaller institutions offered fewer opportunities, 89% of the presidents found these programs valuable to participants, and 87% found value for the institution (Hull & Keim, 2007).

There is no one segment that is capable of producing the perfect leader for the community college. With numerous issues faced by community college leaders, consideration should be given to a more integrative approach in finding future leaders. Using the combination of on-the-job training, internal leadership growth processes, internship, mentorship, leadership development programs, and graduate school programs can provide an opportunity to develop well-rounded community college leaders (Strom et al., 2011). Organizations identify individuals internally to serve as potential leaders. Individual leadership development plans can use the 70/20/10 model approach to identify specific development actions for individuals (Kramer, 2013). Kramer (2013) stated that most leadership development happens on the job with 70% through job opportunities, projects and assignments; coaching and mentoring occurs at 20%; and 10% is actually formal training. The opportunities to develop leadership skills can utilize special projects and opportunities that come along in every organization to help individuals develop specific skills (Kramer, 2013).

Identifying and developing talent from within an organization for leadership roles is effective in preparation for advanced responsibilities, has a positive effect on staff morale, and minimizes the impact of vacant leadership positions during recruitment (Miodonski & Hines,

2013). For an organization to have a vital leadership development program it should take advantage of all formal resources currently available through human resources or organizational development departments (Miodonski & Hines, 2013). These resources may also include classroom activities, mentoring programs, shared leadership/governance, and programs that shadow staff from other departments.

### **Succession Planning**

Succession planning was first acknowledged by Henri Fayol (1841-1925). Fayol indicated that it is a responsibility of the organization to create stability and, if that responsibility was not acted on, individuals lacking the essential characteristics and skills would be placed in critical roles (Rothwell, 2010). Developing a pipeline of talent to ensure a seamless transition and continuity is a step in the right direction of succession planning in institutions of higher learning. The depth and quality of an organization's leadership are the most important determinants of the organization's future, and especially in uncertain and turbulent times such as these, organizations need to focus on building their pipelines of talent and ensuring successful leadership transition (Hazarika, 2009).

Some researchers define succession planning as a systematic effort to help managers, who need to identify a pool of high-potential candidates, develop leadership competencies in those candidates and then select leaders from the pool of potential leaders (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011). Calareso (2013) shared that succession planning is an ongoing process that is utilized to identify future leaders and prepare them to take on the role of leadership. The process does not occur serendipitously, but is intentional and systematic (Calareso, 2013). Rothwell (2010) agreed with Calareso that succession planning should be deliberate and systematic, but gives a more comprehensive definition and contends that succession planning should not only

focus on significant leadership positions, but should take into consideration the identification and development of critically important talents such as professional, technical, clerical and production positions. Galbraith, Smith, and Walker (2012) supported Rothwell's explanation in that they describe the term succession planning as a process for identifying and developing individuals who do not necessarily have direct managerial responsibilities, but are in positions that are highly specialized and require extensive training to acquire the necessary skills. Others have referred to it as a strategic, systematic, and deliberate activity to ensure an organization's future capability to fill vacancies without patronage or favoritism (Tropiano, 2004).

A clear definition of the scope of succession planning increases the likelihood of obtaining the desired results and that scope is defined by the organizations needs to consider a few fundamental elements; positions, employee potential, internal candidates, diversity, development and resources (Piña-Ramírez & Dávila, 2015). In the 1950s and 60s, succession planning made major advances in the response to the rise of corporate America. The complex size and scope of the organizations required a more systematic method to manage personnel, assess performance, and identify potential talent for promotion (Grossman, 2014). The original emphasis of succession planning was CEO replacement, but this focus shifted in the 1980s to include lower management levels (Berke, 2007).

Identifying future leaders is a principal aspect of succession planning; doing so safeguards the organization from the confusion that can ensue when a key leader leaves (Galbraith et al., 2012). Historically, organizations focused on replacing key employees before they left the organization, then they would replace them with new employees without developing them which was a common mistake (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011). Several problems can occur from simply replacing employees, such as the difficulties of finding the right person for a

new vacancy in a short period of time or the cost of hiring from outside the organization. For decades, the concern of succession planning was about hiring the exact person, not the required skills and talents needed for the organization's future. The target of succession planning in this old view was implemented by top leaders and business owners in the larger organizations (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011). Davies and Davies (2011) stated that current leaders need to model the behaviors they wish to see in others; by doing so success in the present can be assured for those in the future. While this point may be true, institutions cannot rely on this approach alone and need to be proactive in developing future leaders. In today's society where competition is high, work is fluid, the environment is unpredictable, and the organizational configuration frequently changes, the old view of succession planning by defining specific people for the specific job does not work. Nowadays, organizations need to develop a group of high potential people with general competencies creating flexibility and the leadership potential at all organizational levels (Mehrabani & Mohamad, 2011). This traditional way of thinking continues to hinder the community colleges where the percentage of anticipated presidential retirements is expected to reach 84% by 2016 (Bornstein, 2010).

Richards (2016) conducted a qualitative case study on succession planning in a community college and the influence of the institution's culture on the succession process. The case study used a large community college located within a southeastern state, with an enrollment of approximately 30,000 students. Participants comprised of two members of the president's council, four division chairs, and three department chairs. The emphasis of the study was on the positions of power that make decisions regarding succession planning, therefore the age, race, and ethnicity of the participants were not a factor. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, Richards (2016) assigned a pseudonym to the institution and to each participant

involved in the study. In this qualitative research, a purposeful selection method was used to select information rich cases for detailed study (Ajjawi & Higgs, 2007; Hunt, 2011). Interviews were used ranging from 45 minutes to an hour and consisted of a series of questions constructed to better understand how succession planning was viewed and practiced at the selected site, and how the succession planning process was advanced or impeded by the culture and traditions at the institution. The utilization of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews as one of the methods of data collection, following the approach outlined by Creswell (2014).

Participants views were amongst the findings that focused on the institution that were described as large and continuing to grow, innovative and supportive of autonomy, and as an institution that fulfills its mission through service to the community (Richards, 2016). From coding and recoding of the data four superordinate themes were derived: (a) change is constant, (b) diversity is valued, (c) top leaders are recruited from outside, and (d) succession planning is important. Each superordinate theme was supported with direct quotes from the participants and presented both in narrative and table format (Richards, 2016). Eighty-nine percent of the participants remarked on the constant changes that were taking place at the institution and another 56% commented on the importance of diversity to the institution especially as it relates to the very rigid hiring process that is designed to ensure that hiring committees are diverse (Richards, 2016). Finally, 67% of the participants commented that succession planning is important; however, succession planning is not formally practiced at the institution and there was resistance to attempts to implement it (Richards, 2016).

Another superordinate theme was that top leaders were recruited from outside the institution which aligns with research literature that states college and university presidents are usually hired from outside the institution (Richards, 2016). A national study conducted by

Amey, VanDerLinden, and Brown (2002) on the administrative careers of community college presidents reported that 22% of the presidents who participated in the study had been internal hires, and 66% of them had been hired externally from other community colleges. Weisman and Vaughan (2007) revealed that 35% of the presidents in their study were internal candidates for their first time presidential role. Jones and Warnick (2012) found the participants of four community college presidents in Texas were already employed in the community college system, but from different institutions. Nevarez and Wood (2010) stated that leaders in the community college system may have an advantage when it comes to the top leadership positions in community colleges; however, one concern to note is the lack of succession planning that occurs within community colleges.

A qualitative study used 360-degree leadership skills inventories to survey 770 participants in the sample of 3,720 rating personnel from 13 companies in North America (Dai et al., 2011). The leadership competencies were considered by the researchers in assessing the skills needed at different levels of management and determined that different levels required different skill sets. The results of the study suggested that succession plans need to incorporate guidance of experiences to help develop employees' adequate skills for each level (Dai et al., 2011).

An international mixed method study conducted in Johannesburg, South Africa found a gap between the perception of succession planning and actual succession planning. A questionnaire study was used to test four objectives: (a) if succession planning was part of strategic business plan, (b) how the company was governed, (c) if the company provided training for internal staff, and (d) if succession planning was perceived to add value to the company. The companies surveyed concluded that succession planning was important, but they did not

implement a plan to develop potential managers (Garg & Van Weele, 2012). Also, the study found the lack of succession planning made the companies more vulnerable and concluded that succession planning and leadership training were important, although succession plans had not been implemented (Garg & Van Weele, 2012).

In a university study by Jantti and Greenhalgh (2012), staff who were encouraged to participate in a leadership development program where succession planning was incorporated, however, there was a lack of interest in leadership positions from potential candidates that perceived an unfavorable climate within the leadership ranks. Owens Community College in Ohio did an internal study showing that the major factors of not having a succession plan were lack of communication between stakeholders, lack of understanding of succession planning by union personnel, and apathy toward organizational culture (Owens Community College, 2006). The study also revealed that not having a succession plan resulted in the loss of valuable employees to other institutions, team members reluctant to sharing knowledge, and the lack of strong leadership. Similarly, a mixed-methods research conducted by Carlson (2007) revealed Colorado community college stakeholders had a somewhat different perception of succession planning within their own system. Stating that those who held vice-president positions felt succession planning was an essential part of their organizational structure, while 70% of faculty members did not agree with that conclusion. With this study it was recommended that succession planning be incorporated into Maryland's Community Colleges' strategic plans.

Formal succession planning in higher education has rarely been practiced which may be attributed to ongoing traditions and institutional culture (Calareso, 2013). With the projection of a leadership crisis in higher education it is essential that strategies for succession planning be developed. A succession planning strategy compiles the skills, abilities, and goals of each

employee, compares them with the needs of current and future roles, and tracks employee progress toward being ready to fill those roles (Bell, Whitney, & Kalman, 2014). Strategies for a strong succession plan include the following steps: Pack a BASKET which creates a specific model for every job that defines the “behavior,” “attitude,” “skills,” “knowledge,” “experience,” and “talent” necessary to succeed in a position (Bell et al., 2014). Know where you are going by making sure BASKET assessments consider the skills necessary to fulfill future roles and map the gaps by using the BASKET assessments to do a gap analysis with employees to help them see what they need to do to be ready for the next level (Bell et al., 2014). As part of the assessment, ask for directions by talking to employees about their own career goals and aspirations to be sure you are prepping them for a job they want. Identify roadblocks and look for any obstacles in the development process that could prevent candidates from moving forward (Bell et al., 2014).

