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# Perceptions of Impediments to the Advancement of Women Leaders in Community Colleges

Teresa Alley Yearout  
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PERCEPTIONS OF IMPEDIMENTS TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN  
LEADERS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

by

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## ABSTRACT

### PERCEPTIONS OF IMPEDIMENTS TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN LEADERS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Teresa Alley Yearout  
Old Dominion University, 2015  
Director: Dr. Mitchell R. Williams

As community college presidents, chief operating officers (CEOs), and other senior level administrators plan to retire, the critical demand for qualified leaders brings greater focus on previous trends and current statistics in community colleges leadership. These findings provide evidence of the continuing underrepresentation of women in senior level leadership positions. Further investigation examines women leaders' perceptions of the barriers or impediments to their advancement into these leadership positions. The purpose of the current study was to examine the perceptions of impediments of women community college leaders in a variety of institutional settings (rural, suburban, urban).

The literature provided an inventory of barriers that community college women leaders have identified through their personal and professional experiences and their perceptions of obstacles to their advancement. For the current study, this inventory of impediments guided the design of a survey instrument intended to gather data for the perceptions of women community college leaders to this inventory of impediments. Participants in community colleges in eleven southeastern states responded to professional and institutional demographic questions and a five-point Likert-type modified barriers scale of 24 impediments to advancement.

Findings in the present study confirmed the continuing existence of obstacles to women leaders' advancement. Balancing professional and personal life, hiring or promotion practices and policies, and the "good ol' boys' network" and culture of power were the impediments with the highest mean scores by types of impediments. Overall, the impediment with the highest mean

score was the existence of a “‘good ol’ boys’ network”. Among the three types of impediments, organizational culture impediments received the highest composite mean score.

Women leaders continue to perceive barriers to their advancement in community colleges. These impediments may be personal or organizational in origin, but the identification of the impediments offers opportunities for reflection and change within the leaders and their current institutions. Recommendations for prospective women leaders and community college practitioners and leaders include understanding the existence of impediments to advancement, strengthening hiring and promotion practices, and enhancing diverse institutional structure and culture.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved husband Richard “Rick” Yearout.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The systemic spotlight on the impending critical need for community college leaders highlights the continued gender gap in the fulfillment of senior level positions in community colleges. The percentage of community college presidents who intend to retire by the year 2016 is most currently reported at 84% (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). While the percentage of women in these positions has steadily increased from 11% in 1991 to 29% in 2006 (Weisman & Vaughan), women are still disproportionately underrepresented in the roles of presidents, provosts, chief academic officers, chief financial officers, and deans (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Gerdes, 2003; Weisman & Vaughan).

Previous analysis of this underrepresentation attempted to provide insight into the reasons why women do not advance into these positions or why their advancement is impeded. The barriers women leaders encounter in their advancement have been reported in studies of senior level female leaders in community colleges. In these studies, women leaders have identified and characterized these impediments as barriers, organizational structure barriers, and organizational culture barriers (Cejda, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; DiCroce, 1995; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Grove & Montgomery, 1999; Jablonski, 1996; Johnsrud, 1991; Scanlon, 1997; Winship & Amey, 1992). Although perceived impediments have not been clearly linked to the community college setting of these women leaders, two types of impediments--organizational structure and organizational culture--may be significant to the currently identified barriers to advancement in all settings (rural, suburban, urban) of community colleges. If women in community colleges are to successfully advance to senior level administrative positions, an analysis of women leaders'

perceptions of impediments might offer a clear set of personal and organizational recommendations for the advancement of women leaders into critical leadership positions.

## **Background**

Studies of community college leadership have progressed along with the twentieth century evolution of community colleges as institutions of higher education. Throughout these previous studies of women leaders, researchers trace the history and extent of women leaders' progress through the community college system to senior level administrative positions. Since the mid-1980s, Vaughan and others (Vaughan, 1986; Vaughan et al., 1994; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002, 2007) reported the trends of community college leadership, including the presence of women in senior level positions. While the representation of women in senior leadership positions has improved since early reporting in the mid-1980s, women remain inadequately represented (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002; Chamberlain, 1990; Gerdes, 2003; Gillett-Karam, Roueche, & Roueche, 1991; Keim & Murray, 2008). Considering the predicted retirement of 84% of community college presidents by 2016 (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007) and the opportunity for women to advance, women leaders may not be fully prepared to fill these positions through traditional career pathways.

Many of these studies of women community college leaders focused on the demographics of senior leaders and presidents, including age, gender, ethnicity, and other characteristics (Amey et al., 2002; Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; Mark, 1981; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999; Vaughan, 1986; Vaughan, Mellander, & Blois, 1994; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002, 2007). Early research efforts to understand the women who successfully fill leadership positions attempted to indicate a demographic portrait of these women although a clearer portrait emerged of the majority of men who filled these positions. In 1981, Mark noted that college



presidents tended to be “male, middle-aged, married, white, professional-managerial in experience and native-born with a small-town family background” (p.189). In 2006, college presidents who responded to the Weisman and Vaughan’s Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS) reported they were primarily White (88%), male (71%), and aged 58 or older (57%). In further efforts to understand the women leaders who have successfully advanced, researchers have completed studies of leadership types, styles, skills, values (Chin, Lott, Rice, & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007; Eagly, 2007), and educational and experiential backgrounds (Keim & Murray, 2008).

Other studies focused on the career pathways of these leaders, including job mobility (Cejda, 2008; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Valdata, 2006); traditional, internal job advancement within traditional career pathways (Keim & Murray, 2008; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007); external job placement; mentorship (Moore & Sangaria, 1979; Porter & Daniel, 2007; Scanlon, 1997; Weisman & Vaughan); and professional development (Gillett-Karam, Roueche, & Roueche, 1991; Wolverton, Bower, & Hyle, 2009). Another group of mainly qualitative studies have followed the “stories” of senior leaders in an attempt to find out how successful women leaders have achieved, advanced, and thrived in community college leadership (Clark, Caffarella, & Ingram, 1999; Harris, Ballenger, Hicks-Townes, Carr, & Alford, 2004; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1998, 1999). These studies reported some positive, uplifting experiences in the linear and non-linear career paths of women leaders, but they also revealed some of the gender-related reasons women were stymied, passed over, or treated inequitably in positions (Clark et al.; Wolverton, Bower, & Hyle, 2009).

Gender studies of women community college leaders have yielded insights into their career pathways, including both their success stories of job attainment and advancement and the perceived barriers encountered along their pathway (Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010;

Wolverton et al., 2009). The persistence of these impediments to advancement is of concern to community colleges, which are facing lingering issues in diversity in leadership (Eckel, Green, & Hill, 2001; Stout-Stewart, 2005) and in the impending “crisis” of a retiring senior level leadership (Amey et al., 2002; Eddy & Cox, 2008). Many of these self-reported obstacles are organizational and personal in nature (Chin et al., 2007; Deemer & Fredericks, 2003; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006; Fobbs, 1988; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Lester, 2008; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Stout-Stewart, 2005; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998; Wolverton et al.).

The classification settings of the individual rural, suburban, and urban community colleges may provide additional insight into barriers specific to issues inherent to these settings. No empirical studies have included the factor of colleges’ settings into the identification of impediments, especially those that are cultural in nature. The current Carnegie Classification system provides the recognized classifications of community colleges based on institutional settings and size (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching [Carnegie Foundation], 2010). Most community colleges or Associate’s Colleges are classified as two-year, public institutions that are identified by setting as urban-serving, suburban serving, or rural-serving (Carnegie Foundation).

The nationwide impending need for qualified senior level community college leaders and the continued diminished representation of women leaders in senior level leadership positions suggest further study of the impediments to women’s advancement into these crucial positions. While women’s advancement and the gender gap has been one challenge for the community college and those who have studied leadership trends, the current existence of impediments to

advancement should continue to be explored. Findings about these gender related barriers suggest opportunities for personal reflection and organizational change.

### **Conceptual Models of Impediments**

Previous studies, related to women as community college leaders, their pathways to leadership, and reports of their successful leadership roles, have been interspersed with statements and accounts of impediments to their succession and pathways. In general, these barriers fall into thematic groups, including personal (internal) barriers, organizational structure (external) barriers, and organizational culture (external) barriers.

Theoretically, an early gender-based model used to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions is the meritocracy model or the individual perspective model (Estler, 1975; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Schmuck, 1980) or personal impediments.

A second gender-based model used to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions is the organizational perspective or the discrimination model, which focuses on the educational (organizational) system (Estler, 1975; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Schmuck, 1980) or organizational structure impediments. Finally, a third complementary gender-based model used to explain the inadequate representation of women in educational leadership positions is “women’s place” or social perspective model (Estler, 1975; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Schmuck, 1980) or organizational culture impediments. These three early models of underrepresentation were incorporated into limited literature on personal, organizational structure, and organizational culture impediments to advancement.

Additionally, the relationship of community college classification setting to organizational structure and especially to organizational culture remains unexamined. The current Carnegie Foundation (2010) descriptions of community colleges include the settings as

rural-, suburban-, and urban-serving colleges, based on the sizes of communities that each institution services. While Denison (1996) argues the differences in the terms organizational *culture* and organizational *climate*, both theories point out that social systems within organizations evolve over time and that organizational systems impact groups and individuals. Hardy and Katsinas (2007) recommend that policymakers take differences in institutional type and location into account when planning for changes in student demographics, programs to improve student readiness for college, workforce and instructional needs, and faculty retirement. Therefore, community college settings and their inherent cultures may impact women leaders and the barriers to their advancement within that culture and setting.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to examine the perceptions of women community college leaders regarding barriers to career advancement in a variety of institutional classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban). Three gender-based models of impediments, which are used to explain the underrepresentation of women in community college leadership positions, guided the current study. The participants of the study were senior level women leaders at community colleges in eleven states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) included in the accrediting region of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

Participants examined their perceptions of the impediments to advancement in community colleges through a survey instrument designed for the study. Participants also provided demographic and professional data, including information about their leadership pathway, their current leadership positions, and the classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) of their current institutions. The dependent variables of the study were the leaders' perceptions

regarding impediments. The three composite subscales of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture) were attribute independent variables. The main independent variable of the study was the institutions' classification setting (rural, suburban, urban).

### **Research Questions**

Previous studies of the perceptions of senior level community college leaders reported the existence of impediments to advancement of leadership in community colleges. The current study examined women leaders' perceptions of these impediments and was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are women leaders' perceptions of personal/internal impediments to advancement in community colleges?
2. What are women leaders' perceptions of organizational structure impediments to advancement in community colleges?
3. What are women leaders' perceptions of organizational culture impediments to advancement in community colleges?
4. Does the community college classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) of an organization impact the women leaders' perceptions of impediments to leadership advancement?

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will provide results which will be of value to community college practitioners and leaders as well as selection committees who recommend candidates for hire and boards who hire presidents and senior level leaders. With the findings of this study, individuals and institutions can also address gender issues that impede advancement within the institution.

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the number of women presidents has steadily risen to 29% or less than one-third of the total number of community college presidents (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). More than two out of three of the current community college presidents are male, and a strong majority (81%) are white males (Weisman & Vaughan). Further, issues in diversity of leadership persist in community colleges that are much more diverse in gender in their full-time faculty (51% females), administrators (53% females), staff (58% females), Chief Executive Officers or CEOs (28% females), and the students (61% females) they serve (American Community College Association [AACC], 2011). Meanwhile, the persistence of the “crisis” in community college leadership with the impending retirement of 84% of senior level leaders (Weisman & Vaughan) emphasizes the need for qualified community college leaders and the continued underrepresentation of women leaders.

Finally, the persistence of barriers to the advancement of women in senior leadership roles is evident in the literature and studies of women leaders, their personal and professional pathways, and their issues with organizational structure and cultures. The present study was significant because it offered further insight into the aspects of these obstacles to women’s advancement in the community college system at a crucial time in community college experience. More specifically, this study with its intent to examine community college settings and impediments to advancement offered insights into organizational structure and culture.

Both practical and theoretical implications exist for the study of these barriers to the advancement of women leaders. Practically, women leaders’ responses to the identified impediments indicated areas in which they have self-imposed personal, internal barriers and have experienced professional, external barriers within organizational structures or cultures. With the findings of this study, individuals and institutions can address gender issues that impede

advancement within the institution. As previously stated, the findings of this study also provided results which will be of value to community college practitioners and leaders as well as selection committees who recommend candidates for hire and boards who hire presidents and senior level leaders.

**Relationship to discipline of community college leadership.** The current study was conducted with senior level women administrators at community colleges in eleven states and in institutions of all types of classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban). The study examined female leaders' perceptions of impediments to advancement in leadership. These impediments may be related to the persistence of the gender gap, issues of diversity, and the aging of the current, male-dominated leadership. This impending demand for leadership may be filled either through the traditional, internal pathways to leadership or through non-traditional pathways through industry and experiential positions, but studies of the obstructions to these pathways enhance the understanding of the continued disproportionate representation of women in these senior leadership roles.

The role of the community college and its structure and culture, along with personal leadership issues, figure in the literature of gendered impediments to advancement in leadership and are extremely relevant to the study of community college leadership in general. Community college leadership programs that prepare leaders for advancement within community college systems and institutions will have practical and theoretical insights into barriers to advancement as well.

### **Overview of Methodology**

This cross-sectional survey study will collect quantitative data using an online survey instrument. A review of the professional literature guided the design of a survey instrument. In a

cross-sectional survey of this type, data are collected at one point in time, and data examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010; Creswell, 2008; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). The use of an online survey, distributed via an email link, will be an appropriate method of one-time data collection for this study of women leaders' attitudes and opinions about impediments to their advancement (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009; Sue & Ritter, 2007). Advantages of this online survey method include access, speed of return, economy, and anonymity.

The participants included a nonrandom, purposive sample of senior level female community college leaders employed at community colleges in eleven states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) within the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region. These states included community colleges that are representative of the three types of classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban) according to the assignments of the current Carnegie Classification system (Carnegie Foundation, 2010). These states included approximately 268 community colleges with approximately three to six senior level women leaders at each identified institution. The researcher sent a cover email to each senior level participant with the online survey instrument link provided directly in the body of the email.

To answer the first three research questions concerning perceptions to impediments, descriptive analysis tests were conducted to analyze the group of impediments and the subscale groupings of the three types of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture). Participants reported their perceptions of impediments using a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from "not an impediment" to "an extreme impediment." The frequency of responses and the mean scores for all impediments and the three subscales were reported. To



answer the final research question, analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to measure the independent variable of classification settings.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

Delimitations are used to narrow the scope of the study and to establish parameters (Creswell, 2003). A delimitation of the proposed study was the scope of the participants included in the study. The study was confined to women in senior level administrative positions in community colleges across eleven states in the southern area of the United States. The identification of participants in the sample was one delimitation that arises from adequate and accurate access to women administrators at proposed institutions (Creswell). Lists of identified participants were dependent on access to current college staff directories and email addresses.

Another delimitation of the study was the focus on perceived barriers to advancement of leaders in community colleges. Some participants may have considered the nature of impediments in general to be sensitive and may be reluctant to share information that may reflect poorly on their past or present employers. Sue and Ritter (2003) and Schaefer and Dillman (1998) suggested the use of the proposed online survey is similar to other self-administered formats that have been successful in inquiring about sensitive or embarrassing information. Every effort was made to assure participants of anonymity in recording and storing data and in reporting results. Sue and Ritter also called for the use of the online survey which helps to preserve anonymity since there is no email address linked to a web survey response.

Participants of the study included community college women leaders in eleven states including all three classification settings (rural, suburban, urban). Utilizing rural, suburban, and urban settings establishes boundaries to the study within the sampling of women leaders'

institutions. The participants in the survey identified the setting of their institutions as a part of the demographic questionnaire included with the survey instrument.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions of key terms and concepts are provided:

*Career path:* Any previous experiential positions, professional development, degree attainment, or training that leads to advancement.

*Community college:* Any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree, including the comprehensive two-year college as well as many technical institutes, both public and private (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

*Glass ceiling:* Any artificial barrier to the advancement of women and minorities (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995a); the unseen, impenetrable barrier that keeps minorities and women from advancing on the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995b).

*Impediment:* Any barrier, hindrance, or obstruction to the advancement of a person to a position within the community college administrative hierarchy; for the purposes of the current study, synonyms for *impediment(s)* include *barrier(s)*, *obstacle(s)*, *obstruction(s)*, *hindrance(s)*.

*Good old (ol') boys network:* All male networks and male dominated networks that view diverse leaders as outsiders, different and problematic (Chin et al., 2007).