Departments in higher education normally operate within their own parameters and succession planning is hindered by placing constraints, competitive professional goals, and selections made based on elements other than performance (Rothwell, 2011a; Gonzalez, 2010). Rothwell (2010) also mentioned that succession planning should be comprehensive and purposeful, especially in higher education. Those institutions that fail to develop and implement succession planning will sacrifice institutional stability. Options must be considered for succession planning of college presidents, although there is a difference in organizational structures between colleges and corporate entities, succession planning practiced in the business community should be considered for its plausibility in the higher education arena (Wecker, 2014). According to Davis (2013), succession planning is a major component for the grooming and nurturing of potential leaders to sustain higher education and should be embraced formally

or informally. Appiah-Padi (2014) conducted a study that indicated 45% of those holding the position as Chief Academic Officer elected not to pursue the college presidencies and 25% were undecided in having the interest to succeed as the president. A few reasons mentioned for lack of interest were the time demands of the position, not finding the responsibilities appealing, the lack of preparation for the position, and not wanting to live with the high visibility that is required of the position (Appiah-Padi, 2014).

Attributes that are most common in succession planning include a systematic process implemented at all levels of an organization, employee opportunity for upward and lateral movement within the organization, rewarding leaders for promoting their best, talented employees (Rothwell, 2010). For an effective succession plan to occur several steps must be taken. This may include conducting an assessment of organization's needs, identifying the knowledge, skills and attributes of future leaders, identifying and assessing the talents of current employees, developing growth plans for employees interested in upward movement, implementing those growth plans with clear feedback and accountability requirements, and evaluating the process (Neefe, 2009).

Although several institutions of higher education have not formally adopted succession planning, more emphasis is being placed on requiring a specific plan. Emory University affirmed a specified goal when the Excellence through Leadership program was introduced (Davis, 2013). To improve leadership performance and develop a leadership conduit for succession planning, individuals with a position of director or higher who demonstrated strong potential for professional advancement were allowed to participate in a yearlong program at Emory (Davis, 2013). A curriculum was provided with an assessment of general and individual leadership styles, basic leadership competencies and access to Emory's executive leaders. Some

institutions pool their resources like Gettysburg College, Bucknell University, and Dickinson College who established a coordinated succession planning tool to create the Higher Education Leadership Institute of Central Pennsylvania. The mission of the institute is geared to prepare potential administrative leaders from the three institutions in addressing complex challenges facing higher education (Patton, 2013).

The fundamentals in succession planning should address leadership at all levels, engaging in practices fostering career and leadership development (Calareso, 2013). According to Gonzales (2010), leadership development could be perceived as a precursor to succession planning and identified as talent management. The current structure and culture of an institution should foster transparency to its stakeholders while being sensitive to time management (Valentine, 2011). Promotion from within is considered to be a positive gesture; however, the trickle-down effect created by the move can be harmful to leadership stability (Calareso, 2013).

Community colleges are becoming more prone to adopt succession planning models from corporate leadership styles realizing that many of the board members, trustees and stakeholders come from the corporate environment (Luna, 2010). General Electric has been noted for its succession planning success that includes open discussions that deal with core issues, linking business practices and talent development, and the social structures that integrate distinct consultations into an ongoing practice (Conaty & Charan, 2010; Onatolu, 2013). General Electric promotes an environment where employees are challenged to develop to their potential and are rewarded for their efforts bringing a spirit of cooperation to the employee and the organization. It is important for organizations to choose the best candidate, one who is not just in harmony with present or past business strategies, but who can be aligned with future strategies and vision (Plank, 2014). Succession planning is more than identifying individuals for

leadership positions, but provides a way for an institution to ensure a sufficient source of possible leaders through a systematic process of establishing a diverse talent pool with both the capacity and the skills to lead the institution into the future (Davis, 2013).

According to Gonzalez (2010), leadership succession in the academic world is known for taking extended time, and there are many more layers of cultural processes and procedures compared to the corporate world when decisions are often made quickly in reference to succession, especially when organizations are faced with a crisis. In the business world, leadership succession plan is done often and quickly, which gives the organization stability in the perception of the public (Gonzalez, 2010). Blumenstyk (2005) stated that academia is becoming more like the business arena, but has not applied one of the best attributes used in business of hiring executives from within. Effective communication and organizational commitment that identifies and develop potential leaders are common factors required in succession planning (Cascio, 2011; Rothwell, 2010). This void continues to reduce the collection of experienced knowledge among college leaders, while community college presidents will retire within the next ten years at a rate of 75% (Thompson, 2013).

There is only a small proportion of community colleges that have formal succession plans according to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE; 2008). With efficient leaders retiring and opting for other careers, it was of necessity for Daytona Beach State College to implement a succession planning model replacing an orderly leadership development strategy. The succession plan was a positive process for blending organizational development with personal and professional development focusing on the social, economic and technological dynamisms that shape a remarkable time of transformation and a period of extraordinary opportunity (Lorenzo, 2013). To prevent the gaps that occur within the internal leadership

programs it is suggested that the significance of strategic planning become inclusive (Phillippe & Tekle, 2013). Leadership development leads to effective succession planning.

Community colleges play vital roles in the area they serve. Although the mission of community colleges is similar, regional locations can create differences in how succession planning is approached. Several unique factors were noted in the study of leadership competencies and succession planning in community colleges located in rural areas (Eddy, 2013). Those factors included a downside of limited experience of working in colleges and limited networking within the national community college arena. Succession in the rural setting was a more informal structure than large institutions and the community college in rural areas were more prone to practice replacement planning (Eddy, 2013). Replacement planning is defined as a less formal model of leadership change that tends to be used in filling key positions in emergencies, such as severe illness, disability, or unexpected resignations (Rothwell, 2011). Experts in leadership recommend succession planning as a more viable methodology to maintain and improve institutional viability and sustainability (Gonzalez, 2010).

The demands and ongoing changes in regards to federal regulations, support and technological advancements make leadership positions in higher education more challenging (Nevarez & Wood, 2012). A study by McNair, Duree, and Ebbers (2011), concluded the need for leadership development and succession planning was prevalent as it shows the gaps of knowledge for the new executive leadership in community colleges. The gaps in knowledge are prevalent in the area of grants, finances, bonding issues, construction, and federal regulations. The leadership void in higher education among institutions in Illinois caused the need for leadership training programs to be addressed. Southeastern Illinois College developed such a program in 2012, where research showed significant emphasis placed on the program being

specific to the organizational structure and culture of the institution (Rice & O'Keefe, 2014). According to Rice and O'Keefe (2014), in following the lead of the success of that program, the Illinois Community College Trustees' Association proposed the development of a comprehensive leadership development program to cultivate emerging leaders as community colleges confronted the leadership void.

There are several levels of succession planning identified by (Galbraith et al., 2012) which are displayed in an array of spectrums. At one end of the spectrum is a basic succession plan which includes plans to develop leadership skills for all employees throughout the institution. This type of plan develops and creates a pool of employees who are leaders in their respective positions and who may be ready to take on additional leadership responsibilities if needed. In the middle of the spectrum, a succession plan may include identifying a group of higher performing employees with leadership potential and preparing them for future vacancies. On the far side of the spectrum, a highly specialized succession plan may include only preparing a few top candidates for specific key leadership positions. On the far side of the spectrum the succession planning may become frustrating for employees who are not chosen to be groomed for leadership; and becomes just as frustrating to organizations that invest in potential employees that may leave (Galbraith et al., 2012).

Succession planning has become a valuable process because it not only identifies the next leader of the organization, but it outlines specific strategies and processes for preparing and developing individuals for their future roles as leaders (Atwood, 2007; Calareso, 2013). Succession planning should be a transparent process that includes not only the forecasting of openings, but also the preparation of a qualified talent pool, and the sustainment of leaders through support and mentoring (Peters, 2011). Succession planning also helps to avoid

premature promotions since it is a guided developmental process that prepares employees for future leadership roles (Atwood, 2007).

In the past, faculty have evolved into administrators to fill leadership roles in higher education; however, fewer faculty are interested in the career transition due to sustained need for high numbers of faculty, lack of administrative mentoring, and lack of interest (Luna, 2010). Along with faculty, fewer senior administrators are interested in being in the role of college presidency (Hanson, 2015). With the changing responsibilities of college presidents coupled with the demographics in age, the position has become less attractive to administrators who actually have experience in higher education (Ashford, 2011; Duree & Ebbers, 2012; Ekman, 2010).

Existing economic times and budget shortfalls have further impacted the skills required of future leaders, requiring the need to have leaders who are equipped to handle the multiplicity of challenges facing community colleges, higher education funding, students, and the community (Coward, 2012). As the war for qualified talent intensifies, two-year institutions can no longer depend on professionals from outside of higher education to serve as a potential talent pool (Miller & Pope, 2003). For the most part discussions centered on the leadership gap have focused on the movement of top executives, but there is also a deficit in the number of faculty in the pipeline to fill the position of presidency. This attrition of faculty will also have a major impact on the leadership crisis. A review of college presidents who had previously transitioned through academic divisions found that 70% of presidents had served as full-time tenured faculty during their academic careers. Also, the analysis shows that less than 33% of faculty are full-time and tenured and nearly 14% of full-time tenured community college faculty members are of retirement age (King & Gomez, 2008).

Corporate America has embraced the model of succession management, the concept. Although emphasized in the classroom in higher education, corporate America has largely been ignored by the administrations of universities and colleges. If institutions of higher learning are operating businesses, universities need to implement the succession management strategies such as job rotation and mentorship programs that are taught in order to retain their credibility in the service-based business of educating (Long et al., 2013). There is a lack of implementation of succession planning in higher education which shows significant contrasts in education and the business community resulting in a challenge to apply succession planning in the field of academia (Clunies, 2007). A study conducted by Lampton (2010) determined a majority of respondents believed that succession planning would not be useful at their university. The response is surprising indicating the avoidance by administrations in higher education for a proven successful business concept. The findings disclose that the departmental managers in universities surveyed had made plans for implementing their own form of succession planning within their division, but they had not received any support or leadership from their supervisors regarding the plans (Lampton, 2010). Academic institutions need to look at developing clear paths to leadership for their junior faculty and staff to increase the future talent pool (Davis, 2008).

Although leadership succession in the business sector is similar in nature to higher education leadership succession practices, Calareso (2013) stated leadership succession in higher education becomes a “form of contingency or emergency planning for leadership rather than as an orderly progression of leadership preparation.” One of the major differences in planning for leadership succession in the business world versus higher education is due to limited resources, especially in small and mid-sized universities (Calareso, 2013). The significant challenge within

academia is the tendency of faculty and staff members' lack of interest in moving into administrative positions. The academic community must begin to address the lack of interest to increase the flow in the pipeline to the presidency (Moser, 2008). When participants discussed the challenges and barriers to succession planning, two areas emerged which are shared governance and the loss of leadership momentum (Klein & Salk, 2013). Sixty-four percent of participants indicated succession planning was discussed, but only to the extent of the "interim" level and most indicated their institutional by-laws required their institutions have a plan for the unanticipated loss of the president (Klein & Salk, 2013).

Boggs (2011) declared that community college leaders must undertake numerous systemic complex challenges within their current and foreseen future environmental platform. It is suggested that community colleges leaders' specific challenges include: modeling integrity, demonstrating level of honesty and ethical values, being open to new approaches, using fair and equitable judgment as well as being student focus as in ensuring students are respected, and protected while obtaining their educational experience (Boggs, 2011). In addition to leaders of community colleges facing challenges to growth, there are those related to student access, keeping the cost of education economical, and providing pathways to obtain higher education for the disadvantage, the primary challenge centers on balancing all of the various missions, and functionalities to ultimately meet the needs of this nation's locally and nationally. This type of challenge requires leaders of community colleges to be in tune to applicable local and national changes as well as being alert to the needs of the corporate environment while at the same time meeting the needs of their student population (Adams, 2010).

Although succession planning is not commonly practiced in higher education, community colleges have begun to pay attention to the concept since they are highly affected by the

retirements of aging presidents. Additionally, community colleges have been challenged to be at the forefront, and to take on a leadership role in keeping America competitive in the global economy. The leadership concerns in community colleges can be perceived as a challenge and as an opportunity. The concern presents a challenge to fill the current leadership gap, but at the same time an opportunity exists to hire new leaders with innovative ideas (Richards, 2016). Although leadership succession planning has been recognized as important in higher education, it was evident that a scarcity of research existed relative to formalized leadership succession planning (Trickel, 2015).

### **Summary and Transition**

The research surrounding this study examined how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena. The primary focus for this study was to explore and expound upon succession planning practices using a single case study design. The literature revealed that transformational leadership is considered one of the latest leadership theories and is the process that transforms people while placing emphasis on values, emotions, ethics, standard and long-term goals. Transformational leadership concerns itself with an extraordinary form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is normally expected of them (Northouse, 2016). Along with leadership development and succession planning, programs produce success when participation in educational activities and taking advantage of opportunities of performance based activities that contribute to increasing skill levels must be a part of the curriculum. Leaders must embrace mentorship of those mentees selected to participate in leadership development must be continuous (Cole, 2012).

Fayol specified that it is an obligation of the organization to create stability, and if that responsibility was not acted on, unqualified individuals would be placed in critical roles

(Rothwell, 2010). Richards (2016) conducted a qualitative case study on succession planning and found that within the large community college change is constant, diversity is valued, the top leaders are recruited from outside, and succession planning is important. Furthermore, 67% of the participants in Richards (2016) study commented that succession planning is important; however, succession planning is not formally practiced and the institution was resistant to implementing succession planning.

Calareso (2013) stipulated formal succession planning in higher education is seldom practiced which may be credited to continuing institutional culture. The impending leadership crisis in higher education brings about the necessity to development succession strategies. Bell et al. (2014) developed a strategy termed BASKET which refers to a model that defines every job's "behavior," "attitude," "skills," "knowledge," "experience," and "talent" necessary to succeed in a position. Community colleges hold a critical position in the area they serve, although the mission of community colleges is comparable to area locations this can generate diversities in how succession planning is approached. The strains and continuing deviations in regards to federal regulations, support and technological advancements make leadership positions in higher education more taxing (Nevarez & Wood, 2012). Succession planning has become a beneficial process because it recognizes the next leader of the organization, but it also summaries specific strategies and processes for formulating and developing individuals for their future positions as leaders (Atwood, 2007; Calareso, 2013). Succession planning should be a transparent progression that includes the projecting of openings, the preparation of a qualified talent pool, and the nurturing of future leaders through backing and mentoring (Peters, 2011).

Section two describes the role of the researcher, participants, research method, and design. Further information provides details on the research population, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Section two also examined reliability and validity of the study.

## Section 2: The Project

This research study aimed to address the lack of succession planning in two-year community colleges in Georgia. In section two, the researcher began with a restatement of the purpose of this research study. The researcher provided a thorough explanation of the role of the researcher, the participants, and research method and design that was implemented for the project. Additionally, section two provided detailed information concerning the population and sampling, data collection, data analysis techniques, and reliability and validity of this research study to provide the reader with pertinent information.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in the state of Georgia. The study intended to provide awareness into the leadership challenges facing community colleges senior administrators and the resources they need to prepare them to move into the next level of community college leadership. Succession planning develops a pool of people to consider for promotion, or talent management, which focuses on attracting, developing, deploying, and retaining the best people (Rothwell, 2011).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The researcher was the data collection instrument for this case study (Creswell 2014). This qualitative case study used face-to-face interviews to evaluate and understand (Creswell, 2014) how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in the state of Georgia.

The researcher first developed a series of interview questions to gather information from participants concerning succession planning at their institution (Creswell, 2014; Suter, 2012).

The researcher contacted each participant via public email directory to schedule the interview at a time and location convenient for him or her. The researcher made sure that participants understood the nature of the study, the minimal risks involved, and that there were no personal benefits or compensation to the participant (Creswell, 2014; Suter, 2012). Once the interview session was established, the researcher met with each participant individually and conducted the interview.

Ultimately, the researcher's role during the interview was to record the data presented from the participant (Suter, 2012). Great listening skills and objectivity contributes to ensure an understanding of the responses from participants (Cook, 2015). The researcher's role also consists of observing body language, taking accurate field notes, and examining the significance of all the information received (Creswell, 2014; Suter, 2012). The role of observing, listening, and processing who, what, when, where, and how also includes relating such data to the research question (Stake, 2010).

### **Participants**

Once the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from Liberty University approved the study, permission was obtained from the institution under study by receiving IRB approval as well. The potential participants were contacted by using the community college's public email directory. A copy of the letter inviting each participant to participate was sent via email (Appendix B). Appendix C includes the accompanying consent form that was also sent via the institution's public email directory. Interviews were scheduled once the individuals returned the completed consent form agreeing to participate.

The participants were provided with this consent form to sign, via email, to acknowledge their understanding of the study and willingness to participate. A working relationship with the intended participants was already established as the researcher currently works within the same higher education arena. To provide each participant with adequate ethical protection the researcher implemented and utilized a generic coding system to assure anonymity of participants' responses and information.

### **Research Method and Design**

This researcher chose to use a qualitative research method and a case study design to explore how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in the state of Georgia. Qualitative research works well as a method for analyzing and disseminating information pertaining to social phenomenon and processes that involve people from a variety of perspectives (Hazzan & Nutov, 2014; Creswell, 2014). From the employee's perspective, succession planning is a human phenomenon; therefore, the research conducted was best used by a qualitative approach. With the use of anecdotal context of the interview questions, which was an opinion research, a qualitative method approach to succession planning research would be effective (Creswell, 2014).

### **Method**

Primarily qualitative research is exploratory in nature with the intent to gain an understanding of fundamental logic, attitudes, and motivations of participants (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research is also used to reveal trends in thinking and attitudes, and explore deeper into a problem. With the use of qualitative data, collection techniques can be adapted to use semi structured or structured formats (Yin, 2012).

The researcher used the qualitative method to explore deeper into experiences and awareness of the desired research topic. Creswell (2014) stated that researchers tend to collect data from participants in their natural setting. Participants are not brought into a lab, nor do they typically send out instruments for individuals to complete. The information gathered is conducted by talking or interviewing individuals and observing their behavior, which is a major characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). This researcher interviewed and gathered information from participants at their respective institution. In the qualitative research process, the researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants embrace about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or what is expressed in the literature (Creswell, 2014).

When the researcher's objective is to probe, and provide an in-depth study through the collection of data by having closed-ended questions, surveys and data obtained through statistical and numerical data, this is the method of quantitative research (Bryman, 2012; Creswell, 2014). Stake (2010) stated the quantitative research method relies heavily on linear attributes, measurements, and statistical analysis referring to how things work with a more exact science. In addition, quantitative research depends on comparison and correlational studies with a mixture of some type of experimentation (Stake, 2010). This research study focused on the experiences of individuals through collected data by means of observation and interviews, therefore, quantitative method was not preferred when human understanding and personal experience was involved.