*Personal/Internal barriers:* Any barriers within the individual's personal life that may impede him/her from advancement. For this study, examples may include: family and home responsibilities; lack of mobility; gender identity and socialization; lack of support,

encouragement, and counseling; lack of confidence; and lack of aspiration or motivation (Eddy & Cox, 2008; Lester, 2008; Shakeshaft et al., 2007).

*Organizational/Institutional/External cultural barriers:* Any barriers within the organization/institution culture that may impede him/her from advancement. For this study, examples may include: cultural and social norms that encourage discriminatory practices; socialization patterns; and disempowerment.

*Organizational/Institutional/External structure barriers:* Any barriers within the organization/institution structure that may impede him/her from advancement. For this study, examples may include: systemic gender bias; promotional practices; lack of institutional pipeline or succession planning; and the glass ceiling effect (Dunn, 1997).

*Rural-serving community colleges:* According to the Carnegie Foundation basic classification, institutions that are physically located within Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs) or Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with populations less than 500,000 people, or not within PMSAs or MSAs, according to the 2000 census (Carnegie Foundation, 2010).

*Senior level leaders/administration:* Community college administrative positions that may include deans, vice-presidents, provosts, chancellors, and presidents.

*Suburban-serving community colleges:* According to the Carnegie Foundation basic classification, institutions that are physically located within Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with populations exceeding 500,000 people according to the 2000 census (Carnegie Foundation, 2010).

*Urban-serving community colleges:* According to the Carnegie Foundation basic classification, institutions that are physically located within Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs)

with populations exceeding 500,000 people according to the 2000 census (Carnegie Foundation, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

The impending need for qualified applicants for senior level leaders in community colleges provides a challenge for individuals and institutions in community college systems across the nation and across the various settings—rural, suburban, and urban—of community colleges. While this overall need presents a challenge, it also presents a positive chance not only to update outdated practices, create new workplace policies, and introduce organizational structures and models that promote greater efficiency, but also to increase diversity in leaders and faculty and to be more reflective of the communities these colleges serve (AACC, 2010). According to the AACC's snapshot of these communities, 61% of all community college students are female in relation to 58% of female full-time staff, 53% of female senior level administrators and managers, but only 28% of female CEOs (AACC, 2011). A clearer understanding of the continued underrepresentation of women in senior level leadership positions in community colleges will provide suggestions for change based upon identified barriers to advancement and related connections to community college settings.

This first chapter provided an overview of the current study, including its background, conceptual models, purpose and research questions, significance, methodology, delimitations, and definitions of terms. The second chapter is a review of the literature of the identified concepts of the study. Chapter three will discuss the methodology used for the study, chapter four will present the findings of the study, and chapter five will discuss the findings and present conclusions and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to examine the perceptions of women community college leaders regarding barriers to career advancement in a variety of institutional classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban). This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to this study. The first section of the chapter reviews the historical perspectives of women in academics and community colleges, the underrepresentation of women in leadership, and the current state of women in community colleges. The second section synthesizes the literature on the historical and current perceptions of women leaders to impediments to advancement. The third section identifies and reviews the literature of three types of perceived impediments, including personal/internal impediments, organizational structure impediments, and organizational culture impediments. Finally, the last section addresses the literature on classification settings of community colleges (rural, suburban, and urban) and the gap in literature connecting classification settings to the previously discussed perceived impediments to women's advancement in community colleges. A chapter summary of the literature concludes the review of literature.

#### **Method of the Literature Review**

The literature review yielded scholarly journals and monographs identified through the print and electronic library collections of Old Dominion University (ODU), Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC), and other institutions that provided interlibrary loan journal articles and monographs obtained through ODU and SWCC libraries. The databases that were used to gather peer-reviewed articles included those provided by Old Dominion University, Southwest Virginia Community College, the Virtual Library Virginia (VIVA), and the Virginia

Community College System: EBSCOhost Research Databases, primarily Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, Women's Studies International, ERIC, Dissertations and Theses Full Text; and H. W. Wilson databases, primarily Education Full Text. The major topics of investigation centered on the empirical literature of women leaders and administrators, community colleges and higher education, barriers and impediments to career advancement and career pathways, underrepresentation of women and women leaders, women's studies, and classification settings (rural, suburban, urban). The key terms and descriptors used for Boolean searches of databases included: women; gender; leader(s) OR administrator(s); leadership; community college(s); higher education; barrier(s) OR impediment(s); career pathway(s); underrepresentation; and Carnegie OR classification setting(s), including rural OR suburban OR urban.

Library catalogs of ODU, SWCC, and OCLC's WorldCat collections provided access to print and eBook monograph titles. Print monographs were available through ODU, SWCC, and OCLC lending institutions for interlibrary loan services. Electronic books were available through SWCC, VIVA, and VCCS collections of netLibrary eBooks and EBSCOhost eBook Collection. Catalog searches centered on major topics of investigation of the literature of women leaders and administrators, community colleges and higher education, barriers and impediments to career advancement and career pathways, underrepresentation of women and women leaders, women's studies, and classification settings (rural, suburban, urban). Boolean search key words and terms for catalogs included community college(s); higher education; women leader(s) OR administrator(s); gender; barriers OR impediments; education; underrepresentation; leadership; and rural OR suburban OR urban.

Additional electronic resources included official websites of organizations such as the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The AACC website provided historical and current statistical trends and data for community colleges, their students, their faculty, and their administrators. The Carnegie Foundation website presented the historical and current classification system for institutions of higher education and specifically for community colleges. Classification settings of rural, suburban, and urban community colleges are provided as searchable data on the Carnegie Foundation website. A key word search of a popular search engine revealed the official web addresses for the organizations and their content.

### **Findings in Brief**

The body of literature focusing on women community college leaders has grown exponentially compared to the actual growth in numbers of women leaders in these institutions. Attempting to understand the continued underrepresentation of these women leaders in an otherwise seemingly diversified educational structure and culture, researchers have rendered analysis of past and current statistical representations of both genders in the leadership (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998); analysis of self-reported data and themed stories of their mutually successful and impeded advancement to leadership (Eddy & Cox, 2008; Fairholm & Fairholm, 2000; Gerdes, 2003); and analysis of the impact of structure and culture of community colleges on gendered leadership (DiCroce, 1995; McGrath & Tobia, 2008; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). The literature focusing on research of community college related topics and issues according to their specific classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban) has increased since the instigation of the Carnegie Classification system's designation of the three categories in 2005 (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007). The literature review indicated a lack of literature focusing on

studies of women community college leaders related to classification settings and more specifically in women leaders' perceptions of impediments to advancement in community colleges related to classification settings.

### **Conceptual Frameworks for the Current Study**

As Green (2008) stated, "Research on gender provides a framework for understanding what it means to be a woman working within the community college" (p. 812). The concepts that guide the current study of women community college leaders include gender studies; women leaders in higher education and specifically community colleges; underrepresentation of women leaders; barriers or impediments to the advancement of women leaders; types of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture); and classification settings of community colleges (rural, suburban, urban). These concepts are evident in the development of sections of the literature review for the current study.

**Historical perspectives of women in academics and community colleges.** The earliest roles of women professionals with administrative careers in academics were those of "deans of women" at coeducational universities in the late nineteenth century (Nidiffer, 2010). These deans performed a broad range of responsibilities, and they worked primarily to improve the student life of women students while establishing the earliest model of professionalism as women administrators (Nidiffer). By the turn of the century, early women leaders who supported the advancement of women in academics envisioned these positions would produce experts in women's education, women faculty, and eventually women in student affairs.

In the 1970s Patricia Sexton (1976) provided statistical and situational analysis of "academic women." At the time of the publishing of her book *Women in Education*, Sexton noted several prevailing women's issues: earnings gap; discrimination, prejudice, and lack of



prestige in a male-dominated profession; lack of advanced degrees; underrepresentation in presidential positions at four-year coeducational colleges and apparently no presidential representation at two-year colleges; and few academic deans although many reported deans of women, the traditional women's role since the turn of the century.

In the 1980s Shakeshaft (1987) studied the existing research of women in public school administration and devised a chart reflecting the stages of research and the current status of women (see Table 1). Shakeshaft's stages of research identified the first stage as the absence of women in studies all the way through to the sixth stage of transforming existing theory of women in leadership. Shakeshaft questioned why there are so few women in educational administration, suggested approaches to improving and enhancing research on the status of women leaders, and stated outcomes for implemented approaches. According to Shakeshaft (1987), the third stage of research involved the identification of barriers to advancement, and she asked that research on women in education include the voice of women.

Table 1

*Shakeshaft's Stages of Research on Women in Administration*

Stage	Questions	Approach	Outcome
1. Absence of women in studies	Number of women in Educational Administration? In what positions?	New surveys	Documentation
2. Search women as administrators	Characteristics and history of women?	Studies of present and past administrators and descriptions	Demographic & attitudinal experimental studies
3. Disadvantaged, subordinate status	Why so few women leaders in Educational Administration?	Attitudes toward women; experiences	Identification of barriers to advancement
4. Women studied as women	How do women describe themselves?	Interviews/observational studies	Female perspective
5. Women challenging theory	How must theory change to include women's experiences?	Analysis of current theory/methods	Reality that theories don't work for women
6. Transformation of theory	What are theories of human behavior?	Range of approaches	Reconceptualization of theory

*Note.* Adapted from *Women in Educational Administration* by C. Shakeshaft, 1987.

Additionally, Fennema and Ayer (1984) edited the book, *Women and Education: Equity or Equality?* which traced the status of women and minority women in education. Of particular interest was the establishment and progress of women's studies programs and courses in the 1960s and 1970s; the environment of the work place for women in higher education; the effects of affirmative action programs on gains in women's leadership roles; and the underrepresentation of women in top-level administrative positions (Fennema & Ayer).

More specific to the study of underrepresentation, Gillett-Karam, Roueche, and Roueche (1991) provided a directed study of the issues of underrepresentation and diversity among women and minorities in the community college. These authors concluded that the issues of underrepresentation seemed to come together in the concept of diversity and the values that support diversity (Gillett-Karam et al.). In one chapter of their book, these authors looked to leaders' diverse voices to inform the issues of equality, diversity, experience, and increased representation and recognition (Gillett-Karam et al.). One president of a community college said community colleges "must have a genuine commitment to build diversity, to nurture good and developing leaders, to allow change to occur incrementally, to help teachers develop a more institutional view, to model valuing diversity, and to incorporate these ideas into the fabric or culture or climate of the college community" (p. 199). According to this view, if the diversity issue at community colleges is addressed, the underrepresentation issue will be addressed.

As recently as the mid-1990's stereotypical, negative language was still applied to faculty descriptions of their women college presidents. In a study of faculty and their responses to college presidents, Jablonski (1996) found faculty members used gendered metaphors such as the heroine, the mother, the matriarch, and the nun to describe their own presidents.

**The concept of underrepresentation in women's leadership.** Community colleges have traditionally been known for their democratic representation and open door policy to all types of students and by extension for their democratic and open door policy in their leadership (Boggs, 2003; Twombly, 1995). Brown, Martinez, and Daniel (2002) reiterated that community colleges are “considered homogeneous in that they generally serve diverse populations and share a commitment to open access, comprehensiveness, and responsiveness to local needs” (p. 46). Twombly noted, however, that the state of underrepresentation of women and minorities exists because community colleges have been slow to bring these minorities into top leadership positions in proportion to their representation as faculty and students.

According to Gillett-Karam, Roueche, and Roueche (1991), the underrepresentation and underutilization of women and minorities in positions of leadership in the community college is a question of diversity. According to some researchers in the issue of the underrepresentation of women leaders in the community college, the community college is the natural place to study gender diversity (Gillett-Karam et al., 1991; Green, 2008). According to American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) statistics, females make up the majority of enrolled community college students since 61% of all community college students are female (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2011). At the same time, 58% of full-time staff was female, 53% of senior level administrators and managers were female, and 28% of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) were female (AACC).

DiCroce (1995) supported the idea that community colleges should be at the forefront of hiring women, especially women presidents. Community colleges have had a strong commitment to the values of open access, diversity, and inclusiveness (DiCroce). Since the inception of the community college model, these colleges have been called the “people's college,” “democracy's

college,” and “opportunity’s college” (DiCroce; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999), so it stands to reason that community colleges would be the pacesetter for establishing diversity policies for hiring.

**Career paths and underrepresentation.** In a research brief prepared for the American Association of Community Colleges, Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) reported on the career paths for community college leaders. In the 2000 survey of both female and male community college senior administrators, 22% of presidents were promoted to the presidency from within their institutions while 66% came from other community colleges (Amey & VanDerLinden). Conversely, 52% of chief academic officers were promoted within their institutions while 28% were hired from other community colleges (Amey & VanDerLinden). Other findings of the survey reflected the underrepresentation of women in certain administrative positions: (a) 27% women presidents; (b) 29% women occupational or vocational education directors; and (c) 30% women chief financial officers (Amey & VanDerLinden). Ultimately, implications in the Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) report suggested that women’s lack of representation in steppingstone positions to the presidency may impede future growth in numbers of women in senior level positions, especially in the presidency of community colleges.

### **Current State of Women’s Leadership**

The current state of leadership in community colleges records the notable but still underrepresented advancements of women leaders. Women in presidential and provost positions at colleges and universities are noticeably underrepresented in spite of the recent trend toward increased numbers of women in senior administrative positions (Haring-Hidore, Freeman, Phelps, Spann, & Wooten, 1990; Johnsrud, 1991; Lively, 2000; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). Studies indicate that while most of these gains have been in numbers of women in community colleges, liberal arts colleges, and institutions of lower rankings, an increase in women in

administrative positions at Ivy League colleges are also on the rise but are still statistically low (Lively; Scanlon, 1997; Tedrow & Rhoads).

Vaughan and others (Vaughan, 1986; Vaughan, Mellander, & Blois, 1994; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007) presented the results of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) presidential surveys spanning 16 years from 1991 to 2007. These results indicated trends in the number of women presidents in community colleges. In 1991, women leaders comprised 11% of community college presidents (Vaughan et al.) while in 2001 the number of women comprised 28% of presidents (Weisman & Vaughan, 2002). At the time of the 2006 survey, an increase of only 1% of women presidents occurred in five years, bringing the 2006 percentage of presidents to 29% (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007) and representing less than one-third of all presidencies. Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) presented results of an AACC survey of other senior level administrators. Approximately 42% of chief academic officers were women, 30% were chief financial officers, 29% were occupational and technical education administrators, and 44% were continuing education administrators (Amey & VanDerLinden). Women in these senior level positions continued to be underrepresented in the traditional pathway for higher level positions (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). According to the 2006 AACC survey (Weisman & Vaughan), the most traveled pathway to the presidency is through the academic pathway with 55% of the respondents holding academic positions before their first presidency.

The significance of the continued underrepresentation of women in senior level leadership in community colleges becomes evident in the statistical results of investigations into the planned retirement of current leaders (Shults, 2001; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). In Weisman and Vaughan's analysis of the 2006 AACC presidential survey,

84% of the participating presidents plan to retire in the next 10 years from 2006 to 2016. The previous implications about the continued gender gap in the academic pipeline for advancement to higher positions become more significant with the impending leadership gap. Explanations for the gender gap may lie in the continued existence of documented barriers to advancement. As Eddy and Cox (2008) concluded after conducting a study of women community college presidents, “Community colleges are gendered organizations despite espoused values of being democratic institutions” (p. 77). Jablonski’s study (1996) of seven women college presidents concluded that gender was a common issue in their experience. Interviews with these women indicated the concept of feminism, achieving quality, faculty perceptions, and an appreciation of the uniqueness and differences of women as gender issues in their own success stories.

### **Perceived Impediments to Advancement**

The study of perceptions of leadership is a tool of social research methodology that adds to the body of literature. According to Bailey (1994) in *Methods of Social Research*, perceptions or mental images build concepts and ultimately form the explanatory statements sought in social research. Explanatory statements of leaders provide invaluable insights and reactions to often-studied leadership situations, styles, characteristics, career pathways, philosophies and core beliefs, competencies, organizations, and leadership development (Chin et al., 2007; Eddy, 2010; Northouse, 2007).

**Perceptions of leadership in gender studies.** The literature focusing on the perceptions of leadership in gender studies and gender issues traces higher education leaders’ career pathways, leadership and communication styles, diversity, organizational structure and culture, leadership and education graduate programs, and other specific issues related to leadership in community colleges (Brown, Martinez, & Daniel, 2002; Caldwell-Colbert & Albino, 2007; Chin

et al., 2007; Eddy, 2010; Green, 2008; Valdata, 2006). Women leaders' perceptions have been reported through varying methodologies of research including qualitative interviews, case studies, and narratives; quantitative surveys and questionnaires; and mixed methods. Researchers of gendered leadership include authors of dissertations and theses, monographs, and empirical research.

The current cross-sectional study focused on current women community college leaders' perceptions to impediments in advancement. A quantitative method using a survey instrument allowed women leaders to provide explanatory statements in the form of perceptions of impediments that have been identified in the literature review and previous research.

**Historical perspectives to impediments to advancement.** As noted earlier, the earliest roles of academic deans of women paved the way for women leaders to advance as experts in women's education, mainly in coeducational settings (Nidiffer, 2010). Unfortunately, these early deans suffered incorrectly from the popular stereotypes of "curmudgeon, chaperone, or house mother" (Nidiffer, p. 559). As the twentieth century progressed and community colleges were founded across America and in each of the different states, women who were hired in typically male-dominated administrative positions were also perceived and treated according to established stereotypes and cultural female role issues. Late twentieth century studies of women leaders in community colleges support the existence of these stereotypes and role issues in consistently underrepresented positions (Chliwniak, 1997; DiCroce, 1995; Jablonski, 1996; Winship & Amey, 1992).

**Current state of impediments to advancement.** Barriers to women's advancement can be perceived or real, conscious and unconscious (Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010). The perceived impediments for women leaders in their advancement to senior level positions in



higher education provided the focus of several studies and comparative writings. Harris, Ballenger, Hicks-Townes, Carr, and Alford (2004) interviewed several women educators and found that one of the main obstacles for their subjects was marriage and family responsibilities, including lack of mobility, husband support, and family size. Another type of impediment was cultural stereotyping, including the importance of networking and sponsoring, the limitations on women's goal orientation, and the conflicts in the perception of women and their feminine leadership qualities.

Other studies added to this list of impediments, including balancing long work hours with their family situation; the perceived notion that women have to try harder and make fewer mistakes than their male counterparts; the resistance to women leaders as caring, nurturing, matriarchal figures; and the need for a generative leadership style in a traditionally male model of leadership (Jablonski, 1996; Lively, 2000). For the purposes of the current study, these specific self-reported and narrated impediments form categories of analysis: personal/internal impediments, organizational/external structure impediments, and organizational/external culture impediments.

### **Theoretical Framework of Impediments to Advancement**

Previous studies about women as community college leaders, their pathways to leadership, and reports of their successful leadership roles have been interspersed with self-reports and accounts of barriers to their succession and pathways. In general, these impediments fall into thematic groups, including personal (internal) barriers, organizational structure (external) barriers, and organizational culture (external) barriers.

Models for these groupings of impediments were identified and grouped by Estler (1975) and others who applied the models in their studies (Grove & Montgomery, 1999; Schmuck, 1980).

**Personal/internal model.** An early gender-based model used to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions is the meritocracy model or the individual perspective model (Estler, 1975; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Schmuck, 1980). This model, based upon psychological orientations (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996), looks to women for cause: personal traits, characteristics, abilities, or qualities as well as self-image and confidence, motivation, and aspirations (Growe & Montgomery, p. 2). This model (see Table 2) links to the limited literature on personal or internal impediments to advancement.

Table 2

*Gender-Based Models*

Models	Emphasis	Cause
Individual <sup>a</sup> or Meritocracy <sup>b</sup> (Personal/Internal)	Psychological Orientations	Women are looked to as the cause.
Organizational <sup>a</sup> or Discrimination <sup>b</sup> (Organizational Structure)	Educational System	The organizational structures and practices of education which discriminate against women.
Woman's Place <sup>a</sup> or Social <sup>b</sup> (Organizational Culture)	Cultural and Social Norms	Different socialization patterns for women and men.

*Note.* Adapted from “Women and the Leadership Paradigm: Bridging the Gender Gap,” by R. Growe and P. Montgomery, 1999, *National Forum Journal*, 17E, p. 3.

<sup>a</sup>Estler (1975). <sup>b</sup>Schmuck (1980).

**Organizational/external structure model.** Another gender-based model used to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions is the organizational perspective or the discrimination model, which focuses on the educational (organizational) system (Estler, 1975; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Schmuck, 1980). Limited opportunities for women due to systemic gender bias exist as a result of aspiration and achievement differences in men and women. This model explains how the organizational structure and practices of education discriminated against women (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). Promotional practices seem to favor men and impede or discourage women in advancement (Growe & Montgomery). This model (see Table 2) links to the limited literature on organizational structure impediments to advancement.

**Organizational/external culture model.** A final gender-based model used to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions is women's place or social perspective model (Estler, 1975; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Schmuck, 1980). This model supports organizational culture as a source of impediments because it emphasizes cultural and social norms that encourage discriminatory practices (Tallerico & Burstyn, 1996). According to Schmuck, the norms, folkways, and mores of the society coincide with different socialization patterns that steer men and women into different areas of work and differential pay and status. This model (see Table 2) links to the limited literature on organizational culture impediments to advancement.

### **Types of Perceived Impediments to Advancement in the Literature**

The three types of perceived impediments (personal, organizational structure, and organizational culture) are identified and defined in the literature.

**Personal/internal impediments.** Barriers to the advancement of women community college leaders may be attributed to the personal or internal characteristics of the women who seek advancement. Study results support the existence of these personal impediments and outline the types of personal impediments women encounter (Stout-Stewart, 2005; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998). One likely impediment lies in individuals' lack of educational degrees required for advancement. In 2000, 37% of senior level leaders had earned Ph.D. or Ed.D. degrees (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002); in 2001, 88% of the presidents responding to the American Association of Community Colleges survey had earned a doctorate degree (Weisman & Vaughan, 2002). These statistics seem to indicate that individuals who are in "emergent steppingstone positions" (Amey & VanDerLinden, p. 15) for advancement should attain a doctoral degree, especially if they have a career plan that includes advancement to chief academic officer or president.

Related to this personal impediment is the individuals' choice to avoid higher level positions (Vaughan and Weisman, 2002). One woman president in Vaughan and Weisman's study stated that she did not know many women in dean and vice-president positions who were particularly interested in pursuing the presidency; these women, she felt, considered the short tenure of a president and the stresses and pressures of the job to be barriers to advancement. Olcott and Hardy (2005) concluded that some women may not want power and either may not be as ambitious for power and rank as men are or may not be satisfied with the same kind of challenges that men are.

**Family and mobility.** As previously noted, other reported personal impediments involve marriage and family responsibilities, including lack of mobility, husband support, and family size (Harris et al., 2004; Olcott & Hardy, 2005). In their study of award-winning educators,

Harris et al. reported on the women's personal barriers, including the toll on families as they took the time needed to do the important job of leadership and to do it well. Most of these women were also "place-bound" (Harris et al., p. 116), commuting to jobs and even failing to pursue advancement because they could not leave the area. Similarly, Eddy and Cox (2008) recorded some of the gendered leadership issues and impediments of six community college presidents among which was the impediment of mobility. Two of the six presidents intentionally chose their college positions because of family obligations, and two others chose their positions because they did not have to move their families to take a promotion (Eddy & Cox). A lack of mobility was also a perceived impediment in several studies as early as 1992 until 2008 (Cejda, 2008; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Valdata, 2006; Winship & Amey, 1992).

In the 1996 Jablonski (1996) study of seven women college presidents, for instance, all of the women mentioned family as both a source of support and as a distraction from their work. Later, Eddy and Cox (2008) reported in a study of six community college presidents that family life was embodied in their pathways to their presidencies. One president stated, "I consciously made a decision...that my first priority would be my family...If someone offered me a job across the country, I'd love it, but it would take me away from my family. I wouldn't even think about it" (Eddy & Cox, p. 73). Gerdes (2003) asked 98 women senior level administrators about whether factors in their personal lives made success in their careers easier or harder, and 36 answered harder, 30 answered easier, and 32 answered their personal lives had both positive and negative effects or no effect on their careers.

Other literature compiles lists of internal barriers that support the notion that women have perceptions of internal barriers that impact advancement to leadership. Madsen (2010) asserted, "Women are sometimes their own barriers to leadership positions because of a variety of

personal and professional insecurities and perceptions” (p. 576). Madsen listed the following barriers as support for these perceptions of internal barriers of university presidents: attitude; fear of failure; hesitancy to take risks; lack of confidence in one’s skills and abilities; a self-concept that is linked to internalized traditional female stereotypes; discomfort with conflict and confrontation; lack of assertiveness; work-life issues and challenges; and perceptions of limited opportunities or capabilities (p. 576).

VanDerLinden (2005) studied the barriers to career advancement as reported by 300 community college administrators. While only 14-17% of the study participants indicated the existence of such barriers, they did note that two of the perceived personal barriers were limited time for professional development and a lack of appropriate degree or educational credential.

**Organizational/external structure impediments.** The institutional or organizational structure may be the source of impediments to women community college leaders’ advancement (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006; Harvard, 1986). According to Winship and Amey’s (1992) study of women presidents, the literature supports the concept of the organization’s structure as a source of both overt and subtle barriers to women’s advancement, including “gender and age discrimination, lack of managerial support, and not having their skills taken seriously” (p.24). This early study also concluded that the gender rules for communicating and working together within the organization have not been adequately defined or discussed (Winship & Amey). In a more recent study, one female leader in higher education referred to attending committees at which “her voice was not heard” (Harris et al., 2004, p. 116). Sandler (1986) and later Gerdes (2003) referred to the “chilly climate” concept of academe that impedes women’s progress. This “chilly climate” towards advancement depicts both structural and attitudinal constraints and impediments for women (Gerdes; Sandler).

***Marginality.*** One perceived and significant organizational structure impediment is the marginalization of women and minorities as “outsiders” (Caldwell-Colbert & Albino, 2007; Cejda, 2008; Eddy & Lester, 2008; Munoz, 2010; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1998, 1999; Twombly, 1995). This impediment refers to women leaders’ perception of a lack of structural support that incorporates women into the organization and encourages their treatment as insiders who can effectively lead and blend into the structure of the community college. Twombly stated even when women succeed in achieving leadership positions, their accomplishments may be marginalized or discussed in terms of problems rather than in terms of potential. Munoz (2010) reported the impediment of “multiple marginality” for Latinas and other women of color. Latina presidents noted that they may experience additional layers of marginality and stereotyping being both women and minorities (Munoz; Turner, 2002).

The perceived impediment of “double jeopardy” also reflects the dual aspects of women minority leaders. Caldwell-Colbert and Albino (2007) noted that instances of gender and race marginalization are equally problematic for African American women in academics. From the perspective of Toy Caldwell-Colbert (Caldwell-Colbert & Albino), a senior level academic administrator, “ Both subtle and overt experiences with discrimination, stereotyping, racism, and sexism are constants for women of color, and issues of racism and sexism may be hard to differentiate” (p. 76). In another study of community college leaders, one woman leader reflected that as an African American woman she faced double challenges or “double jeopardy” based on race and gender (Green, 2008). Green noted, “...some questioned my ability to ‘cut it’ because I am a woman, my ability to ‘cut it’ because I am an African American, and my ability to ‘cut it’ because I am a mother” (p. 813).

***Lack of mentorship.*** Another perceived and significant organizational structure impediment is the lack of mentorship within community colleges. Gibson-Benninger, Ratliff, and Rhoads (1996) acknowledged the lack of mentors is obviously one impediment to increasing the leadership roles of women and underrepresented minorities. These authors (Gibson-Benninger et al.) also noted that a lack of mentoring contributes to feelings of isolation and exclusion from informal networks. Grove and Montgomery (1999) stressed the importance of mentoring for women administrators in education and questioned women's success in acquiring administrative positions without mentoring relationships. They also emphasized the importance of mentoring of younger workers, which reduces turnover and helps mentees deal with organizational structure and even culture assimilation (Grove and Montgomery).

***Hiring or promoting practices.*** Organizational structure impediments may also present during the application of hiring and promoting practices of community colleges. Blevins (2001) interviewed seven women community college leaders in 2001, and these leaders described their accounts of becoming presidents, the challenges, and the positive experiences of their tenure. One president reported as she was being considered for a presidency some trustees felt that "a woman wouldn't be able to handle that job, wouldn't be able to speak before men's groups" (p. 506). Munoz (2010) referred to the common tendency within community colleges to hire others like themselves (themselves statistically being white males). This pattern of hiring contributes to maintaining the status quo and impeding women from being considered for positions that historically have been held by men (Munoz). One president in Munoz's study said she knew from serving on search committees that people are looking for people who are like them, who look like them, and who talk like them.



According to Gibson-Benninger, Ratliff, and Rhoads (1996), another challenge that contributes to hiring faculty and staff from underrepresented groups is the so-called “dry pipeline,” which they defined as the lack of women and minority applicants available and applying for positions (p. 71). They recommended several ways for community colleges to revamp their inequitable hiring and promotion practices and policies in order to overcome this challenge, including widening search areas, the inclusion of women and minorities on search committees, and tapping into its own diverse talent from within (Gibson-Benninger et al.).

**Organizational culture impediments.** Barriers to the advancement of women in community college leadership may be attributed to characteristics of organizational culture. Organizational culture has been defined as “a powerful though subtle and largely invisible force in the lives of students, staff, and administration” (McGrath & Tobia, 2008, p. 43). Additionally, organizational culture holds an institution together by providing shared interpretations of events through socializing members into common patterns of perception, thoughts and feeling (McGrath & Tobia; Schein, 2004) as well as shared basic assumptions (Claxton, 2007; Schein). Specifically, Rhoads and Tierney (1992) described organizational culture as “the glue that holds the institution together” (p. 5). McGrath and Tobia defined a strong and well-articulated culture as “a vital component of high-performing institutions because it provides a sense of identity, clarity of mission, and a focus to decisions, strategies, and practices” (p. 44). Winship and Amey (1992) noted the idea that a “comfort zone” must exist in each organization’s culture, “including the definition of who fits in, who understands and defines the organization’s norms and values, perceptions of team playing and ability and loyalty, and how one knows whom and when to trust” (p. 24). Most of these researchers agree that leadership is entwined with culture formation (Amey, 2005; Schein).

Fairholm and Fairholm (2000) discussed the organizational culture impediment of traditionalism. They wrote that organizations have a “natural tendency” to maintain traditional ways of thinking and behaving (p. 106). Additionally, this tendency can be “either positive or negative, either helpful to the culture or hurtful to it... past practice, rites, and rituals often becomes the basis for present activity” (Fairholm & Fairholm, p. 106). Women leaders may perceive this traditionalism and reliance on past practice as an impediment to their advancement and an “entrenched organizational culture” that creates an “issue of conformity that stifles innovation” once they do advance (Fairholm & Fairholm, p. 107).

*The “Glass Ceiling”*. The term “glass ceiling” refers to a specific cultural or social impediment which women community college leaders have reported. Morrison, White, and Van Vlesor (1992) probably introduced the concept of the “glass ceiling” in relation to women leaders in the corporate world, but others have adopted the term in their studies of women leaders in higher education (Johnsrud, 1991; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Lively, 2000; Scanlon, 1997). The perceived or real “glass ceiling” describes women as a group who are kept from advancing to higher positions because they are women (Morrison et al.; Olcott & Hardy, 2005; Scanlon), and this ceiling applies to women in middle-level and top jobs in higher education organizations (Johnsrud & Heck). The fact that the United States Department of Labor convened a “Glass Ceiling Commission” supports the existence of a “glass ceiling” in corporate and educational settings. The commission defined the glass ceiling effect and reported its findings on the “glass ceiling” from 1991 to 1996.

Chliwniak (1997) summarized her findings of the existence of a glass ceiling as subtle, indirect obstacles that derive from labeling and stereotyping and that place a stumbling block in the career paths of women. Stereotypical perceptions of women leaders and whether they look,

act, and lead like woman or like a man are often cited in discussions of the glass ceiling (Chliwniak; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Jablonski, 1996). Chliwniak (1997) also concluded that organizational glass ceilings are not “due the inability of women to function effectively in their responsibilities. Rather, the glass ceiling most often is the result of a woman being unlike her predecessor, usually a white male” (Chliwniak, p. 52). In a case study of six community college presidents in 2007, only one president specifically recalled having had a “glass ceiling” experience; she felt she had a promotion stone-walled in an organizational culture where a male vice-president “couldn’t envision a woman as a dean and that was plain and simple” (Campbell et al., 2010, p. 27).