The involvement and use of combine methods to approach a particular subject matter can be valuable. The technique that combines the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches into one research is considered mixed method research (Creswell, 2014). In addition, Creswell

(2014) stated that mixed methods approach includes both predetermined and emerging themes and theory of the phenomenon of the study. The researcher did not rely on statistical data, nor delivered the findings in a statistical manner and allowed the theory and themes to emerge from the collected data from participants of the research study, therefore, mixed methods approach was an inappropriate method for this research study.

Because this study focused on strategic interactions related to succession planning between higher education leaders and their institutions, a qualitative methodology was used. For this study, qualitative research worked well mainly because succession planning methods tend to be less scientific, therefore, difficult to quantify causing the researcher to use deductive thinking to deliver meaning (Creswell, 2014). Both qualitative and quantitative research methods attempt to describe reality, which was accomplished by qualitative research by analyzing the experiences of subject participants rather than the quantitative calculations of the data set (Allwood, 2012). For a more diverse sampling of data, qualitative research was used as opposed to quantitative research methods that tend to ask very narrow questions (Farrelly, 2012). Giving the participants the ability to share and express specific issues that relate to their experience led to different ways of looking at succession planning. Qualitative methods also assist the researcher in recognizing trends in opinions and thoughts of those that participated in the research, allowing greater basis for interpretation of key issues in the study (Stake, 2010).

### **Research Design**

A key component to the research was understanding the succession-planning phenomenon through data that were gathered from participant interviews and contemporary research (Kumar, 2012). Each participant was equally important as his or her individual experience and opinions were shared in relation to the unique concept and process of succession

planning. The single case study research design allowed the use of anecdotal information to understand the phenomenon being researched (Snyder, 2012). The use of a single case study design was appropriate in this study because case studies use how and why questions to understand the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). The single case study is an appropriate design because it is equivalent to a single experiment, and many of the same conditions that justify a single experiment justify a single case study (Yin, 2014). It is also noted by Yin (2014) that single case study is rational when it represents a critical case in testing a well-formulated theory.

The grounded theory design depends mostly on interviewing as does case study design; however, the grounded theory was not selected due to its reliance on formulating theory based on data. Grounded theory assumes the natural occurrence of social behavior in situations is best analyzed by deriving bottom-up grounded categories and concepts (Yin, 2014). Suter (2012) described grounded theory design as the use of emergent methodologies such as continuous comparison that allows a theory to develop from the data deprived of prejudiced or inflexible concepts. The concepts of grounded theory build from specific to general and the theory develops from the data. This researcher conducted the study by collecting data from the current leadership staff to provide in-depth perspective of succession planning at the community college under study. Research was not examined on the community college understudy over an extended time period. Grounded theory was not appropriate for this research study because the researcher was not attempting to develop new theory, but simply looking at the existing gap between theory and actual practice. Grounded theory is appropriate when a broad theory or explanation of a process is needed and existing theories do not address the problem or the participants that are being studied (Creswell, 2014).

Ethnography design is a no-intervention descriptive design that is typically participatory for the researcher in nature and extends over a set period of time (Suter, 2012). Ethnographic research can reveal an abundance of qualitative data and evaluation of the data can be very time consuming (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) stated the researcher must account for the time required to build relationships of trust with the participants. Additionally, Creswell (2014) stipulated that ethnography involves the evaluation coming from anthropology and sociology, whereas the researcher studies shared patterns of behaviors, language, and actions of an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time. Ethnography is a very broad area with a large range of experts and methods. This qualitative research study was conducted over a very short time period, specific to the leadership staff of a two-year community college cultural group, and the researcher used observations, interviews, and field notes therefore an ethnographical design was not chosen (Hays & Wood, 2011; Creswell, 2014). In addition, the researcher did not participate in the study, depended solely on observation, or conducted extensive interviews as a method of data collection (Tracy, 2013; Suter, 2012; Creswell, 2014).

Phenomenological design studies human events as they are experienced live in real world settings, resisting prior categories and concepts that may distort the experiential basis for understanding the event that occurs (Suter, 2012). The main focus of phenomenology design is the phenomenon change and the implications to a certain individual or group (Yin, 2014; Suter, 2012). Phenomenological design was not chosen for this research study because the researcher studied the current experiences of the leaders. The phenomenological design was not chosen for this single case study and does not prove to be beneficial. Participants were not asked to describe their experiences about a specific phenomenon as they perceived it.

## **Population and Sampling**

For this research study, the sample population of community colleges in Georgia was 33. The total population for this study consisted of one designated college within the Georgia statewide system. The total leadership staff of all of the community colleges in the sample population consisted of 526 individuals. The leadership staff from one of the 33 community colleges consisted of 36 individuals ranging from directors, executive directors, deans, associate deans, assistant vice presidents, vice presidents, executive vice president, and the president. The focal point of interest was those of the senior level and middle level leadership staff because those were the positions in which there was lack of training and leadership development to advance to a presidency position.

The sampling method for this research study was purposeful sampling. Yin (2014) stated the most effective way to yield the most relative and plentiful data that coincides with the researcher's own research qualitative study was to use purposeful sampling of participants. Qualitative research typically has a small number of participants when using a case study design. One focal point to purposeful sampling is to engage participants that provide contrary views or information pertaining to the topic of research (Yin, 2014). This contributed to eliminating bias within the research study. The primary purpose of small purposeful sampling for a qualitative researcher is to gather specific participants that can clarify or expand the researchers understanding about the phenomenon under study (Ishak & Bakar, 2014). Similarly, in this research study the focus was to interview participants concerned with the phenomenon under study as well as those that enhanced what other researchers have learned about the research topic.

The purposeful sampling approach consisted of selecting participants that were current full-time employees with a degree level of master's or higher. Participants had worked five or more years in a leadership position in higher education, and had an age range of 18-65. The leadership positions chosen were directors, executive directors, deans, assistant vice presidents, vice presidents, executive vice president, and president. Any member of the leadership staff that met the criteria was eligible to participate in this research study. Incorporating the criteria of eligibility provided the opportunity for the research to obtain rich and diverse data pertaining to succession planning. These individuals held leadership positions in which they may have aspired to succeed and others saw their position as one to aspire to achieve. Additionally, Minzberg (2013) stated that middle and senior level leadership staff is oftentimes the ones overlooked, but worked the hardest and were asked to perform as a leader and sometimes manager. Most corporations hastily put together a plan of succession for top positions only when faced with a sudden unplanned departure (Fennessey, 2015). The most relevant characteristics of this sample population were position as well as this group was the most diverse in age, gender, education, and years on the job and in their individual position.

The sample population of the community college under study consisted of 36 individuals. This researcher selected a potential population sample size between six and 20 participants from the community college to ensure a more diverse sampling, which ensured a more generalized and unbiased outcome (Yin, 2012). Failure to reach data saturation has an impact on the quality of the research conducted and hinders content validity; the intent of a study should include what determines when data saturation is achieved (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Typically, a smaller study will reach saturation faster than a larger study. Data saturation is reached when there is adequate information to replicate the study when the ability to obtain additional new information has been

attained, and when further coding is no longer feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). There is no one-size-fits-all method to reach data saturation, because study designs are not universal. When and how one reaches those levels of saturation will vary from study design to study design (Fusch & Ness, 2015). There is no hard-fast rule as to the specific number of participants needed to gather accurate data and results in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Mason, 2010). However, researchers offer guidance in this area for researchers to consider when achieving accurate results (Creswell, 2014; Manson, 2010; Yin, 2014). The smaller the number of participants in relation to the whole leadership staff population allows for a more in-depth evaluation process for each participant (Yin, 2014).

Qualitative population samples must be big enough to ensure that most or all the perceptions of the participants that are significant are uncovered, but simultaneously if the sample is too big data becomes repetitive and ultimately, redundant (Mason, 2010). If a researcher stays faithful to the ideologies of qualitative research, sample size in the mainstream of qualitative studies should normally stick to the notion of saturation.

The number of individual participants may vary in qualitative studies. Typically, in qualitative research a few individuals or cases are studied because the researcher's ability to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site (Creswell, 2014). In some cases, the researcher might study a single individual while in other cases the number may range from 1 or 2 or 30 to 40 (Creswell, 2014). When using qualitative research design and method allows researchers to be more creative, purposeful, and deliberate when dealing with sampling (Yin, 2012). The considerably great proportion of studies utilizing multiples of ten as their sample is the most significant finding from his research study analysis (Manson, 2010).

## **Data Collection**

The data collection subsection includes a detailed discussion of the data collection process. The data collection process in qualitative research method includes setting the parameters for the research study, gathering data through unstructured or semi-structured observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials, as well as establishing the procedure for recording information (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research experts state that in qualitative interviews, the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, telephone interviews, or participates in focus group interviews with six to eight participants in each group (Creswell, 2014; Suter, 2012; Stake, 2010).

This researcher served as the key instrument through interviewing and observing participants. Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) also stated although the researcher may use an instrument for collecting data, they are the ones who gather the information. These potential interviews comprise unstructured and normally open-ended questions that are small in number and projected to prompt personal views and opinions from the participants (Creswell, 2014). Permission was requested and received to audio record the interview. Interviews and observations were used within this qualitative research study to elicit data from the participants that pertained to the study. Interviews and observations were quite appropriate to ask open-ended questions and allow the participants to give liberal responses.

## **Instruments**

In qualitative research, data collection includes exploring the procedure of how individuals attach meaning, events, programs that happen in real-world settings as each research setting has its own nuances, histories, cultures, and subcultures (Yin, 2012). In qualitative

research, the researcher is the primary interpreter of the research instrument (Scarneci, 2012). The instrument in the social sciences is the human being and unlike scientific research, preciseness of the issues may not always be forthcoming (Berg & Lune, 2012). For this study, the researcher selected live face-to-face interviews as the data collection instrument. Creswell (2014) stated that face-to-face interviews are useful in qualitative research when participants cannot be observed directly. Additionally, Creswell (2014) stated that interviewing participants allows for the exchange of historical information from the participants to the interviewee. The researcher has control over the line of questioning, but also the decision to use face-to-face interviews included having a semi-structured environment with open-ended questions to have a conversation with the purpose of understanding the participants' views and opinions concerning their personal experiences and perceptions about succession planning (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2012).