As to whether or not the “glass ceiling” continues to be a perceived impediment of women leaders in higher education, one university president said there is still a glass ceiling in higher education (Wolverton et al., 2009). As reported in a series of interviews of women university and college presidents in *Women at the Top*, this same president said there have been “incredible changes, but at the end of the day women still have a long way to go. There are still functions that are perceived as male, like leadership” (Wolverton et al., p. 18).

***Male norms and gender bias.*** Women leaders may perceive the organizational culture to be mired in male norms that produce gender bias and a gender gap. Schein (2004) asserted cultural norms define how organizations define leadership—who will be promoted and who will establish the attention of followers. Cultures differ to the degree in which leaders are differentiated for work and family roles and to the degree in which gender roles are seen as different (Schein). Eddy and Cox (2008) noted women leaders may be penalized for acting in ways that are outside of organization expectations, yet they may be judged for not fitting this male-normed mold. A fine line exists in some organizations between gender expectations,

allowances, language, behaviors, and even looks and attire (Eddy & Cox). Wolverton, Bower, and Hyle (2009), who interviewed women university and college presidents in *Women at the Top*, concluded that gender bias and racial discrimination “continue to influence the cultural mind-sets of many Americans...And they persist in higher education, an environment supposedly open and accepting of difference” (p. 148).

Campbell, Mueller, and Souza’s (2010) case study of six women community college presidents led to findings of occasions of gender-based treatment. One president reported women “don’t get a pass,” meaning women do not have the same opportunities to make mistakes as their male counterparts do. Another president reported she had worked with a male superintendent who would hardly acknowledge her presence in a room because she was female (Campbell et al.). From this same case study, however, one president stated she actually benefitted from gender bias since her institution was looking to fill a position with a woman; she perceived the gender bias to have provided an opportunity for her even if she was hired as a token woman (Campbell et al.).

Cultural stereotyping has also placed women in non-leadership roles, effectively limiting women’s goal orientation. Women do not necessarily enter into the culture of an organization with the goal of advancement, and they remain at their entry level longer than men do (Harris et al., 2004).

**“Good old boys” network.** Along with the male norms and gender bias within organizational cultures, some institutions have some form of “good old boy” network. DiCroce (1995) went so far as to say most institutions have some form of this network at play within their institutions. DiCroce defined this “good old boys” network as a part of the power structure of the institution that creates a climate in which the network and the subsequent disenfranchised group

thrives. According to Chin et al. (2007), the good old boys' network is "a solid barrier to advancement because it filters out those who the network members believe can lead and those who they believe should not be allowed to lead" (p. 240).

In a recent study of Latina community college presidents, Munoz (2010) found the "good old boys" network still exists, providing men the opportunity to develop networks and attain mentors. This network was a valuable resource for men; this same resource was not available to women leaders (Munoz).

Tedrow and Rhoads (1999), who conducted a qualitative study of 30 senior-level administrators in community colleges, found some leaders were aware of gender issues, specifically the power of the "good old boys." One woman administrator in the study said she had learned the best way to collaborate with these males was to be quiet; as a conciliatory leader, she learned to recognize and respect these males and their power so that she could do her job within the system (Tedrow & Rhoads).

*The "double bind"*. Some women leaders perceive themselves to be caught in an organizational "double bind" (Harvard, 1986; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999), a specific form of gender stereotyping. A "double bind" occurs when a woman leader breaks with the relational norms expected of woman only to be isolated from other women and never being fully accepted by men. Even as these leaders accept the male norms of the culture, they are rejected because they are female; they may become isolated from both men and women or be pitted against both genders in their struggle to adapt.

Another aspect of organizational culture and the "double bind" impediment women leaders have perceived is the creation of a competitive, independent environment that pits one woman against another (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). One study of corporate women leaders

further defined this “double bind” impediment to advancement as the “never just right” bind in which a woman leader who is consistent with the gender stereotype is considered soft, while those who go against it are considered tough (Robbins-McNeish, 2007).

### **Women’s Leadership and Setting in the Community College**

Few if any studies have directly addressed the issue of women’s perceived impediments and the setting of the community college. Some evidence of a link between gender and community college setting does exist. According to Kulis (1997), “a large array of institutional characteristics has been linked to gender equities in the workplace, including size” and “gender composition of the power structure” (p. 152).

**Carnegie Classification and institutional setting.** Historically, research into higher education institutions called for an institutional typology or classification of types of institutions that would allow researchers to differentiate when reporting research data and information. The earliest attempts to create an institutional typology for four-year colleges began with Carnegie Classification System of Institutions of Higher Education. Originally released in 1973, the classification system was refined and updated in 1976, 1987, and 1994 (Katsinas, 1996). Colleges were divided into four subcategories based on the levels and numbers of degrees offered (doctoral, master’s, baccalaureate, and associate), selectivity in the admissions process, and the volume of federal research dollars received (Katsinas).

While these Carnegie classifications were further divided four-year colleges into eight subcategories, two-year institutions including community colleges were placed into a single, one-size-fits-all grouping (Katsinas, 1996). The need for additional subcategories for two-year institutions became apparent, and Katsinas proposed an addition to the system that would

establish among public community colleges three categories of community colleges: rural, suburban, and urban.

The current Carnegie Classification system provides the recognized classifications of community colleges based on institutional settings and size (Carnegie Foundation, 2010). Most community colleges or Associate's Colleges are classified as two-year, public institutions that are identified by setting as urban-serving, suburban serving, or rural-serving (Carnegie Foundation). Both urban- and suburban-serving institutions have more than 500,000 people according to the 2000 United States Census; urban-serving institutions (hereafter urban community colleges) are physically located within Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), and suburban-serving institutions (hereafter suburban community colleges) are within Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs). Institutions in PMSAs or MSAs with a lower total population, or not located in a PMSA or MSA, are classified as rural-serving (hereafter rural community colleges).

More recent investigations into the characteristics of rural, suburban, and urban community colleges have established some clear differences in the nature of these colleges. Significant differences exist between rural community colleges and their metropolitan counterparts, especially when it comes to mission, location, culture, and constituencies (Eddy & Murray, 2007; Eller, Martinez, Pace, Pavel, & Barnett, 1999; Katsinas, 1996; Valadez & Killacky, 1995). Several studies have noted the differences in the student enrollments in the three settings of community colleges (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007; Perrakis & Hagedorn, 2010).

***Rural community colleges and leadership.*** Community colleges classified as rural in setting and size have some characteristics that are unique to all community colleges (Eddy & Murray, 2007; Hardy & Katsinas, 2007; Leist, 2007; Miller & Kissinger, 2007). In Hardy and

Katsinas' (2007) work in classifying community colleges, the authors identify some of these characteristics of the rural community college: (a) 34% of the nation's community college students attend rural institutions, (b) rural community college enrollment is less diverse than suburban and urban enrollment with 74% white students, (c) rural community colleges serve larger percentages of full-time students with 55% female students, and (d) educational and vocational program offerings and other opportunities for student services and special programs may be reliant on the typically smaller budgets available to rural colleges. Rural community colleges provide open access to their community members, providing an open door approach that enrolls students with unique characteristics, cultures, backgrounds, assumptions, and beliefs (Miller & Kissinger). Rural community colleges often serve as the cultural and community center for their communities, hosting cultural events, providing facilities for community programs and events, and providing access to educational opportunities that would not otherwise be available to rural communities (Hardy & Katsinas; Miller & Kissinger).

While some studies of recruiting, hiring, and retaining faculty members for rural community colleges have been conducted (Murray, 2007), few studies have focused on this process for community college leaders. Murray (2007) identified the challenges for rural faculty members, including social and economic concerns; racial, ethnic, and intellectual diversity issues; budgetary influences; and cultural and educational opportunities in isolated areas. Leist (2007) noted these issues would likely provide challenges for administrative and presidential selection committees and their candidates as well. According to Leist, rural culture is a significant factor in attracting and retaining presidents, and the rural cultural mindsets and values of these communities play a part in the rural community college president's efforts and focus.



Effective rural community college leaders have addressed the unique opportunities and challenges of their rural student base, small and wide-spread communities with continually shifting populations, economic and workforce activity, educational needs, and the growing technological divide (Clark & Davis, 2007). Miller and Kissinger (2007) suggested college leaders look to their community to identify both its immediate and future needs and then respond accordingly and to face developmental challenges across the “broader rural spectrum” (p. 33). Eddy and Murray (2007) suggested rural community college leaders employ creative methods of partnerships and collaboration to solve issues in leadership development programs and advanced degree programs.

***Suburban and urban community colleges and leadership.*** Acknowledging the differences between rural community colleges and their larger, less isolated suburban and urban counterparts, studies indicate that some unique characteristics exist in suburban and urban colleges as well. Hardy and Katsinas (2007) identified some of these characteristics of the suburban and urban community college: (a) 32% of the nation’s community college students attend suburban institutions and 34% attend urban institutions, (b) suburban and urban community college enrollments are more diverse than rural enrollment with 54% suburban white students and 45% urban white students and larger minority populations including African Americans, Asians, and Hispanics (c) suburban and rural community colleges serve full-time students with 54% suburban female students and 56% urban female students, and (d) greater suburban and urban educational, vocational, and avocational and recreational program offerings and other opportunities for student services and special programs, which are reliant on the typically larger budgets available to suburban and urban colleges. While rural community colleges often serve as the cultural and community center for their communities, suburban and

urban colleges offer greater opportunities for recreational and avocational courses and programs of study (Hardy & Katsinas; Miller & Kissinger).

While few studies of recruiting, hiring, and retaining leaders for rural community colleges have been conducted, even fewer studies have focused on this process for community college leaders of suburban and urban institutions. Stout-Stewart's study (2005) of female community college presidents presented data concerning rural, suburban, urban, and inner-city presidents and their leadership practices. This study indicated that there were no significant differences in the presidents of different classifications settings and their leadership patterns and behaviors (Stout-Stewart, 2005).

Perrakis and Hagedorn (2010) added to the research of women community college leaders in their study of Hispanic-serving colleges. Their interviews of administrators of these colleges concerned student issues and recruitment and what it means to work in a Hispanic-serving institution specifically.

**Classification, culture, and gender.** According to the Carnegie Foundation (2010), institutional size does matter in that it is related to "institutional structure, complexity, culture, finances, and other factors." Organizational culture as previously defined holds an institution together by providing shared interpretations of understandings of events through socializing members into common patterns of perception, thoughts and feeling (McGrath & Tobia; Schein, 2004) as well as shared basic assumptions (Claxton, 2007; Schein). Katsinas (1996, 2003), who explained the basis and usefulness of the two-year classification system in community college research, asked whether or not organizational culture and climate vary by community college type. His conclusion was it seemed logical that such variations occur. He also argued that significant differences exist among and between community colleges that operate in various

institutional settings (Katsinas, 1996). More specifically, he acknowledged the differences in cultures of urban and suburban community colleges (Katsinas, 2003).

Katsinas (2003) recognized the gaps in community college literature as he explained the classification system, which includes the settings (rural, suburban, and urban) of community colleges. He also recognized the gaps in the literature concerning the preparation of leaders for the different college settings (Katsinas, 1996). A gap exists in the literature concerning gender and leadership within the classification settings and more specifically the study of the perceived impediments to women leaders' advancement within the classification settings.

**Classification, structure, and gender.** As previously noted and according to the Carnegie Foundation (2010), institutional size does matter in that it is related to institutional structure. Few, if any, studies inquire about the variables of classification settings, organizational structure, and the perceived impediments to the advancement of women. In 2002, Opp and Gosetti reported findings concerning equity for women administrators in two-year colleges and the variable of urbanicity, but the findings were not inclusive of all three settings of rural, urban, and suburban colleges. Opp and Gosetti (2002) did report findings that were related to organizational climate and the barriers to achievement of women administrators, but these findings align more with the study of organizational culture and again were not specific to settings other than urban.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, a review of the literature revealed the continuing underrepresentation of women in the leadership of community colleges. This complex organizational shortage is complicated by the more timely issue of the impending retirement of senior level administration in many community colleges across the nation. The literature on underrepresentation and

leadership turnover leads to a discussion of possible causes or variables, including the obstacles to women's advancement into leadership positions. These perceived impediments have historically been self-reported in several types of literature based on qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies.

A synthesis of the literature written about women leaders' perceived impediments to advancement informs the grouping of impediments into three types: personal/internal, organizational structure, and organizational culture. These types of impediments are based on early theoretical work and the ensuing studies of women leaders, their career pathways and advancement, and the evolving impediments they perceive in their advancement. A relationship between these perceived impediments and community colleges of specific classifications (rural, suburban, urban) has not been specifically explored but may lend some additional insight into perceptions of impediments to advancement, especially those of an organizational structure or organizational culture origin.

## **Conclusion**

The literature review for the current study of perceptions of women leaders in community colleges to the impediments to advancement indicate the continuing need for such studies. The continuing underrepresentation of women leaders, the impending need for leaders to fill positions vacated by retiring leaders, and the general atmosphere of diversity that community colleges should more fully embrace are all factors that suggest further study of perceived barriers that may hinder the advancement of women into these positions. With the findings of the current study, individuals and institutions can address gender issues that impede advancement within the institution. The findings of this study will also provide results which will be of value to

community college practitioners and leaders as well as selection committees who recommend candidates for hire and boards who hire presidents and senior level leaders.

Chapter Three will present the methodology for the current study. Research design, participants, instrument design, instrument validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis, and limitations will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to examine the perceptions of women community college leaders regarding barriers to career advancement in a variety of institutional classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban). The investigation of their perceptions of impediments led to a discussion that further explained factors in the continued underrepresentation of women in senior level positions. With the anticipated retirement of senior leaders in community college systems, this persistent underrepresentation and gender gap suggest further investigation of those barriers that help explain why women leaders are stymied, passed over, or treated inequitably in positions (Clark et al., 1999; Wolverton et al., 2009).

This study of the perceptions of women leaders in community colleges to impediments to advancement incorporated a researcher-developed survey instrument. The development of Likert-type survey questions was based on the literature review. The survey instrument design provided the data to answer the four research questions for the study, including the women leaders' perception of impediments and the impact of the women leaders' institutional classification settings on the perception of these impediments. The survey instrument design also provided demographic data and classification factors that served as additional variables for the study. Additional data including the leaders' career pathways, personal characteristics, current senior level positions, and educational background indicated demographic characteristics of current senior level administrators in the sampling of the present study.

This chapter presents the methodology for the study: the research design, the participants, the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. The research design included an explanation of the fit of the non-experimental quantitative design for the study of impediments to women's advancement in senior level leadership positions in community

colleges. The chapter describes the process for developing the online survey instrument, establishing the validity and reliability of the instrument, conducting a panel-of-experts evaluation and pilot study, and collecting and analyzing the data. The chapter concludes with the limitations for the research design.

### **Research Design**

This proposed study utilized a cross-sectional design. The cross-sectional design was appropriate for this type of study, which examined perceptions of a problem or issue by taking a cross-section of the population in a one-shot study (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010; Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Kumar, 2005). Additionally, a cross-sectional study was well suited to examine current attitudes, beliefs, opinions, or practices (Creswell, 2008). The identified issue in this study was perceptions of impediments to advancement in community colleges. A static, one-shot, cross-sectional study provided an overall picture of the leaders' perceptions at the time of study (Kumar, 2005).

The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to examine the perceptions of women community college leaders regarding barriers to career advancement in a variety of institutional classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban). Three gender-based models of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture) were used to guide the study and to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions. The participants in the study were senior level women leaders identified at community colleges from the eleven states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) that comprise the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region of the United States. A survey instrument was designed to examine women leaders' perceptions of the impediments to advancement in community

colleges. Participants also provided demographic and professional data, including information about their leadership pathway, their leadership positions, and the classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) of their current institutions.

Variables of the study include the independently surveyed perceptions of impediments and the three composite subscales of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture). The main independent variable of the study was the organizational classification setting (rural, suburban, urban).

### **Research Questions**

This study focused on the following research questions:

1. What are women leaders' perceptions of personal/internal impediments to advancement in community colleges?
2. What are women leaders' perceptions of organizational structure impediments to advancement in community colleges?
3. What are women leaders' perceptions of organizational culture impediments to advancement in community colleges?
4. Does the community college setting (rural, suburban, and urban) of an organization impact the women leaders' perceptions of impediments to leadership advancement?

### **Participants**

The participants in this study included a nonrandom, purposive sample of the population of female senior level community college leaders of various classification settings (rural, suburban, urban). A nonrandom sample provided the best sampling method for this study since it was not practical to contact all members of the given population (Briggs & Coleman, 2007), which included all women senior level administrators in all state community college systems.



Purposive sampling allows the researcher to use her experience to select cases which are representative or typical of the larger population (Ary et al., 2010; Briggs & Coleman).

Participants in this purposive sample were employed at public community colleges in eleven states included in the accrediting region of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). These states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia) included community colleges that were representative of classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban) according to the assignments of the current Carnegie Classification system (Carnegie Foundation, 2010). Women in senior level positions were identified through a review of community college systems, institutional web sites, and personnel directories when available. Senior level positions included presidents, provosts, vice-presidents, associate or assistant vice-presidents, deans, and associate or assistant deans.

Table 3

*Participant Invitation, Returns, and Response Rate*

Survey Invitation	Number of Invitations	Bounced Invitations	Responses	Response Rate
Survey invitation 1	1764	38	173	10.0%
Survey invitation 2	1726	13	102	15.9%
Survey invitation 3	1726	13	92	21.4%
Totals ( $N=1713$ )	1713		367	21.4%

## **Instrument Design**

Although there are existing instruments that examine some perceptions of women leaders to impediments in advancement in community colleges (Leatherwood & Williams, 2008; VanDerLinden, 2004; Wheeler, 1997), these instruments were not created or conducted with the intent of examining the particular variables of this study. There are no existing studies with instruments that measure the response of women leaders as a scale for impediments or as subscales for impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture). Additionally, there are no existing instruments that examine the classification settings of organizations as a variable in the measure or prediction of impediments to advancement.

The survey instrument designed for the current study utilized 24 Likert-type items. The items on the scale reflect factors identified in the literature and from previous instruments that measured the perceptions of senior level community college administrators regarding impediments to advancement. According to Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010), through the study of related literature, researchers learn which research questions, methodologies, theories, and concepts have proven useful or less promising. For the present study of perceptions of impediments to advancement, the related literature yielded a list of impediments that were useful in writing the items for this survey instrument (Appendix A). The wording and phrasing of the listed impediments for this survey instrument (Appendix B) was based on the compiled listing of impediments.

Participants responded to the 24-item list perceptions of impediments using a modified barriers scale of response anchors with a five-point scale (not an impediment, a slight impediment, a moderate impediment, a significant impediment, an extreme impediment). Variations of the barriers scale response anchors have successfully been used in other studies

(Edwards, 2002; Garza-Roderick, 2000) that provided data for perceptions of impediments to advancement.

According to Creswell (2008), common problems to avoid in constructing survey items are: (a) unclear, vague, or imprecise wording, (b) multiple-question items, (c) wordy items, (d) jargon or unfamiliar words or overly technical language, (e) overlapping responses, (f) unbalanced response options, and (g) mismatching questions and answers. Sue and Ritter (2007) stressed the need for consistency in wording and phrases in questions, the need for simple instructions for each question or section of questions, and short, simple questions in the form of complete sentences.

An opening section of the survey instrument included a series of demographic, descriptive multiple choice questions that allowed the participants to identify aspects of their leadership position, their institution, and personal characteristics, including: (a) current position/title, (b) length of time in current position/title, (c) highest educational degree level attained, (d) age, (e) race/ethnicity, (f) number of full-time enrolled students (FTE) at current college, and (g) Carnegie classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) of current college. These questions represented the independent variables (IV) of the study. Creswell (2008) suggested the survey instrument begin with the demographic or personal questions that the participants can easily answer, thus encouraging their early commitment to completing the survey.

**Instrument content validity.** One method of establishing the content validity of the survey instrument for the current study was to establish a panel of content or subject-matter experts. Content experts have in-depth knowledge in specific areas, and they can offer advice about the topic of the survey and provide a context for the research (Sue & Ritter, 2007). The

panel of experts for this study included five experts with knowledge of the community college system and experience in the subject of women's leadership and advancement to leadership:

1. Dr. Laura Leatherwood, Vice President of Student and Workforce Development, Haywood Community College, Clyde, NC. She has published articles and presented at conferences on issues related to women leaders and the community college.
2. Dr. Diann Back, Director, Center for Leadership and Staff Development, Central Piedmont Community College, Charlotte, NC. Dr. Back's 2007 dissertation was entitled, "Perceptions and Reactions to Career Barriers among Women in Executive Leadership Roles at Community Colleges."
3. Dr. Jaime Lester, Assistant Professor of Higher Education, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA. Dr. Lester has published articles and presented at conferences on issues related to women faculty and leaders and the community college. She edited the Summer 2008 issue of *New Directions for Community Colleges* entitled "Gendered Perspectives on Community College."
4. Dr. Debbie L. Sydow, President, Richard Bland College, Petersburg, VA. Dr. Sydow has experience in the Virginia Community College System as a faculty member and Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences at Southwest Virginia Community College and as a Vice-President of Academic and Student Affairs and Acting President at Mountain Empire Community College. She was previously the president of Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, New York, and is currently the president of Richard Bland College in Petersburg, Virginia.
5. Dr. Barbara Fuller, Vice President of Academic and Student Services, Southwest Virginia Community College, Richlands, VA. Dr. Fuller has served in various roles at the

community college level, including faculty member and Acting Dean and Dean of the Business Division.

The panel of experts each received an e-mail with the following attachments:

1. Panel of Experts Invitation (Appendix C)
2. Purpose and Research Questions for Content Experts (Appendix D)
3. Evaluation Instrument for Content Experts (Appendix E)

The invitation acknowledged the panel members' willingness to participate as a content expert for the study and in doing so helping to assess the content validity of the proposed survey instrument. In the invitation, the panel received a brief overview of the study and subject-matter of the proposed survey instrument, including the attached study purpose and research questions, as well as instructions for participation, including instructions for accessing the Survey Assessment for the survey instrument. The experts were asked to return their responses within a week via email.

The panel of experts first assessed each item of the instrument using the following scale:

- 1= This item should be included in the survey.
- 2= This item should be included with clarification.
- 3= This item should be deleted.

Second, the panel of experts assessed each item of the instrument for clarity, answering the question: Is the item clearly written? Based on the returns of the panel members, the survey instrument will be revised and additional items may be added.

**Instrument reliability.** After the revisions of the panel of experts were completed, the survey instrument questions underwent pilot testing. Pilot testing is a procedure in which changes are made to the instrument based on feedback from a small number of individuals who

complete and evaluate the instrument (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Creswell, 2008). For the current study, ten female community college leaders from a state outside of the eleven targeted states in the SACS region were asked participate in the pilot test; five of the ten women leaders who were asked to participate completed both administrations of the pilot test. Since the pilot test participants provided feedback on the survey instrument, they were excluded from the final sample for the study (Creswell). The participants received a Pilot Group Invitation (Appendix F) via email; the invitation presented an overview of the purpose of the study, the research questions, and instructions for serving on the pilot group. In a follow-up email, the pilot group received the Pilot Group Survey Instrument (Appendix G), along with an internal link to the Pilot Group Evaluation Instrument (Appendix H).

According to Briggs and Coleman (2007), “careful and appropriate” piloting of research instruments “weed out inappropriate, poorly worded or irrelevant items, highlight design problems and provide feedback” on the ease of completing the survey (p. 130). Additionally, the pilot study permits a preliminary testing of the research questions, which may give some indication of the tenability and refinement of the research questions (Ary et al., 2010). The women leaders involved in the pilot test for the current study provided comments for the following questions:

1. Are the instructions provided on the survey instrument clear and unambiguous?
2. Was any item or question on the survey instrument confusing?
3. Was there any item on the survey instrument which could be considered offensive to anyone?
4. How long did it take you to complete the survey instrument?

After the return of the initial pilot test comments, the pilot group participated in a second administration of the survey instrument (see Appendix I). A second administration helped to establish reliability of measurement or the consistency of the instrument in measuring whatever it measures (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). According to Ary, Jacobs, and Sorensen (2010), one indication of the reliability of a measure is its reliability coefficient. The computation of a coefficient of correlation or reliability coefficient between two administrations of the same test determines the extent to which the participants maintain the same relative position (Ary et al.). A reliability coefficient of 1.00 indicates that each participant's relative position on the two administrations remained exactly the same and the test would be reliable (Ary et al.; Wiersma & Jurs). The researcher modified the instrument based on the concerns outlined in the pilot group test and retest of the instrument (Creswell, 2008).

### **Data Collection**

The survey instrument "Perceptions of Senior Level Women Administrators in Community Colleges," that was validated and assessed for reliability, was administered to the identified sample of women leaders in community colleges in eleven states. The survey link, along with instructions for completion of the survey, was embedded in the invitation email "Invitation to Participate in the Survey" (Appendix J) to the sample group.

Data collection for survey responses continued for two weeks following the initial email. At the end of the second week, the researcher sent a second email, "Follow-up Invitation to Participate in the Survey" (Appendix K), to thank those who have already participated and to prompt non-respondents to do so, using the embedded link in the email. After a two-week period, the link to the survey was disabled. The researcher exported survey data from Survey Monkey as

Excel spreadsheets to SPSS 18.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for statistical analysis.

Response return rate is always a concern in survey research because a high response rate creates a stronger claim in generalizing results from the sample to the population (Creswell, 2008). This return rate, or the percentage of surveys the participants return, varies from study to study and may be influenced by proper notification, adequate follow-up procedures, respondent interest in the study, the quality and brevity of the instrument, and use of incentives (Creswell; Sue & Ritter, 2007).

Specifically, online survey response rates may present some inherent issues. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity are always concerns of participants. The online survey that uses an embedded survey link offers some additional assurances of anonymity (Sue & Ritter, 2007). To help establish trust, the researcher described the steps taken to ensure the confidentiality and security of participants' responses (Dillman et al., 2009). To help ensure the confidentiality of the data collected, the researcher initially stored the data on a secure server. Once the data collection was complete, the data were stored as a spreadsheet on the server and was converted into a data file compatible with statistical software. While responses to an online survey are not technically anonymous because the participants' email addresses are known, in the present study the researcher separated any identifying information about survey participants from their responses. The raw data will be destroyed after a minimal three-year period, and research analyses and statistics will be considered for destruction after a three-year period.

### **Data Analysis**

Four research questions were posed for this study. The first three questions examined the perceptions of women community college leaders to three types of impediments to advancement



(personal, organizational structure, organizational culture). The participants responded to a series of identified impediments using a Likert-type scale. In order to answer the proposed research questions, the overall responses were produced a total scale that was analyzed by independent demographic variables. The identified impediments were also divided into three subscales by item grouping.

The variables (survey items) for each subscale were grouped and transformed by computing variables into three new variables, the subscales. To answer the first three research questions, descriptive analysis was utilized to analyze data for the leaders' responses to impediments and the subscales of impediments. Descriptive statistics indicated general tendencies in the data (mean scores), the spread of scores (variance, standard deviation, and range), and a comparison of how one score relates to all others (Creswell, 2008).

The fourth research question provided data for the impact of the independent variable of classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) on the perceptions of women leaders to impediments to advancement. Using inferential statistics, a series of tests for analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to compare dependent, continuous variables with these independent, categorical variables (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Analysis of variance is a statistical procedure which can test the null hypothesis that two or more population means are equal (Wiersma & Jurs). In a one-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA), each individual participant or case must have two variables: a factor and a dependent variable (Green & Salkind, 2005). The factor divides participants into two or more groups or levels while the dependent variable differentiates these individuals on some quantitative dimension (Freed, Ryan, and Hess, 1991; Green & Salkind). To help answer research question four for the current study, the factor for the ANOVA

included the three groups of classification settings while the dependent variable was the quantitative dimension of the data for the perceptions to impediments of women leaders.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Limitations or parameters to any study are the potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher (Creswell, 2008). These enumerated limitations may relate to the study's variables, participants, sampling, measurement errors, and other factors related to data collection and analysis, according to Creswell. A limitation of the present study included the construction of the instrument. Even though the researcher constructed items on the survey instrument from a panel-of-experts evaluation, a pilot test of the instrument items, and the literature on barriers or impediments, the wording of the items may have presented unforeseen problems with participant responses. Participants may define or describe their personal or organizational impediments in other personal terms or language, which may prevent them from recognizing certain items as impediments or in reporting items accurately (Sue & Ritter, 2007). The Likert-type scale may also present problems for the participants. Additionally, the use of an online survey format presents some inherent issues, including email contact challenges, nonresponse rates, trust and anonymity assurance, and non-completion rates (Dillman et al., 2009).

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, an overview of the methodology for the study was presented. The participants for the study were identified as current women leaders in community colleges in the eleven states grouped in the southeastern accreditation region. A survey instrument as designed to include questions about the personal and professional characteristics of the participants and the Likert-type survey questions that prompted the participants to respond to 24 identified

impediments to advancement in community colleges. Validity and reliability of the researcher-created instrument was tested by a five-member panel of experts and a pilot study, which resulted in retaining all 24 items with the rewording and clarification of some items of the instrument. After three invitations to participate and administrations of the survey, data were collected, missing cases were treated, and data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tests for each of the four research questions of the study.

Chapter Four will report the findings of the study. Personal and professional characteristics of the participants will be reported along with the women leaders' perceptions of the impediments to their advancement in community colleges. Finding will be organized by the four research questions of the study.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of impediments of women community college leaders in a variety of institutional settings (rural, suburban, urban) in eleven southeastern states that comprise the accrediting region of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Three gender-based models of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture) were used to guide the study and explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions. Results of the study included the participants' professional and personal demographics, the findings for the perceptions of women leaders in community colleges to impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture) to advancement, and the impact of classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) on the perceptions to impediments to advancement.

After a review of the literature concerning the advancement of women leaders in community colleges, the perceived barriers or impediments to their advancement was recorded (see Appendix A). Each impediment was placed within a model or thematic group, including personal (internal) barriers, organizational structure (external) barriers, and organizational culture (external) barriers. A survey instrument was created that reported women leaders' perceptions of 24 identified statements of impediments to advancement. The Likert-type scale of 24 impediments formed three model subscales (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture) for further analysis. To address a gap in the literature, a secondary analysis focused on the impact of the classification setting (rural, urban, suburban) of the participants' institution on their perceptions of impediments to advancement. Additional data were collected for a demographic snapshot of the participants' professional and personal characteristics.

The survey instrument was tested for validity and reliability. Both a panel of experts and a pilot study were conducted to test the survey instrument. All 24 items on the survey instrument were retained, and the phrasing for some of the 24 items was revised at the suggestion of the panel and pilot study participants. The survey instrument was distributed to women leaders identified in community colleges in eleven states of the SACS accrediting region.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize the frequencies of the demographic questions and the overall impediments scale for the 24 individual items and the three subscales, each with eight items and a total subscale descriptive analysis. T-tests were used to determine means and standard deviations for the items and subscales. Inferential statistics were applied with one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) used to indicate relationships between dependent and independent variables. Descriptive and inferential analysis of data were conducted with the statistical software package SPSS 18.

### **Data Collection**

The participants of the study were identified women leaders at community colleges in the eleven SACS accredited states. The researcher gathered the participants' names, positions, and professional email contact information from institutional webpages. The self-reported professional demographics of the participants were (a) current leadership position held, (b) number of years in current position, (c) highest educational level attained, (d) approximate number of unduplicated headcount at current institution, and (e) classification setting (rural, urban, suburban) of current institution.

**Professional and institutional demographics.** Table 4 presents the frequencies of the participants' current leadership positions in community colleges. Choices for answers to this included leadership positions of presidents, provosts, vice presidents (assistants and associates),

chancellors and vice chancellors, chief academic/financial officers, deans (assistants and associates), and others. The highest number of participants was deans ( $n = 161$ ) with vice presidents ( $n = 76$ ) as second highest number of total participants ( $N = 346$ ). Table 5 presents the frequencies of the number of years women leaders had held their current leadership positions. The most common number of years was 1-3 years ( $n = 115$ ) and 4-6 years ( $n = 100$ ).

Table 4

*Respondents' Current Leadership Positions*

	Frequency	Percent
President	10	2.9
Chancellor	1	0.3
Provost	7	2.0
Vice-president	76	22.0
Vice Chancellor	2	0.6
Vice-president, Assistant or Associate	41	11.8
Chief Academic Officer, Chief Financial Officer, etc.	8	2.3
Dean	161	46.5
Dean, Assistant of Associate	27	7.8
Other	13	3.8

$N = 346$ .

Table 5

*Respondents' Number of Years in Current Leadership Position*

	Frequency	Percent
1 – 3 years	115	33.2
4 – 6 years	100	28.9
7 – 9 years	61	17.6
10 – 12 years	35	10.1
12+ years	34	9.8
Total	345	99.7
Missing	1	0.3
Total	346	100.0

$N = 346$ .