The interview questions were few to sustain a conversation with the participant that had a defined purpose (Yin, 2012). Cook (2015) used ten interview questions in his case study research project on succession planning within global electronics. In 2010, Seaver, using case study design, used eight interview questions along with a quantitative method to examine his cross-cultural organization on the effects of transformational leadership. The face-to-face interview process ensured a conversation between equals that created trust to avoid researcher bias. Yin (2012) posited interviews provide for an environment to investigate complex behavior, motivations, and diverse meanings. Six open-ended questions (Appendix A) were used for the interview, which allowed participants to elaborate on situations specific to them while ensuring that each research question was thoroughly covered. Interview questions one, two, and three were developed to promote a specific response to the first research question concerning the

strategic planning of executive leadership succession. Interview questions four, five, and six allowed the participants to provide detailed information concerning leadership programs that aligned with succession planning which was relative to research question number two.

The interview process took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. All the interviews occurred in a similar manner and similar environment to ensure consistency and reliability in the information gathered. The reliability of a research instrument concerns the extent to which the instrument yields the same results in repeated trials (Yin, 2012). Interview questions were derived from a previous research study on succession planning in New Jersey community colleges (Trickel, 2015). Trickel's (2015) study focused on executive leadership succession planning therefore the interview questions were relevant to the academic arena of community colleges in the state of Georgia.

### **Data Collection Technique**

Data collection included the participant's interviews held in a reserved conference room located on the specific campus of each participant. Each conference room provided a non-invasive, quiet and isolated setting equipped with recording devices to capture the interviewee's responses. The six interview questions utilized were developed to logically and sequentially address the two research questions. In order to probe deeper into the responses, the researcher was prepared to have follow-up questions to solicit additional information. The researcher asked each participant the interview questions, which consisted of six structured open-ended questions and then collected all the data through an audio recording device, observation, and field notes. Multiple participants were interviewed, which enhances the quality of the study (Yin, 2014).

A scripted description of the research problem and purpose statement as well as space to document specific elements such as date, time, and a participant identifier was included in the

interview protocol form (Appendix D). The form also provided a scripted statement to guide the researcher in ending the interview. In addition, the protocol form provided space to create field notes including initial observations and later researcher reflections. An audio digital recording device was used to accurately record information and produce transcripts. Recorded information was then downloaded to a USB drive.

### **Data Organization Techniques**

The data organization technique includes storage and protection of the raw data in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. Confidentiality and protection of all research information is significant and viable when securing research data and information, so maintaining confidentiality with the data during the process and after is crucial (Mealer & Jones, 2014). The researcher used Microsoft Word to transcribe interviews and handwritten notes.

A folder was organized on each participant and identified by the participant's alphanumeric code. An audio file and text file was backed up on an external hard drive for each participant.

### **Data Analysis Technique**

The data analysis process included transcribing the recorded participant interviews. The audio recordings were transcribed for each interview along with member checking to assure responses were accurate. The researcher utilized member checking by contacting each participant with a transcription of their given responses within the interview to confirm that the responses were captured accurately. Member checking is a process that is vital to qualitative research which consist of presenting a recording of an interview to the participant that provided information and asked the participant's correction and confirmation of pervious responses (Stake, 2010).

To ensure participants' confidentiality a coding system was used to keep track of individual responses. Participants were identified as P1, P2, P3, and so on. Coding systems are used and beneficial in protecting the identity of subjects participating in a study (Heffetz & Ligett, 2014). The data were analyzed by recognizing themes or commonalities in the data that may be unobvious via manual analysis. By isolating keywords and statements that occurred in the interview transcripts, themes were drawn. The use of an inductive coding system assisted in applying themes and profiles to format them and report findings. With the use of inductive coding, deriving themes directly come out of the data allowing the researcher to analyze anecdotal information (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The analysis of themes and the relationship to the context of existing literature provided insights into the importance of how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community colleges in the state of Georgia.

### **Reliability and Validity**

#### **Reliability**

The reliability of the research study is the reassurance that another researcher investigating the same problem or using the same data would arrive at the same findings (Ali & Yusof, 2012). According to Yin (2012), the analysis of interviews, surveys, and archival records should provide validity of the findings to enable convincing conclusions and recommendations. Triangulation is the use of multiples sources for data collection that ensures data saturation in the data analysis process (Anyan, 2013; Fusch & Ness, 2015). Creswell (2014) viewed triangulation as the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data such as field notes, and methods of data collection such as documents. In this qualitative research study field notes were used as a part of the triangulation process. The triangulation in data analysis process

included the researcher reviewing and transcribing the information given by each participant during the interview from the audio recording. Triangulation pertains to the goal of seeking at least three ways to verify or corroborate a particular event, description, or fact being reported by a study (Yin, 2014). This type of corroboration serves as another way of strengthening the validity of a study (Yin, 2014). The transcribed information was taken back to the participants to confirm that information provided was accurate. This process is known as member checking which consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account (Creswell, 2014).

No influencing elements or biases were presented to the participants based on any relationships. No incentives or benefits were offered for participation and no conflicts of interest existed. No personal or identifying data were revealed regarding the identity of the participants, other than demographic information to protect the confidentiality of participants. For this study, the researcher served in an objective manner as an interviewer and interpreter of the questions and data from the beginning of the process until all findings were concluded. The researcher attempted to recognize and constrain biases by going further to check the data gathered and analyses with validation (Stake, 2010). Attention to details was given during the recording of participants' answers with a focus on keeping the researcher bias from the findings were key to ensuring that the study can be duplicated by another researcher and arrive at similar results.

### **Validity**

Farrelly (2012) stated that from the perspective of qualitative research, validity refers to the extent to which the research investigates and concludes what it intended to. Content validity, construct validity, and criteria-based validity are three recognized methods for testing validity

(Yin, 2012). The degree to which the elements within a study are relevant and representative of the construct that they will be used to measure is recognized as content validity (Yin, 2012).

To achieve content validity, the researcher addressed succession planning in the community college system that is characteristic of such planning. The information gathered was from the participants' point of view only and not those of the researcher to ensure internal validity. In addition, interviews were conducted in a controlled and consistent environment throughout the study to ensure external validity. Credibility of the study was ensured by providing transcripts to each participant of their interview, which ensured that the answers given to each question were accurate as intended.

### **Transition and Summary**

The aim of this qualitative case study was to address the lack of succession planning in two-year community colleges. The study provided awareness into the leadership challenges that senior leadership staffs encounter at community colleges and the resources that are needed to prepare them to move into the next level of community college leadership. Section two provided the role of the researcher as the main data collection instrument in which interview sessions were held. This section provided information on the methodology of the research to include detailed description of the qualitative method chosen and parameters of the case study design also chosen. The data collection technique, which was face-to-face interviews, was presented in section two. Included in section two was a detailed presentation of the data organization techniques and data analysis. The presentation of the reliability and validity of the data collection instrument and the research study also was communicated in section two.

Section three provides an overview of the study. This includes the presentation of the findings, applications to professional practice, and recommendations for action. Furthermore,

included in section three are recommendations for further study and research reflections. The researcher shares the experience of the process and integrates biblical principles that are relevant to the study.

### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

In this section, a brief overview was provided of the study by the researcher along with the presentation of the findings. The applications to professional practice were discussed as well as recommendations for action and further study. Finally, the researcher concluded with reflections from the overall study and its conclusion.

#### **Overview of Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how leadership succession planning was developed and implemented in the community college arena in the state of Georgia. The presentation of the findings of this qualitative research study included explanations that addressed the research question and how findings related to scholarly literature. The conceptual framework for this case study was derived from best practices for succession planning in community colleges and identified by numerous scholars and practitioners into a comprehensive succession program (McMaster, 2012). The study intended to provide awareness into the leadership challenges facing community colleges' senior administrators and the resources needed to prepare them to move into the next level of community college leadership. This research studied a large community college (5,000 plus students) in Georgia. The college has approximately 520 full time employees to include faculty and staff. The college is a part of the Technical College System of Georgia, which comprises of 22 colleges throughout the state.

A series of interview questions were developed to gather information from participants concerning succession planning at their institution. Participants were interviewed one-on-one and extended six open-ended questions to allow for their liberal responses. In this single case study, the face-to-face interviews were conducted with senior administrators from a large community college in Georgia. The participants of this qualitative research study consisted of

individuals that are members of the college's leadership team holding positions as directors, executive directors, deans, assistant vice presidents, and vice presidents. Participants were contacted by using the college's public email directory. The participants interviewed consisted of three vice presidents, two assistant vice presidents, three executive directors, and three directors. All participants have served their college in a leadership role for more than five years. Participants answered six unstructured and normally open-ended interview questions (see Appendix A) along with six penetrating questions when needed to be expounded for clarity or more in-depth responses. Permission was requested and received from each individual participant to audio record each interview and then transcribed for analysis. The researcher utilized member checking by contacting each participant with a transcription of their given responses within the interview to confirm that the responses were captured accurately.