The participants' reported their "highest educational level attained" with the highest frequency as doctoral degrees ( $n = 185$ ) followed by Master's degrees ( $n = 126$ ).

For the demographic questions related to the participants' current community colleges, the women leaders reported a wide range of numbers for their institutions' "approximate number of unduplicated headcount." The lowest number of unduplicated headcount was 400 while the highest was 93,000. According to the Carnegie Foundation (2010) definitions of institution size, all sizes of community colleges were reported from "very small two-year" colleges with less than 500 full-time equivalents (FTEs) to "very large two-year" colleges with greater than 10,000 FTEs.

A variable of Research Question Four was the Carnegie Foundation (2010) classification setting (rural, urban, suburban) of the participants' institutions. Table 6 presents the frequencies of the three classification settings. The highest number of participants held leadership positions at rural colleges ( $n = 172$ ), representing almost half of the total respondents ( $N = 346$ ) with leaders at suburban colleges ( $n = 92$ ) and urban colleges ( $n = 82$ ) together making up the other half.

Table 6

*Carnegie Foundation Classification Settings of Current Institutions*

	Frequency	Percent
Rural classification	172	49.7
Suburban classification	92	26.6
Urban classification	82	23.7

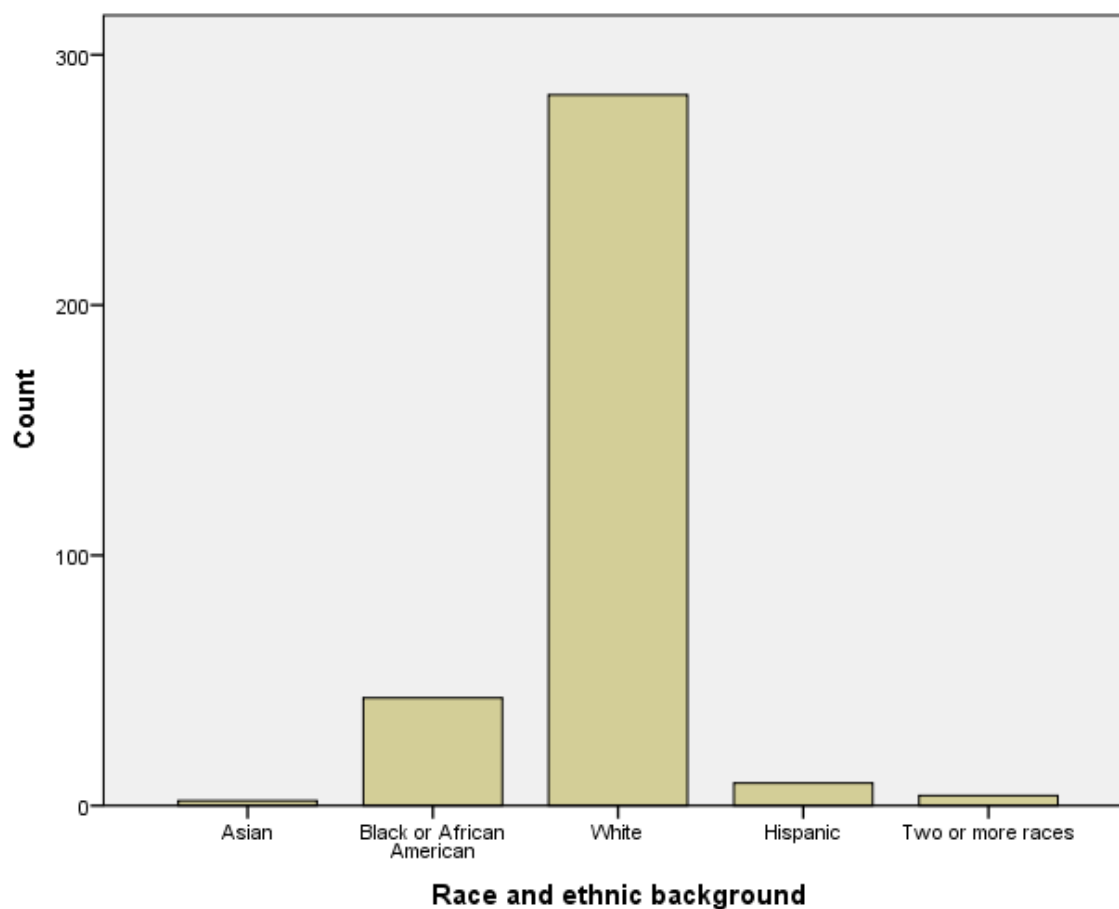
$N = 346$ .

**Personal demographics.** Participants provided demographic information in the following areas: (a) age, (b) race and ethnic background, and (c) marital status. The age range for the women participants was 34 to 75 years with the highest frequencies at ages 55, 56, and 60 ( $n = 18$ ) and ages 62 and 63 ( $n = 17$ ).

For the personal demographic "race and ethnic background," Figure 1 summarizes the number of cases for the five choices of race and ethnicity. The highest percentage and number of cases of participants was "White" with 82.1% ( $n = 284$ ). Remaining percentages and numbers of

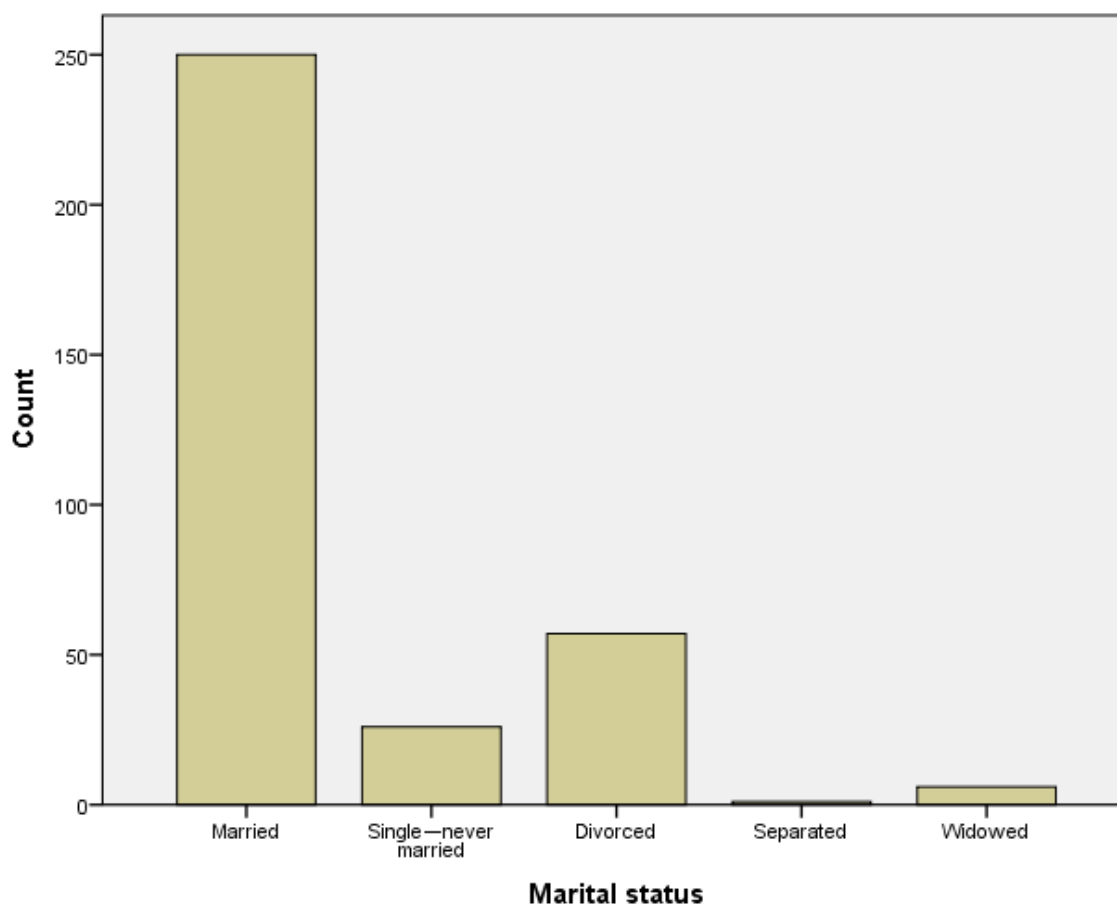


cases were “Black or African American” with 12.4% ( $n = 43$ ), “Hispanic” with 2.6% ( $n = 9$ ), “Asian” with 0.6% ( $n = 2$ ), and “Two or more races” with 1.2% ( $n = 4$ ).



*Figure 1.* Respondents’ race or ethnic background.

The summary of the findings for the frequencies of “marital status” personal demographic is shown in Figure 2. The highest frequency percentage and number count for “married” status was 72.3% ( $n = 250$ ) with second highest frequency for “divorced” status at 16.5% ( $n = 57$ ) and third highest at “single—never married” at 7.5% ( $n = 26$ ).



*Figure 2.* Respondents' marital status.

### **Findings Related to the Research Questions**

As outlined in the Literature Review, women leaders self-report their perceptions of the barriers to advancement in community colleges. These impediments help explain the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in community colleges. Within gender-based models of underrepresentation, barriers fall into thematic groups, including personal (internal) barriers, organizational structure (external) barriers, and organizational culture (external) barriers (Grove & Montgomery, 1999).

Twenty-four impediments were identified from the literature that informed the construction of a 24-item survey instrument using a Likert-type scale (see Appendix A). These items were grouped according to the gender-based models, creating three thematic 8-item subscales of personal, organizational structure, and organizational culture impediments. Participants responded to each of the 24 items using a modified barriers scale of response anchors with a five-point scale of “not an impediment,” “a slight impediment,” “a moderate impediment,” “a significant impediment,” and “an extreme impediment” (Edwards, 2002; Garza-Roderick, 2000). The items of the subscales were not grouped or identified in the 24-item survey instrument but were intermingled to avoid any implication of importance or pre-scaling among the items.

**Personal/internal impediments.** Eight of the 24 items were grouped in the subscale of personal impediments. Personal impediments that women leaders may perceive as internal barriers to advancement involve personal characteristics, marriage and family, and educational and career levels. The eight impediments of the subscale in shortened form were (a) unwillingness to move, (b) balance professional/personal life, (c) lack of career strategy, (d) tokenism, (e) lack of spousal/family support, (f) race/ethnicity, (g) family distraction, and (h) isolation, loneliness.

The mean score and standard deviation were calculated for each of the eight items of the personal/internal impediments subscale (see Table 7). The eight personal items were grouped as a subscale, and the total personal subscale was analyzed to determine the mean and standard deviation for descriptive and comparative purposes.

Table 7

*Responses to Eight Individual Items in Personal Impediments Subscale*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Unwillingness to move	2.46	1.37
Balance professional/personal life	2.49	1.17
Career strategy	1.89	1.14
Tokenism	1.64	0.99
Spousal/family support	1.45	0.85
Race/ethnicity	1.71	1.15
Family distraction	1.81	0.93
Isolation, loneliness	1.99	1.09
Total Personal Impediments 8-Item Subscale	1.94	0.63

*N* = 346.

Among the eight personal/internal impediments, the women leaders scored the impediment of “balance professional/personal life” the highest on the five-point scale. The mean and standard deviation for “balance professional/personal life” ( $M = 2.49$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ) placed this impediment midway between the “slight impediment” score ( $M = 2.00$ ) and the “moderate impediment” score ( $M = 3.00$ ). The second highest mean score for the personal/internal impediments was “unwillingness to move” ( $M = 2.46$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) while a third highest mean score was “isolation, loneliness at the top” ( $M = 1.99$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ), which was closer to the “slight

impediment” score ( $M = 2.00$ ). The personal/internal impediment with the lowest mean score on the one to five point scale was “lack of spousal/family support” ( $M = 1.45$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ).

The overall subscale ranking for the eight personal/internal impediments ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ) is very close to the “a slight impediment” score ( $M = 2.00$ ). The three subscales findings will be compared in a later section of this chapter.

**Organizational structure/external impediments.** Eight of the 24 items were grouped in the subscale of organizational structure impediments. Organizational structure or external impediments that form barriers to women leaders’ advancement may involve an institution’s structure characteristics and practices such as hiring and promotion, salary gaps, mentorships, inequity in numbers, glass ceilings or dry pipelines, and role strains or double standards. The eight impediments of the subscale in shortened form were: (a) lack of mentors or role models, (b) existence of “glass ceiling” effect, (c) hiring/promotion practices/salary gap, (d) “dry” or “failed” pipeline, (e) marginalization, (f) gender inequity in numbers, (g) role “strain” or “entrapment,” and (h) double standards.

The mean score and standard deviation were calculated for each of the eight items of the organizational structure/external impediments subscale (see Table 8). The eight organizational structure items were grouped as a subscale, and the total organizational structure subscale was analyzed to determine the mean and standard deviation for descriptive and comparative purposes.

Table 8

*Responses to Eight Individual Items in Organizational Structure Impediments Subscale*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Lack of mentors or role models	2.13	1.21
Existence of “glass ceiling” effect	2.36	1.24
Hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap	2.62	1.32
“Dry pipeline” or “failed pipeline”	1.55	0.88
Marginalization of women as “outsiders”	1.81	1.03
Gender inequity in numbers	1.81	1.09
“Role strain” or “role entrapment”	1.95	1.10
“Double standards”	2.28	1.31
Total Organizational Structural Impediments 8-Item Subscale	2.07	0.88

*N* = 346.

Among the eight organizational structure/external impediments, the women leaders ranked the “hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap” with the highest mean score on the ranking scale of 1 “not an impediment” to 5 “an extreme impediment.” The mean and standard deviation “hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap” ( $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) placed the score of this impediment between “a slight impediment” ( $M = 2.00$ ) score and “a moderate impediment” score ( $M = 3.00$ ). The second highest scoring organizational structure

impediment was “the existence of the ‘glass ceiling’ effect” ( $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ), and the third highest was “double standards” ( $M = 2.28$ ,  $SD = 1.31$ ).

The overall subscale ranking for the eight organizational structure/external impediments ( $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) is slightly above the mean of the “a slight impediment” score ( $M = 2.00$ ). The three subscales findings will be compared in a later section of this chapter.

**Organizational culture/external impediments.** Eight of the 24 items were grouped in the subscale of organizational culture impediments. Organizational culture or external impediments may involve an institution’s cultural barriers for women leaders, including gender gaps, sex-role stereotypes, and cultural disenfranchisement. The eight impediments of the subscale in shortened form were (a) existence of gender roles or gender gap, (b) ”double bind” or isolation due to relational norms, (c) “comfort zone” or ability to fit, (d) knowledge or understanding of culture of institution, (e) sex-role stereotypes or expectations, (f) “good ol’ boys” network and culture of power, (g) cultural disenfranchisement, and (h) judged against “male norms.”

The mean score and standard deviation were calculated for each of the eight items of the organizational culture/external impediments subscale (see Table 9). The eight organizational culture items were grouped as a subscale, and the total organizational culture subscale was analyzed to determine the mean and standard deviation for descriptive and comparative purposes.

Table 9

*Responses to Eight Individual Items in Organizational Culture Impediments Subscale*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Existence of gender roles or gender gap	2.32	1.19
“Double bind” or isolation due to relational norms	2.01	1.14
“Comfort zone” or ability to fit	2.16	1.11
Knowledge or understanding of culture of the institution	1.56	0.85
Sex-role stereotypes or expectations	2.04	1.20
“Good ol’ boys” network and culture of power	2.85	1.37
Cultural disenfranchisement, underinvolvement, or undervaluement	1.93	1.15
Judged against “male norms”	2.24	1.24
Total Organizational Cultural Impediments Subscale	2.14	0.92

*N* = 346.

Among the eight organizational culture/external impediments, the women leaders scored the impediment of “‘good ol’ boy’ network and culture of power” as the highest on the five-point impediments scale. The mean and standard deviation for this “‘good ol’ boy’ network and culture of power” impediment ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) was the highest scored item in the organizational culture subscale. This impediment was also the overall highest scored item in all 24 items of the impediments scale. Other higher scored items within the organizational culture



subscale were the “existence of gender roles or gender gap” impediment ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) and the “judged against ‘male norms’” impediment ( $M = 2.24$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ).

The overall subscale ranking for the eight organizational culture/external impediments ( $M = 2.14$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) is slightly above mean of the “a slight impediment” rank ( $M = 2.00$ ). The three subscales findings will be compared in a later section of this chapter.

**Overall 24-item comparison of means and standard deviations.** The overall means and standard deviations of the 24 individual items of the full scale reveal the highest ranking perceptions of impediments among the three subscales. Table 10 presents six items with the highest mean scores of the 24 items. The item “‘good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” was the overall highest scored impediment ( $M = 2.85$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ) of all 24 ranked impediments. Participants ranked this organizational culture subscale item as the most commonly perceived impediment to their advancement within their community colleges, indicating their perceptions of an existence of a “good ol’ boys” network and a culture of power within institutions that impacts their advancement. The second most commonly perceived impediment was the organizational structure item of “hiring or promotion practices/ policies, salary gap” ( $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ). Participants perceived their community colleges’ hiring and promotion policies and practices, along with a perceived salary gap, were impediments to their advancement. The overall third highest rated impediment from the personal/internal subscale was “balance professional/personal life” ( $M = 2.49$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ). Participants indicated their own personal or internal impediment of balancing their professional and personal life provided a barrier to their advancement within community colleges. In comparing the overall means and standard deviations for the 24 items of the scale, the three most highly ranked items were from all three subscales from organizational culture to organizational structure to personal impediments.

Table 10

*Six Highest Mean Scores of All 24 Items*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
“Good ol’ boys” network and culture of power	2.85	1.37
Hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap	2.62	1.32
Balance professional/personal life	2.49	1.17
Unwillingness to move; geographic immobility	2.46	1.37
Existence of “glass ceiling” effect	2.36	1.24
Existence of gender roles or gender gap	2.32	1.19

### **Overall three subscales and total scale comparison of means and standard**

**deviations.** Table 11 presents the overall means and standard deviations of the three subscales.

The organizational culture subscale had the highest ranking composite mean score ( $M = 2.14$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ), indicating the perceptions of the women leaders to their advancement in community colleges to be related to the organizational culture of the institutions where they hold positions.

The second highest ranking overall subscale was perceptions to organizational structure impediments ( $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ), followed by the third and least highest ranking subscale of personal impediments ( $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ).

The total composite mean score for all three subscales produced an overall scale composite mean score ( $M = 2.05$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ). Within the Likert-type scale of scoring impediments on a one to five point scale from “not an impediment” to “an extreme impediment,”

the total mean score of the scale indicates that the mean of 2.05 falls near the “a slight impediment” mean ( $M = 2.0$ ).

Table 11

*Responses by Three Subscales of Impediments and Overall Total Composite Scale*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Personal/internal subscale	1.94	0.63
Organizational structure/external subscale	2.07	0.88
Organizational culture/external subscale	2.14	0.92
Total composite scale of three subscales	2.05	0.75

$N = 346$ .

### **Findings by Institutional Classification Settings**

An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted between individual dependent variables, the 24 items (impediments), and the independent variable of the classification settings (rural, suburban, urban) of the participants' institutions. Means and standard deviations on the 24 individual items in classification settings were grouped into three tables according to the three subscales (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture).

Table 12 indicates the eight items of the personal impediments subscale in relation to the three classification settings. The two highest scored personal impediments across all three classification settings were first “balance professional/ personal life” (rural,  $M = 2.41$ ; suburban,  $M = 2.48$ ; urban,  $M = 2.67$ ) and second “unwillingness to move; geographic immobility” (rural,

$M = 2.44$ ; suburban,  $M = 2.47$ ; urban,  $M = 2.42$ ). The means for the total personal subscale indicates that women leaders of urban institutions ( $M = 2.02$ ) scored overall personal impediments higher than did either leaders of rural institutions ( $M = 1.91$ ) or leaders of suburban institutions ( $M = 1.90$ ).

Table 12

*Women Leaders' Perceptions of Personal Impediments to Advancement by Classification Settings of Institutions*

Personal Impediments Subscale	Rural ( $n = 172$ )		Suburban ( $n = 92$ )		Urban ( $n = 82$ )	
	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$	$M$	$SD$
Unwillingness to move; geographic immobility	2.44	1.40	2.47	1.35	2.46	1.36
Balance professional/personal life	2.41	1.23	2.48	1.14	2.67	1.08
Lack of career strategy	1.87	1.12	1.76	1.08	2.08	1.26
Tokenism	1.70	1.07	1.64	0.99	1.51	0.81
Lack of spousal/family support	1.42	0.82	1.37	0.68	1.62	1.03
Race/ethnicity	1.72	1.18	1.61	1.09	1.79	1.15
Family distraction	1.78	0.94	1.86	0.93	1.83	0.91
Isolation, loneliness	1.98	1.06	1.93	1.06	2.06	1.20
Total Personal Impediments Subscale	1.91	0.65	1.90	0.58	2.02	0.66
Total all subscales	2.07	0.75	1.97	0.73	2.07	0.77

Table 13 presents the eight items of the organizational structure impediments subscale factored by the three classifications settings. The item “hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap” was the highest scored structure impediment across the three classification settings. The women leaders at urban institutions scored hiring, promotion, and salary practices ( $M = 2.79$ ) as the highest perceived impediment related to their organizations’ structure while leaders at rural institutions ( $M = 2.62$ ) and suburban institutions ( $M = 2.48$ ) also ranked them as moderate impediments. The second highest mean score for an organizational structure impediment factored against classification settings was “the existence of the ‘glass ceiling’ effect” with women leaders at rural institutions perceiving the “glass ceiling” as a higher scoring impediment ( $M = 2.45$ ) than did women leaders at urban institutions ( $M = 2.38$ ) or suburban institutions ( $M = 2.18$ ). The overall organizational structure impediments subscale factored against classification settings indicates women leaders at urban institutions scored the organizational structure subscale the highest ( $M = 2.07$ ), followed by the scoring of leaders at rural community colleges ( $M = 2.13$ ) and suburban community colleges ( $M = 1.96$ ).

Table 13

*Women Leaders' Perceptions of Organizational Structure Impediments to Advancement by Classification Settings of Institutions*

	Rural ( <i>n</i> = 172)		Suburban ( <i>n</i> = 92)		Urban ( <i>n</i> = 82)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<b>Organizational Structural Impediments Subscale</b>						
Lack of mentors or role models	2.17	1.22	2.08	1.21	2.11	1.19
Existence of “glass ceiling” effect	2.45	1.25	2.18	1.22	2.38	1.24
Hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap	2.62	1.30	2.48	1.34	2.79	1.35
“Dry pipeline” or “failed pipeline”	1.59	0.87	1.47	0.83	1.58	0.95
Marginalization of women as “outsiders”	1.91	1.09	1.71	0.98	1.69	0.96
Gender inequity in numbers	1.91	1.14	1.64	0.90	1.81	1.09
“Role strain” or “role entrapment”	1.93	1.07	1.91	1.12	2.01	1.16
“Double standards”	2.35	1.31	2.18	1.27	2.26	1.38
Total Organizational Structural Impediments Subscale	2.13	0.89	1.96	0.86	2.07	0.88
Total all subscales	2.07	0.75	1.97	0.73	2.07	0.77

Table 14

*Women Leaders' Perceptions of Organizational Culture Impediments to Advancement by Classification Setting of Institutions*

Organizational Cultural Impediments Subscale	Rural ( <i>n</i> = 172)		Suburban ( <i>n</i> = 92)		Urban ( <i>n</i> = 82)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Existence of gender roles or gender gap	2.34	1.18	2.24	1.19	2.35	1.22
“Double bind” or isolation due to relational norms	2.02	1.10	1.88	1.14	2.12	1.22
“Comfort zone” or ability to fit	2.11	1.06	2.09	1.14	2.34	1.17
Knowledge or understanding of culture of the institution	1.59	0.88	1.53	0.79	1.52	0.87
Sex-role stereotypes or expectations	2.06	1.23	2.00	1.12	2.04	1.27
“Good ol’ boys” network and culture of power	2.96	1.35	2.69	1.36	2.79	1.41
Cultural disenfranchisement, underinvolvement, or undervaluement	1.96	1.15	1.85	1.10	1.96	1.23
Judged against male norms	2.33	1.28	2.19	1.21	2.11	1.24
Total Organizational Cultural Impediments Subscale	2.16	0.90	2.07	0.93	2.17	0.94
Total all subscales	2.07	0.75	1.97	0.73	2.07	0.77

Table 14 shows the eight items of the organizational culture impediments subscale factored by the three classifications settings. The item ““good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” was consistently the organizational culture impediment with the highest mean score for all three classification settings. Women leaders’ perception of the impediment of the “good ol’ boys” network at rural institutions had the highest mean score ( $M = 2.96$ ), urban institutions the

second highest ( $M = 2.79$ ), and suburban institutions the third highest ( $M = 2.69$ ). On the impediments scale of one to five points (with one point being “not an impediment” and five points being “an extreme impediment”), the mean of ““good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” factored by rural institutions had the highest mean score ( $M = 2.96$ ) of all 24 items factored by all three classification settings. The overall organizational culture impediments subscale factored against classification settings indicates women leaders at urban institutions ranked the organizational structure subscale the highest ( $M = 2.17$ ), followed by ranking of leaders at rural community colleges ( $M = 2.16$ ) and suburban community colleges ( $M = 2.07$ ).

Table 15 presents the six items with the highest mean scores and standard deviations factored by the three classification settings. Among the top items, there were two personal impediments, two organizational structure impediments, and two organizational culture impediments.



Table 15

*Six Items with Highest Mean Scores by Institutions' Classification Setting*

Item (Subscale)	Rural ( <i>n</i> = 172)		Suburban ( <i>n</i> = 92)		Urban ( <i>n</i> = 82)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
“Good ol’ boys” network and culture of power (Org. Culture)	2.96	1.35	2.69	1.36	2.79	1.41
Hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap (Org. Structure)	2.62	1.30	2.48	1.34	2.79	1.35
Balance professional/personal life (Personal)	2.41	1.23	2.48	1.14	2.67	1.08
Unwillingness to move; geographic immobility (Personal)	2.44	1.40	2.47	1.35	2.46	1.36
Existence of “glass ceiling” effect (Org. Structure)	2.45	1.25	2.18	1.22	2.38	1.24
Existence of gender roles or gender gap (Org. Culture)	2.34	1.18	2.24	1.19	2.35	1.22
Total all items	2.07	0.75	1.97	0.73	2.07	0.77

Comparing the overall mean scores for all the three impediments subscales factored by the three classification settings, the organizational culture subscale presents the highest mean scores for all three classification settings. The total mean score for all three subscales factored by the all three classification settings was the same for rural and urban institutions ( $M = 2.07$ ), followed by suburban institutions ( $M = 1.97$ ).

**One-way ANOVAs--items and subscales significant differences.** An Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the mean score of rural, suburban, and urban women leaders regarding (a) each of the 24 items on the instrument, (b) the three impediment subscales, and (c) the overall instrument. For reporting the results of the ANOVAs on the 24 individual items by the institution setting (rural, urban, suburban), the results were presented by the three subscales (see Tables 16, 17, and 19) and by three total subscales and total subscale (see Table 19). Degrees of freedom (*df*), F-values (*F*), eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ), and p-values (*p*) were reported for each item, subscale, and total composite scale. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of the independent variable institutional setting on the dependent variables of responses to impediments.

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) determined there was no statistically significant difference in the mean score of rural, suburban, and urban women leaders regarding any of the 24 items on the instrument, the three impediment subscales, or the overall instrument. Therefore, no post hoc tests were indicated. Eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ) for each item was of weak effect (.00 - .01) range.

Table 16

*Responses to Eight Items in Personal Impediments Subscale by Institutional Classification Settings*

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Unwillingness to move	2	.01	.00	.990
Balance professional/personal life	2	1.36	.01	.258
Career strategy	2	1.68	.01	.188
Tokenism	2	1.05	.01	.352
Spousal/family support	2	2.07	.01	.127
Race/ethnicity	2	.54	.00	.582
Family distraction	2	.18	.00	.834
Isolation, loneliness	2	.30	.00	.744
Total Personal Impediments 8-Item Subscale	2	1.01	.01	.367

Table 17

*Responses to Eight Items in Organizational Structure Impediments Subscale by Institutional Classification Settings*

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Lack of mentors or role models	2	.22	.00	.804
Existence of “glass ceiling” effect	2	1.42	.01	.244
Hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap	2	1.20	.01	.302
“Dry pipeline” or “failed pipeline”	2	.55	.00	.577
Marginalization of women as “outsiders”	2	1.73	.01	.179
Gender inequity in numbers	2	1.85	.01	.159
“Role strain” or “role entrapment”	2	.20	.00	.820
“Double standards”	2	.50	.00	.609
Total Organizational Structure Impediments 8-Item Subscale	2	1.12	.01	.328

Table 18

*Responses to Eight Items in Organizational Culture Impediments Subscale by Institutional Classification Settings*

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Existence of gender roles or gender gap	2	.28	.00	.755
“Double bind” or isolation due to relational norms	2	1.01	.01	.367
“Comfort zone” or ability to fit	2	1.37	.01	.256
Knowledge or understanding of culture of the institution	2	.25	.00	.779
Sex-role stereotypes or expectations	2	.07	.00	.930
“Good ol’ boys” network and culture of power	2	1.27	.01	.282
Cultural disenfranchisement, underinvolvement, Judged against male norms	2	.34	.00	.713
Total Organizational Culture Impediments 8-Item Subscale	2	.66	.00	.673

Table 19

*Responses to Three Impediments Subscales by Institutional Classification Settings*

	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	$\eta^2$	<i>p</i>
Personal Impediments Subscale	2	1.01	.01	.367
Organizational Structure Subscale	2	1.12	.01	.328
Organizational Culture Subscale	2	.40	.00	.673
Total Subscales	2	.66	.00	.520

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of impediments of women community college leaders in a variety of institutional settings (rural, suburban, urban) in eleven southeastern states that comprise the accrediting region of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The study tested three gender-based models of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture) used to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions. Using a researcher-created online survey instrument, data were collected from women leaders in community colleges including demographic survey responses (professional, institutional, and personal) and Likert-type scale responses to 24 identified impediments to advancement in community colleges.

Initial demographic survey questions collected professional, institutional, and personal data. The self-reported professional and institutional demographics of the participants provided a statistical “snapshot” of the participants’ professional and institutional status at the time they

completed the survey. The majority of women leaders who participated in the survey were deans and vice-presidents; they held their current leadership positions for one to six years; and their highest educational levels were Masters level degrees and higher post-graduate degrees. The majority of their institutions' classification settings were reported as rural settings followed by suburban and urban settings.

The personal demographics questions provided a statistical "snapshot" of the participants' personal status at the time they completed the survey. The participants were in the age range of 34 to 75 with the highest frequencies in ages 55 to 63. Their race and ethnic backgrounds were primarily white, and their marital status was primarily married.

Four research questions were examined to determine the perceptions of women community college leaders to 24 impediments to advancement within community colleges. Responses were recorded as a Likert-type five-point scale, ranging from not an impediment, a slight impediment, a moderate impediment, a significant impediment, and an extreme impediment. The first three research questions grouped the 24 items into three subscales, which were previously identified in the literature as personal, organizational structure, and organizational culture impediments. Research Question One reported the frequencies and means of responses to personal impediments. Results of the descriptive tests indicated the personal impediment with the highest mean was "balance professional/personal life," which fell between the slight impediment and moderate impediment scale. Research Question Two reported the frequencies and means of responses to organizational structure impediments. Results of the descriptive tests indicated the organizational structure impediment with the highest mean was "hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap," which fell closer to the moderate impediment rating. Research Question Three reported the frequencies and means of responses to

organizational culture impediments. Results of the descriptive tests indicated the organizational culture impediment with the highest mean was “good ol’ boys network and culture of power,” which fell closer to the moderate impediment rating than the means of any other of the 24 items. Overall, the organizational culture subscale of eight items had the highest mean score of all three subscales.

Research Question Four reported the impact of community college classification settings (rural, suburban, urban) on women leaders’ perceptions of impediments to leadership advancement. A series of ANOVAs as statistical analysis were conducted to determine the means and standards deviations as well as the significance of the three classification settings on the responses to perceptions of the 24 impediments. The two personal impediments with the highest mean scores across all three classification settings were first “balance professional/ personal life” and second “unwillingness to move; geographic immobility.” The women leaders at urban institutions scored hiring, promotion, and salary practices as the organizational structure impediment with the highest mean while leaders at rural institutions and suburban institutions also ranked them as moderate impediments. Another organizational structure impediment with a higher mean score was “the existence of the ‘glass ceiling’ effect” with women leaders at rural institutions perceiving the “glass ceiling” as a greater impediment than did women leaders at urban institutions or suburban institutions.