Understanding the prominent themes found in the reviewed literature pertaining to succession planning, the author interpreted and observed an emerging theme of leadership programs, mentoring, open communication, professional training, encouragement, and support within this qualitative research study. The emerging themes revealed were vital to responding to the two research questions that were compared to previously reviewed literature. The objective of the interviews was to answer the two main research questions: How will community colleges in Georgia plan for the succession of executive leadership positions? How will community colleges in Georgia develop leadership programs that align with succession planning? The following section presents the emerging themes and the analyzed data in relation to this qualitative research study.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The conceptual framework was built upon a model for best practices for succession planning in community colleges with three main components that make up an effective succession plan. Malkie (2014) stated it is important that a process be in place for leaders to become successful. Those three components are (a) career development and training, (b) management support training, and (c) organizational culture. There are several components to the leadership succession that leads to effective planning and it is suggested that these actions are not linear but occur simultaneously (Peters, 2011). The research study is steered by three theories of succession planning, which are trait theory of leadership, transformational leadership, and path-goal theory. Personality traits influence leader emergence and effectiveness per the trait theory of leadership (Colbert et al., 2012). The process that changes and transforms people with emphasis being placed on emotions, values, ethic, standards, and long-term goals is based on the transformational leadership theory (Northouse, 2016); while path-goal theory focuses on how leaders motivate followers to accomplish selected goals and to enhance follower performance and follower satisfaction by focusing on follower motivation (Northouse, 2016).

Interview questions one, two, and three were developed to promote a specific response to the first research question concerning the strategic planning of executive leadership succession. How will community colleges in Georgia plan for the succession of executive leadership positions? Peters (2011) shared leadership succession is often the result of a broken system that often leaves the incoming leader without proper support or training for success. Question one asked participants to share the college's succession plan to achieve executive leadership positions. The emerging theme stated two types of leadership programs were made available, one lead by the college and another sponsored by the Technical College System of Georgia

Leadership Academy. Although the programs provide an abundance of information about the institution and covered basic leadership skills, it was noted that the programs were not designed to prepare employees to become an executive leader. There was some concern noted by a couple of participants of the anticipated retirements with no formal succession plan in place, nor is the intent to develop and implement such a plan. One concern to consider was that of setting aside time to develop and implement a formal succession plan. One of the participants mentioned that so much energy and time is placed on staying financially afloat, increasing enrollment, and providing quality education that succession planning is placed on the back burner and becomes a reactive move rather than a proactive move. One instance is that the college system tracks enrollment, retention, and graduation rates so that becomes the focus of the college while there is no mention of how instructors or administrators of the college will be replaced. The college does not have a clear pathway to executive positions, but there does not appear to be any restrictions on upward mobility.

There appeared to be some awareness the college knew the importance of succession planning and could identify areas and employees that may succeed those in current leadership positions. One participant noted, "The college per se has no standardized or formal succession plan, but instead there is an awareness across the board of developing and supporting young talent." Another participant stated, "I don't know that we necessarily have a succession plan, but there seems to be somewhat of a pattern to identify people for the next level." Calareso (2013) stated succession planning comes as an afterthought due to the emergency planning for leadership rather than an orderly progression of leadership preparation. More than half of the participants stated there was no standardized formal succession plan, but there was an awareness across the board of recognizing and developing talent. The vice presidents interviewed

acknowledge the importance and the need to prepare employees and have viable candidates to sustain the pipeline of knowledge.

Question two specifically asks how participants became aware of a succession plan for executive leadership. All participants stated there was not a specific plan implemented or presented to them or to others. Calareso (2013) stated that formal succession planning in higher education has seldom been practiced which may be accredited to ongoing traditions and institutional culture. The emerging theme revealed the ability to communicate with those in executive positions about the opportunity to discuss personal and departmental growth was readily available and proved to be beneficial. One participant stated, “Generally, through ongoing conversations with my vice president and president, I have a broad plan for personal and departmental growth.” All participants did acknowledge the leadership program lead by the college. It was also noted that all employees were made aware of the leadership program via the college’s email distribution and those who had an interest were invited to participate. Although a formal college-wide program is not available for employees, it was noted from the interviews that each department appeared to provide some recognition, support, and encouragement to those who had shown interest in being a part of the executive leadership team. One participant noted, “We recognize various people throughout the college annually on their strengths and weaknesses; by talking about individuals we know informally who is strong and doing very well and who would like to move on in different areas.” A few participants shared the difficulties of preparing those they supervise for leadership positions with so much emphasis placed on the daily operations of the department. For some organizations, it is difficult to focus on leadership development and succession planning and sustain their growth in leadership (McDonagh et al., 2013).

The vice presidents along with the president play critical roles in identifying those who in their eyes have the potential to serve in executive leadership roles. Again, this is not based on a formal plan, but simply through observations and the prior performance of potential candidates. One area of an individual that stands out among leaders is that trait of exuding self-confidence. Self-confidence is the ability for an individual to own and display a sense of competencies and skills to include high self-esteem and self-assurance and the belief that one can really make a difference (Northouse, 2016).

Question three focused on the benefits or non-benefits in regards to pursuing a position as an executive leader. The interviews revealed an array of responses from the participants with a consistent theme of having a mentor and having a leadership team that is both supporting and encouraging. The literature review states the importance of the mentor-mentee pairings being crucial to the success of mentoring relationships and with informal mentoring the pairing process is spontaneous and voluntary (Bell & Treleaven, 2010). Participants shared the importance of having someone to teach and guide them through the process of being an executive leader in the college environment. Organizations find themselves more competitive and prepared with the capability to develop leaders for the future when formal mentoring can be used in leadership development (Corner, 2014). As beneficial as having mentors has proven to be, participants did note that their mentorship was an informal process. One response stated, "I found mentoring to be an excellent platform for growth." Another stated, "I certainly benefited like most leaders through mentoring and most of that was informal." While participants shared the benefits of having a mentor, they also shared the importance and the need to serve as a mentor to help those current employees aspiring to serve in executive leadership positions. The participants noted the value for individuals and the college to have a formal mentoring process. Corner (2014) stated

that formal mentoring offers opportunities for leadership development by capitalizing on knowledge internally that is geared specifically for the organization and is tailored to meet the goals and objectives of any organization. Several participants mentioned that longevity has been beneficial to them by giving them the knowledge of the ongoing development of the college over the years from serving 400 students to now serving over 7,000 students. Participants also shared the consistent theme of being placed in a leadership position with no prior preparation and had to figure out procedures on their own with very little guidance. One participant stated, “I had been trained to be a teacher in my field, but no one trains to be an administrator.”

Interview questions four, five, and six allowed the participants to provide detailed information concerning leadership programs that align with succession planning, which is relative to research question number two. Question four focused on leadership programs that are shared or utilized with those that are currently supervised by the participants to help employees advance in their career. All participants shared the notification and encouraged their employees to participate in the college’s leadership program. The college’s leadership program was best described as a nine-month program that is open to full-time employees of the college. The primary goal of the program is to develop the leadership skills of employees who demonstrate future leadership promise and to promote an awareness of the different divisions within the college. Calareso (2013) stated that fundamentals in succession planning should address leadership at all levels, engaging in practices that foster leadership development. This emerging theme was consistent with the value that the program brings to the college and how beneficial the leadership program has proven to be for those who have participated. Participants stated, “I strongly encourage my employees to apply for the college’s leadership program.” “Definitely they should participate in the leadership program, it is a creatable program.” “The college’s

leadership program is a great avenue to help develop leaders.” Another consistent comment made was the importance of communication and sharing information to subordinates. Several participants shared the importance of obtaining additional training by way of attending professional development seminars, community leadership programs and obtaining advanced or terminal degrees. To decrease the organization’s risk in the event of key position vacancies, educational endeavors are designed through leadership development and succession planning programs. For succession planning programs to be successful, participation in educational activities and taking advantage of opportunities of performance based activities to demonstrate increasing skill levels must be a part of the curriculum (Cole, 2012). Although it is noted the importance of training and leadership development, barriers often impede the progress.

The college is faced with both internal and external obstacles that delay or prohibit the progress of developing leadership programs. The most obvious is that of finances by being able to create or sustain a budget that allows for what some may call non-priority activities. Being a public institution only allows for very streamline budgets. The thought of having a true succession plan appears to be a great concept, but with being a public institution human resources must make sure that, everyone interested in a position is given an equal opportunity. Being part of government system may have some effects on how succession plans can be developed. One observation made by the researcher was that there are political issues that often dictate the direction the institution will operate.

Question five asked participants to share how they are involved in mentoring subordinates. Again, there was the emerging theme of communication and sharing information by having weekly or bi-weekly meetings and leading by example. Although there is no formal mentoring program, participants did share how valuable it has been for them to have a mentor,

and they have taken it upon themselves to mentor others that show a vested interest. This research study shows consistency with the literature review for the importance and need of mentorship in higher education. Muir (2014) stated that emerging leaders and their mentors acknowledged the importance of having a formal mentoring experience, which leads to the development of their leader identity. Formal mentoring offers opportunities for leadership development by capitalizing on knowledge internally that is geared specific to the organization and is customized to meet any organization's goals and objectives (Corner, 2014). Participants also noted there was no formal mentoring program, but they could recognize and identify leaders that took the time to mentor others. One participant was clear to note, "There is some informal mentoring occurring, but not a structured mentoring program. There should be a more formal mentor/mentee program available." All participants recognized the importance of mentoring and agreed that some form of mentoring was taking place, but more emphasis should be placed on having a more structured or formal mentoring program. It was stated by a participant "I look at those on my team and if they have a desire and want to expand their knowledge for future growth, I try to mentor and share whatever knowledge I can."

Question six was driven towards how the culture of the college encourages the practice of grooming and retaining leadership talent. The college provides a positive and safe environment for those seeking knowledge and having a desire to progress. Much of the literature and research states that there is no one segment that is capable of producing the perfect leader for the community college; using the combination of on-the-job training, internal leadership growth processes, internship, mentorship, leadership development programs and graduate school programs provide an opportunity to develop well-rounded community college leaders (Strom et al., 2011).

All participants stated the culture of the college provided the leadership, support, and encouragement from the president and the executive leadership team to groom those talented individuals who showed the commitment, dedication, and interest to serving the college as an executive leader. Common statements made included, “I have no doubt that we have the support of our president and our executive leadership to identify and cultivate internal leaders.” “I think the college has a great culture; we are able to participate in conferences, serve on committees, encouraged to continue your education and open to talk with someone about your next step.” “I think there is definitely an emerging culture at the college that recognizes the importance of what you are talking about, succession planning.” This culture is also demonstrated by seeing employees advance or be promoted from within the college. There are several programs design to help groom young talent, such as the college’s leadership program, training opportunities, in house job opportunities, and salary adjustments for advanced degrees.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

Calareso (2013) stated that succession planning comes as an afterthought in the form of a contingency or emergency plan for leadership rather than an orderly progression of leadership preparation. This research is meaningful and applicable to professional practice of community colleges in the state of Georgia. The results provide insight on the importance of a succession plan at community colleges and the need for a more structured or formal implementation. Leadership training proved to be the first path towards developing and preparing employees for serving in executive leadership roles. Rothwell (2010) stated several benefits to leadership education for current and future employees to include increase the number of employees eligible for promotion, advancement of diverse groups, improve morale and commitment to the organization’s mission, values, and goals. This research study supported the value of having

leadership development by providing leadership training, workshops, and incentives for obtaining advanced degrees. This can provide opportunities for community colleges to enhance their leadership development programs and open the door to provide more opportunities for those seeking executive leadership positions. For leadership programs to be successful, colleges must provide open communication and transparency to its employees. Open communication consists of senior leadership sharing all pertinent information via division staff meetings. This pattern of sharing information would include the information being shared through departmental staff meetings leading to the information trickling down to unit staff meetings (Mello, 2015; Northouse, 2016). Peters (2011) made note that succession planning should be a transparent progression that includes the projecting of openings, the preparation of a qualified talent pool, and the nurturing of future leaders through support and mentoring.

To create a platform for growth, employees must feel a sense of commitment and support from the college's leadership. Boggs (2011) declared that community college leaders must accept systematic complex challenges within their current and future platform to include modeling integrity, being open to new approaches, demonstrating a level of honesty, and creating a culture of ethical values. This study supports the efforts of community college leaders who lead by example, allow open communication, provide support, and operate with a high level of integrity employees are more inclined to be committed and successful climbing the ladder to executive leadership.

Along with leadership development, mentoring plays a vital role in the development of leaders. The research study provides insight on how mentoring played a major role in the development of leaders. Although the mentoring relationship was described as an informal process, it was strongly suggested that a more formal mentoring program would be advantageous

to the college. Corner (2014) stated that formal mentoring offers opportunities for leadership development by capitalizing on knowledge internally that is geared specific to the organization and is tailored to meet any organization's goals and objectives. Mentoring is used in many different organizations to help develop and cultivate young talent into becoming the next leaders. Again, Corner (2014) pointed out that organization find themselves more competitive and equipped with the ability to develop leaders for the future when formal mentoring can be used in leadership development. The research study shows that some form of mentoring is being used by individuals, but could become more beneficial to the college if a structured process is implemented and used across the entire college. With informal mentoring, a senior level may choose to mentor an employee or the employee may ask to be mentored too. Bell and Treleven (2010) stated the problem with this approach is the benefits of mentoring might not be available for a staff member who does not have access to senior staff members. In higher education, mentoring takes on a natural feel with teachers providing guidance and learning to students and senior leaders provided the same for new and young employees. The practice of formal mentoring can be implemented into community college's leadership plan and tailored to meet the college's goals and objectives. Previous academic literature stated that emerging leaders and their mentors remarked that their formal mentoring experience was essential to the development of their leader identity and provided a strong influence on the mentoring relationship (Muir, 2014). The development of leaders and mentoring has been with us since the beginning of time.

The Bible serves as a resource, which provides guidance concerning the importance of mentoring, and develops leaders. Proverbs 11:14 states that "Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety" (ESV). The community colleges' success depends on the leadership's ability to offer their knowledge, wisdom, and guidance.

Even the leadership should seek the God's guidance. Hebrews 13:7 shares with us to "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith" (ESV). It is important that we understand the value and knowledge that others bring to any organization. Proverbs 27:17 reminds us that "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (ESV). Those seeking executive leadership positions should understand that the knowledge and wisdom of those that have gone before us could prove beneficial in becoming a successful leader. It is important for leaders to seek guidance and understanding and that starts with having a relationship with God who provides the knowledge and understanding if we seek to study and abide by His principles.

The findings of this qualitative research study suggest that community colleges in Georgia do not have a formal succession plan in place to ensure a consistent pipeline of leaders. Additionally, this qualitative research study revealed the colleges have implemented mentoring and leadership programs but they are inconsistent and do not yield a steady pool of leaders. Senior leadership must guide the discussion to develop and implement a strategic succession plan to ensure a consistent and steadfast pipeline of individuals that are ready to succeed. The depth and quality of an organization's leadership are the most important determinants of the organization's future (Hazarika, 2009). Northouse (2016) posited that leaders inspire, motivate, and encourage followers; providing the employees with a succession plan contributes to the development of employees into successful leaders.

Calareso (2013) shared that implementing a strategic succession planning is an ongoing process that is utilized to identify future leaders and prepare them to take on the role of leadership. The college will also have the opportunity to transform the individuals into the specific type of leader that best fits with the current culture and leadership style of the college.

The college will also realize the opportunity to provide the employee with the appropriate leadership skills that will advance the institution financially and the employee will become a great follower that grow into a great leader (Northouse, 2016).

### **Recommendations for Action**

Based on the findings community colleges should identify what structured programs they are willing to invest the time and resources in to create a formal process for succession planning. A concentrated effort should be made to establish and implement a formal succession plan for community colleges in Georgia. Although each independent college falls within the Technical College System of Georgia, a mutual understanding amongst the 22 colleges is important for the development and implementation of providing a cohesive succession plan that represents the mission, vision, and core values of the institution.

To ensure the college follows accreditation guidelines and aligns this succession plan with the mission of the college, the office of institutional effectiveness can spearhead the campaign of the leadership development program. This process should include a leadership development program that focuses on educational endeavors, demonstrates performance based skill level activities and behavior characteristics that exemplify leadership excellence. A leadership succession plan allows organizations to plan for continuity by strengthening their leadership support system (McDonagh et al., 2013). The leadership development program will include exposing the individuals on a monthly basis to different aspects and divisions of the college. The employee can shadow the current leader for a more hands on approach. This program should include demonstrations of performance based skill level activities in which the employee will learn how to manage and supervise effectively employees of different skill sets and capacities. Knight (2014) stated that leaders must demonstrate the behavior and professional

characteristics that they expect as the foundational concept in exemplifying excellence. Additionally, this program will include the college providing each individual with a concentration of the desired leadership style and approached engendered at the college. This can be accomplished by providing the employee with notable leadership guides on the various leadership styles as well as narrowing down which leadership style and characteristics are most desirable. The potential candidate should be allowed to attend decision-making meetings where strategic planning occurs. Professional development becomes critical for the leader to engage in all departmental and divisional activities into current base practices leadership and development (Knight, 2014). The potential candidate should be asked what he or she would decide in certain situations to help gauge if the candidate is shaping up nicely. The relevance of this succession plan program can be geared toward different levels not just senior leadership.

Communication plays a very vital role to not only the current employees but stakeholders as well. The ability to inform individuals within the institution of a formal succession plan gives a sense of shared governance of growth for the college. With the proper communication, employees are aware of the opportunities provided by the college and feel valued for their efforts. Emphasis is then placed on making a conscious effort to perform at one's optimal level and communication enhances the morale of the college knowing that everyone has the potential to move up the leadership ladder (Mello, 2015). The office of institutional effectiveness plays a huge role in communicating this program to the employees. This program can be provided to employees through the umbrella of professional development. Then those that desire to learn more in an effort to be considered; will arise. The information should be readily available on the college website, discussed in meetings, as well as being an ongoing and consistently maintained program. The immediate supervisor should communicate to the potential candidate that the

program may not have a specific timeframe. The candidate may be asked to study, learn shadow, provide input all while completing this program, but a position may only come available once a leader leaves the position.

A formal mentoring program is recommended to provide candidates the opportunity to learn and grow from those who have served for several years and have a true understanding of their role as a leader. Formal mentoring offers opportunities for leadership development by capitalizing on knowledge internally that is geared specific to the organization and is tailored to meet any organization's goals and objectives (Corner, 2014). With the concept of mentoring potential candidates have the advantage of learning from someone else's mistake and avoid falling into some of the same pitfalls that more veteran leaders have experienced. Organizations find themselves more competitive and equipped with the ability to develop leaders for the future when formal mentoring can be used in leadership development (Corner, 2014). A screening process should be set up so that candidates can be paired with someone not only in the area of interest, but also in the area of some personal likes or dislikes. Scheduled times should be set aside on weekly basis to mentor and discuss the direction in which the candidate is pursuing. This program should allow for the mentees having question and answering sessions with the mentor as well as other veteran leaders of the institution. After six months of weekly mentoring, the institution should incorporate an evaluation of the program as a whole to insure the mentees are being properly educated, advised and served. It is obvious that some form of mentoring is beneficial and in some regards occurring on an informal basis. Muir (2014) noted that with his six-part mentoring relationships, emerging leaders and their mentors stated their formal mentoring experience was essential to the development of their leader identity and provided a strong influence on the mentoring relationship.

All 22 institutions within the Technical College System of Georgia may be impacted by the findings of this study. The Technical College System of Georgia encourages promoting within the system. Therefore, when each individual college implements a strategic succession plan the governing agency, the Technical College System of Georgia, as well reaps the positive benefits of succession planning. Each individual college will be impacted by the results of this study because successful leaders talk and engage with other leaders and share ideas. When leaders talk and brainstorm, new opportunities emerge. With succession planning playing a significant role in organizational development, this study may also impact four-year colleges and universities across the country and the business sector. One of the major differences in planning for leadership succession in the business world versus higher education is due to the limited resources, especially in small and mid-sized universities (Calareso, 2013).

The findings of this research study may be disseminated in a leadership conference held at the governing agency, the Technical College System of Georgia, where a mixture of all the leaders of different departments attends. This information may be disseminated at division meetings such as all 22 presidents meeting, peer group meetings consisting of all vice presidents for academic affairs, student affairs, or even administrative services. The results of this qualitative research study may even be disseminated to each college's institutional effectiveness division and made a part of their operational effectiveness agenda. This avenue to disseminate the results of this qualitative research study would contribute to the current leaders being made aware and require action of their part.

With four-year colleges and universities the dissemination of this research study can be done similar to that of the Technical College System by having the information presented from the system level to the individual institutions and then to the departmental levels. In the business

sector, the findings of this research study may be disseminated through human resources orientation with initial hires, training, seminars and with larger business through cooperate headquarters. It will be important for any organization to first assets their needs, current practices, culture and future of the institution.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

The findings from this study warrant additional research of succession planning processes organizational leaders could use to prepare adequately or the succession of new and emerging leaders on the executive leadership team at community colleges. With community colleges facing an influx of retirees in senior leadership positions, most organizations are lacking in preparing and expanding the prospects for their employees in recognizing future leaders. The objective of succession planning encompasses a commitment to ensure an organization has a talented pool of employees to meet the goals of the organization and foster a strong leadership development program that fully engages its employees. Based on the collected data from interviews, a few recommendations are suggested for future research.

Recommendation for further study could be to increase the size of the population by identifying similar concerns in multiple community colleges. By examining the experiences of leaders, a study could be conducted with community colleges outside of the state of Georgia as well as four-year colleges or universities. This study did not include recruitment, compensation nor benefit packages for employees; therefore, researchers could consider exploring how succession planning influences external hiring and how organizations can compensate employees for pursuing new skills and roles in leadership. This study only focused on community colleges in the public sector. Further studies could compare the differences of public and private

community colleges in succession planning. There should also be the exploration of succession planning at four-year colleges and universities.

Further research studies could look at the differences in succession planning in different business types other than higher education which may be helpful to leaders in applying best practices for succession planning. This study focused on current leaders and it is recommended that other researchers examine succession strategies from the viewpoint of other employees. With any organization, the margin of liability and profitability are important; therefore, it is recommended that research be conducted on the financial impact of succession planning on community colleges. College leaders who are skeptical about making the investment in succession planning may reconsider if a positive financial impact can be shown.

### **Reflections**

The researcher worked through the challenging experience of putting aside preconceived ideas and personal bias about succession planning and the development of leaders. A series of unstructured interview questions was the approach used to solicit the responses of participants to determine the findings. The researcher allowed participants to provide open-ended responses that proved to offer multiple responses. Responses were found to be consistent yet interesting to hear a broader perspective from others. The researcher found that the participants were very interested in the research topic and would like to know the overall results and how they could be used to improve the college's current progression.

The participation was well received and the researcher was delighted to create a laid out professional process that could potentially enhance the growth of the community college system. When reflecting on the principles of leadership it is exciting to know and understand how the development of leaders relates to the biblical principles that are laid out in the Bible.

Throughout the Bible it speaks of the importance of forming relationships by communicating, being trustworthy, mentoring, and being committed to principles set forth by God and not by man. It is easy to follow a leader who follows the word of God.

### **Summary and Study Conclusions**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in the state of Georgia. The research around this study intended to provide an awareness into the leadership challenges facing community colleges senior administrators and the resources they will need to prepare them to move into the next level of community college leadership. The literature revealed that succession planning programs produce success when there are leadership development programs, participation in educational activities, performance based activities that contribute to increasing skill levels and the embracement of mentorship relations.

The study was conducted using participants from a large community college who were identified as being part of the college's leadership team with at least five or more years of leadership experience. Participants answered six unstructured and normally open-ended interview questions along with penetrating questions when needed to provide a more in depth response or clarity. With the prominent themes found in the reviewed literature that pertained to succession planning, the researcher interpreted an emerging theme of leadership programs, mentoring, open communication, professional training, encouragement, and support.

The results identified leadership training as the first path towards developing and preparing employees to serve in executive leadership roles. Insight was provided on the importance of community colleges having a succession plan and the need for a more structured or formal implementation. The value of leadership development was displayed by showing the

need for leadership training, workshops, and incentives for achieving advance degrees. This study supported the efforts of community college leaders that lead by example, allowed open communication, provided support, and operated with a high level of integrity; those employees proved to be more inclined to be committed and successful rising to the ranks of executive leadership.

This research study was found to be consistent with the literature stating that leadership development and mentor programs are vital to the progression of a successful succession plan. The ongoing number of retirements for those in executive leadership positions continues to heighten during the period of this research study. Leadership succession planning has been a concern that is recognized both nationally and within the sector of community colleges. It will be vital for leaders to keep the progression of succession planning in the forefront.

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### Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Please share the succession plan used by the College to help employees achieve executive leadership positions.
2. How did you become aware of the succession plan for executive leadership at the College?
3. Please share what has been beneficial or non-beneficial to you in regards to you pursuing a position as an executive leader.
4. What leadership programs do you share or utilize with those you supervise to help them advance in their career?
5. How are current College leaders involved in mentoring subordinates?
6. How does the culture of the College encourage the practice of grooming and retaining leadership talent?

## Appendix B: Invitation Letter

June 19, 2017

Dear Prospective Participant

As a graduate student in the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in Georgia, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older, work full-time in an administrative leadership role at Central Georgia Technical College, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a face-to-face interview with me. It should take approximately 30 minutes for the face-to-face interview. Your name and/or other identifying information will be known as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, click on the link provided below. The consent form provided within the link contains additional information about the research study. Please complete and return the consent document to the researcher via email. I will then contact you via email to set up the time and place for the interview.

Sincerely,

Craig B. Jackson  
DBA Student  
School of Business  
Liberty University  
[Cjackson1@liberty.edu](mailto:Cjackson1@liberty.edu)

Informed Consent Form for the “Examination of Executive Leadership Succession Planning Strategies in Georgia's Community Colleges”

Liberty University

## Appendix C: Consent Form

### CONSENT FORM

“The Examination of Executive Leadership Succession  
Planning Strategies in Georgia's Community Colleges”

Craig B. Jackson  
Liberty University  
School of Business

You are invited to be in a research study of The Examination of Executive Leadership Succession Planning Strategies in Georgia's Community Colleges”. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 years of age or older, work full-time in an administrative leadership role at Central Georgia Technical College. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Craig B. Jackson, a doctoral candidate in the School of at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to examine how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in Georgia by evaluating full-time leadership staff in community college settings.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. You will be asked to participate in a face to face interview that may last between 30 to 45 minutes. Additionally, you will be asked to be audio recorded.
2. You will be asked to follow up with me in a brief conversation to confirm the accuracy of your responses were transcribed accurately.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report, I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. To ensure participants’ confidentiality a coding system will be used to keep track of individual responses. Participants will be identified as P1, P2, P3, etc.; coding systems are used and beneficial in protecting the identity of subjects participating in a study (Heffetz & Ligett, 2014).

- I will conduct the interviews in a location that is convenient for you and where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- All data received from the interview will be converted to an electronic format and kept on a secure server that is encrypted and password protected. Only the researcher will have access to this data. All paper documents will be properly shredded and destroyed. The data from the interviews will be deleted and eliminated from the secure server after the three-year retention period expires.

## Appendix C: Consent Form (cont.)

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate or not will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Central Georgia Technical College. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Craig B. Jackson. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 478.447.0503 or cjackson1911@msn.com. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Gene R. Sullivan, at [grsulliv@liberty.edu](mailto:grsulliv@liberty.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

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 Signature of Participant

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 Date

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 Signature of Investigator

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 Date

## Appendix D: Interview Protocol Form

08/09/2017

Interview Protocol Form

Participant Identifier\_\_\_\_\_

### **Scripted Research Problem**

Community colleges across the nation are facing a critical void in leadership due to the retirements of baby boomer presidents and vice presidents who started their careers some decades ago (Benard & Piland, 2014). About 75% of community college CEOs participating in an American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) survey plan to retire within the next 10 years, with another 15% eyeing retirement in 11–15 years (AACC, 2015). Also there are concerns that employees in the traditional leadership pipeline are also aging and retiring and those individuals who move up the ladder create new vacancies at their current levels and also need to be replaced (Shults, 2001).

The problem to be addressed is the lack of succession planning at two-year community colleges in the state of Georgia to identify future leaders in higher education. Succession planning comes as an afterthought in the form of contingency or emergency planning for leadership rather than as an orderly progression of leadership preparation (Calareso, 2013). Due to the void created by retirement, resignation, and discharge, it is vital that succession plans are implemented within the community college for promotions.

### **Scripted Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how leadership succession planning can be developed and implemented in the community college arena in the state of Georgia. The study intends to provide awareness into the leadership challenges facing community colleges senior level leadership staff and the resources they need to prepare them to move into the next level of community college leadership. Succession planning develops a pool of people to consider for promotion, or talent management, which focuses on attracting, developing, deploying and retaining the best people (Rothwell, 2011).

Interview Questions

1. Please share the succession plan used by the College to help employees achieve executive leadership positions.

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2. How did you become aware of the succession plan for executive leadership at the College?

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3. Please share what has been beneficial or non-beneficial to you in regards to you pursuing a position as an executive leader.

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4. What leadership programs do you share or utilize with those you supervise to help them advance in their career?

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5. How are current College leaders involved in mentoring subordinates?

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6. How does the culture of the College encourage the practice of grooming and retaining leadership talent?

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Thank you for participating in this research study. I will transcribe your responses to the interview questions within the next day or so. I will then phone or email you to deliver to you the transcription for your review. Once you approve the transcribed responses I will then begin to analyze, interpret, and prepare my written findings of all the participants. Your identity will be kept confidential. No further participation from you is needed. Please contact me with any questions, concerns or if you wish to withdraw from this study @ 478.447.0503 or [cjackson1911@msn.com](mailto:cjackson1911@msn.com). Thank you again for your participation.