The item “‘good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” was consistently the organizational culture impediment with the highest mean score for all three classification settings. Women leaders’ perception of the impediment of the “good ol’ boys” network at rural institutions had the highest mean score, urban institutions the second highest, and suburban institutions the third highest. Additionally, the mean score of “‘good ol’ boys’ network and



culture of power” factored by rural institutions had the highest mean score of all 24 items factored by all three classification settings. None of the 24 individual impediments, the three subscales, or the total composite scale was statistically significant when factored with the three classification settings. No further follow-up tests were indicated.

Chapter Five provides a summary, discussion of findings, and conclusions for the study. The discussion of the findings will relate to the literature and prior research, and the conclusions will provide implications for action and recommendations for practitioners and further research.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSIONS

Community colleges continue to face an impending need for presidents and chief operating officers (CEOs) as well as other senior level administrators. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) studies of presidents and CEOs, conducted consistently since the 1980s, continue to report the need for presidents and CEOs to fill positions of those who plan to retire in the next 10 years. In 2012, 75% of responding CEOs (Tekle, 2012) said that they plan to retire in five to ten years between 2017 and 2022. The AACC (2012) studies also indicate that of the 2012 respondents 27% of CEOs were female, which is less than the 29% reported in 2006 (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). With the necessity for qualified community college leaders to fill future positions, the underrepresentation of women leaders in community colleges has become increasingly evident and indicates a need for understanding reasons why women leaders are not advancing to senior level positions.

Studies of the underrepresentation of women leaders in community colleges indicate women leaders' perceptions of several barriers or impediments to their advancement to senior level leadership positions. Early literature indicated the existence of commonly perceived impediments to advancement, including **personal or internal** impediments that prevent or impede women from advancing to senior level positions. Some of these common personal (internal) impediments include an unwillingness to move to pursue positions at other institutions (Cejda, 2008; Growe & Montgomery, 1999); family and spousal responsibilities and lack of support (Cejda; Eddy & Cox, 2008); balancing professional and personal lives (Chliwniak, 1997; Green, 2008; Johnsrud, 1991); feelings of isolation and loneliness in leadership positions (Growe & Montgomery; Munoz, 2010); race/ethnicity issues (Green, 2008; Opp & Gosetti, 2002); and lack of clear career strategy (VanDerLinden, 2004).

Other perceived impediments involve **organizational/institutional or external** barriers which prevent or impede women leaders' advancement. Reported organizational (external) impediments are related to two aspects of institutional characteristics, including institutions' organizational structure and organizational culture. The impediments that women leaders perceive to exist within the institution's structure are related to hiring and promotion policies and practices (Chliwniak, 1997; VanDerLinden, 2004); a lack of mentors or role models within the institution (Cejda, 2008; Gibson-Benninger, Ratliff, & Rhoads, 1996); the existence of an institutional "glass ceiling" (Chliwniak, 1997; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994); gender inequity (Townsend, 2008; Winship & Amey, 1992); gendered "role strain" or "role entrapment" (Scanlon, 1997); and feelings of marginalization as outsiders in leadership positions (Cejda; Eddy & Lester, 2008; Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006).

The third type of organizational impediments are related to the **culture of the institution**. Women leaders reported their perceptions of the existence of cultural barriers such as a lack of knowledge or understanding of the institution's culture (Brown, Martinez, & Daniel, 2002; Cejda, 2008); the atmosphere of a "good ol' boys" network and culture of power (Chliwniak, 1997; DiCrocce, 1995; Harvard, 1986); cultural disenfranchisement (VanDerLinden, 2004); issues in gender roles or a gender gap (Chliwniak; Jablonski, 1996); and being judged against "male norms" (Eddy & Cox, 2008). These organizational culture impediments may also explain the continuing underrepresentation of women leaders in community colleges.

The literature concerning the perceptions of barriers to advancement produced an early attempt to unify these three types of impediments into thematic groups or working models that guide the investigation of impediments to advancement and that informs the underrepresentation of women leaders in community colleges. These impediments fall into thematic groups,

including personal (internal) barriers, organizational structure (external) barriers, and organizational culture (external) barriers. Models for these groupings of impediments were identified and grouped by Estler (1975) and others who applied the models in their studies (Grove & Montgomery, 1999; Schmuck, 1980). These three models are relevant to the identified impediments found in current studies and literature as well and may inform the current perspectives of underrepresentation of women leaders in community colleges.

While no current models exist that relate underrepresentation of women leaders to types and sizes of institutions, the Carnegie Foundation (2010) states that institutional size does matter in that it is related to “institutional structure, complexity, culture, finances, and other factors.” Since both organizational structure and organizational culture are two of the three models for impediments to advancement, institutional setting (rural, suburban, urban) may impact the women leaders’ perceptions of impediments to leadership advancement and ultimately the underrepresentation of women leaders in community colleges.

### **Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of the current study was to examine the perceptions of impediments to advancement of women community college leaders in a variety of institutional settings (rural, suburban, urban) in eleven southeastern states that comprise the accrediting region of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Three gender-based models of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture) were used to guide the study and explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions.

Previous studies of the perceptions of senior level community college leaders reported the existence of impediments to advancement of leadership in community colleges. This current

study examined women leaders' perceptions of these impediments and was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are women leaders' perceptions of personal/internal impediments to advancement in community colleges?
2. What are women leaders' perceptions of organizational structure impediments to advancement in community colleges?
3. What are women leaders' perceptions of organizational culture impediments to advancement in community colleges?
4. Does the community college classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) of an organization impact the women leaders' perceptions of impediments to leadership advancement?

### **Significance of the Study**

The continuing underrepresentation of women in community college leadership positions suggests further study of these leaders' perceptions of barriers to their advancement in community colleges. The findings of this study provide insights into the perceptions of community college women leaders through their responses to identified impediments and barriers to advancement. These impediments—gathered from the literature and studies of gendered leadership, leadership in community colleges, and women leaders—form three types of impediments, including personal/internal impediments, organizational structure/external impediments, and organizational culture/external impediments. The implications of these types of impediments lie in the women leaders' perceptions of the reasons why they do not advance in leadership positions. These perceptions are personal within themselves and their internal situations or organizational within the structure and culture of their community college settings.

Additional findings of this study provide connections with types of community college classification settings (rural, suburban, urban) and women leaders' perceptions of barriers to advancement. This study uniquely examines the impact of these settings on women leaders' perceptions of the reasons why they do not advance in leadership positions in community colleges.

These findings inform community college administrators, college boards, selection and hiring committees, and others of the perceptions of women leaders concerning advancement in community colleges. For prospective leaders and other senior level leaders, these findings suggest personal and organizational issues as well as gender issues as they consider advancement and other job opportunities.

### **Summary of Methodology**

The purpose of this cross-sectional study was to examine the perceptions of women leaders to impediments to advancement in community colleges in a variety of classification settings (rural, suburban, urban). The study also examines three gender-based models of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture) used to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions. The participants in the study were senior level women leaders identified at community colleges from the eleven states that comprise the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region of the United States. A survey instrument was conducted with these participants to examine their perceptions of the impediments to advancement in community colleges. Participants also provided demographic and professional data, including information about their educational status, their leadership positions, and the classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) of their current positions.

The survey instrument designed for this study utilizes 24 Likert-type items. The items on the scale reflect factors identified in the literature and from previous instruments that measured the perceptions of senior level community college administrators regarding impediments to advancement. Participants responded to the 24-item list of identified impediments. Their responses took the form of a modified barriers scale of response anchors with a five-point scale (not an impediment, a slight impediment, a moderate impediment, a significant impediment, an extreme impediment). An opening section of the survey instrument included a series of demographic, descriptive multiple choice questions that will allow the participants to identify aspects of their leadership position, their institution, and personal characteristics.

The content validity and reliability of the survey instrument were established. The method for establishing the content validity of the instrument for this study was through a review by a panel of content or subject-matter experts. Content experts have in-depth knowledge in specific areas, and they can offer advice about the topic of the survey and provide a context for the research (Sue & Ritter, 2007). The panel of experts for this study included five experts with knowledge of the community college system and experience in the subject of women's leadership and advancement to leadership. The experts considered each item of the proposed survey for inclusion and clarity as well as an overall assessment of the survey instrument. Based on the returns of the panel members, the survey instrument was revised and questions and answer choices were clarified, retaining all 24 items or impediments.

After the revisions of the panel of experts were completed, the survey instrument questions underwent pilot testing. Pilot testing is a procedure in which changes are made to the instrument based on feedback from a small number of individuals who complete and evaluate the instrument (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Creswell, 2008). For this study, five female community

college leaders from a state outside of the eleven targeted states in the SACS region participated in the pilot test. For the entire survey instrument, the coefficient of consistency was .816, indicating a good or acceptable reliability. Of the 24 Likert-type items, the pilot test returns indicated concerns with three items and a problem with one item. After revision and clarification of four items, each item was retained as a part of the three impediments scales.

Variables of the study included the independently surveyed perceptions of impediments and the three composite subscales of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture). The main independent variable of the study was the self-reported organizational classification setting (rural, suburban, urban).

### **Summary of Findings**

Initial demographic survey questions collected professional, institutional, and personal data. The self-reported professional and institutional demographics of the participants provided a statistical “snapshot” of the participants’ professional and institutional status at the time they completed the survey. The majority of women leaders who participated in the survey were deans and vice-presidents; they held their current leadership positions for one to six years; and their highest educational levels were Masters level degrees and higher post-graduate degrees. The majority of their institutions’ classification settings were reported as rural settings followed by suburban and urban settings. The age range of the participants was 34 to 75 years with the highest frequency in category of 55 to 63 years. Their race and ethnic backgrounds were primarily white, and their marital status was primarily married.

Four research questions were examined to determine the perceptions of women community college leaders to 24 impediments to advancement within community colleges. Responses were recorded as a Likert-type five-point scale, ranging from not an impediment, a



slight impediment, a moderate impediment, a significant impediment, and an extreme impediment. The first three research questions grouped the 24 items into three subscales, which were previously identified in the literature as personal, organizational structure, and organizational culture impediments. The findings for Research Question One indicated the frequencies and mean scores for the responses to personal impediments. Results of the descriptive tests indicated the personal impediment with the highest mean was “balance professional/personal life,” which fell between the slight impediment and moderate impediment. The findings for Research Question Two indicated the frequencies and mean scores for the responses to organizational structure impediments. Results of the descriptive tests indicated the organizational structure impediment with the highest mean was “hiring or promotion practices/policies, salary gap,” which fell closer to the moderate impediment rating. The findings for Research Question Three indicated the frequencies and mean scores for the responses to organizational culture impediments. Results of the descriptive tests indicated the organizational culture impediment with the highest mean was “‘good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power,” which fell closer to the moderate impediment rating than the means of any other of the 24 items. Overall, the organizational culture subscale of eight items had the highest mean score of all three subscales.

The findings for Research Question Four indicated women leaders’ perceptions of impediments to advancement differentiated by community college classification (rural, suburban, urban). A series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine the means and standards deviations as well as the significance of the three classification settings on the responses to perceptions of the 24 impediments. The two personal impediments with the highest mean scores across all three classification settings were first “balance professional/

personal life” and second “unwillingness to move; geographic immobility.” The women leaders at urban institutions scored hiring, promotion, and salary practices as the organizational structure impediment with the highest mean while leaders at rural institutions and suburban institutions also ranked them as moderate impediments.

The item ““good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” was consistently the organizational culture impediment with the highest mean score for all three classification settings. Women leaders’ perception of the impediment of the “good ol’ boys” network at rural institutions had the highest mean score, urban institutions the second highest, and suburban institutions the third highest. Additionally, the mean score of ““good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” from leaders of rural institutions had the highest mean score of all 24 items factored by all three classification settings. There were no impediments for which there was a statistically significant difference when comparing the responses of leaders from urban, suburban, or rural institutions.

### **Findings Related to the Literature**

Community colleges continue to face an impending need for presidents and chief operating officers (CEOs). The American Association of Community Colleges’ (AACC) research brief, *Compensation and Benefits of Community College CEOs: 2012* (Tekle, 2012) reported 75% of community college CEOs planned to retire in 10 years. In 2012, the AACC also reported 27% of responding CEOs were women, compared to 29% of responding women CEOs in 2006 (AACC). Female executives, administrators, and manager comprise 56% of community college leadership (AACC, 2012), and female community college students comprise 57% of all students enrolled in fall semester 2013. While women are well-represented in community college

administrative positions and in student enrollment, they are underrepresented among presidents and chief executive officers.

In the current study, the sampling of women leaders in community colleges were employed in eleven southeastern states and were distributed among institutions of the three Carnegie Foundation classification settings (rural, suburban, urban) in approximately 300 community colleges in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region. One demographic survey question gathered information about the current positions of women leaders, and answer choices included leadership positions of presidents, chancellors and vice chancellors, provosts, vice presidents (assistants and associates), chief academic/financial officers, deans (assistants and associates), and others. Among the 346 senior level women leaders participating in this study, the highest number of participants was deans ( $n = 161$ ) with vice presidents ( $n = 76$ ) as second highest number of total participants. Ten cases of the 346 respondents were women community college presidents. Among the 346 senior level women leaders participating in this study, 172 respondents were employed at rural institutions, 92 at suburban institutions, and 82 at urban institutions.

**Theoretical perspectives of underrepresentation.** Studies of community college leadership include historical and current statistics for leaders' gender, minority status, current positions, career pathways, and anticipated retirement plans (Vaughan, 1986; Vaughan, Mellander, & Blois, 1994; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). The Association of Community College's (AACC) reports of the retirement plans of presidents and CEOs have consistently indicated an imminent demand for community college leaders while also consistently documenting the underrepresentation of women in president and CEO positions. As the continued underrepresentation of women leaders was

reported, theories explaining underrepresentation emerged in the literature. Among these explanations were theories concerning the existence of perceived barriers that impeded, hindered, or stymied women leaders' advancement in community colleges. These barriers were described as both personal and organizational in nature and included personal/internal impediments, organizational structure/external impediments, and organizational culture/external impediments.

For the present study, reported barriers and impediments were gathered from the literature and compiled into lists of personal, organizational structure, and organizational culture impediments. From these three lists, 24 most commonly reported impediments were selected in the design of a survey instrument that would report women community college leaders' perceptions of and responses to these 24 items. Women leaders responded to these 24 items, presented in a Likert-type five-point scale. The modified barriers scale ranged from one to five points as "not an impediment," "a slight impediment," "a moderate impediment," "a significant impediment," and "an extreme impediment," respectively.

The findings of this study confirm the continued perception of these previously reported impediments through women leaders' ranking of the individual impediments. The lowest mean score ( $M = 1.45$ ) was for the personal impediment "lack of spousal/family support." Conversely, the impediment with the highest mean score ( $M = 2.85$ ) was the organizational culture impediment "'good ol' boys' network and culture of power." The findings indicate the 24 identified impediments continue to factor with varying strengths into the advancement of women in leadership positions and by extension to the underrepresentation of women in these positions.

**Theoretical perspectives of impediments to advancement.** Three gender-based models of impediments were introduced in early attempts to explain underrepresentation (Estler, 1975;

Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Schmuck, 1980). These thematic groups or models of impediments are grouped by their internal or personal barriers, their external or organizational structure barriers, or their external or organizational culture barriers.

The findings of the present study confirm that when applied to the 24 identified impediments of the survey instrument, the three models of impediments (personal, organizational structure, organizational culture) continue to represent types of perceived barriers to advancement. The 24-item scale was grouped according to the three models, producing three subscales comprised of eight personal impediments, eight organizational structure impediments, and eight organizational culture impediments. These items were grouped according to the original definitions of the gender-based models (Estler, 1975).

In the current study, findings of the analysis of the three subscales indicate organizational culture impediments were ranked with the highest mean composite score, followed by organizational structure impediments and personal impediments, respectively. Through their responses to 24 impediments, participants in the current study indicated their personal situations were less of a barrier to their advancement than either community colleges' structural or cultural barriers.

### **Types of Perceived Impediments to Advancement**

The findings in the current study support the continued perception of the three types of impediments to advancement identified in the literature. Personal, organizational structure, and organizational culture impediments continue to factor into the impeded advancement of women leaders in community colleges as well as the current underrepresentation of women leaders in senior level administrative positions.

**Personal/internal impediments.** Personal/internal impediments were early identified themes among women leaders who were surveyed or interviewed in earlier studies (Stout-Stewart, 2005; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998). One personal impediment involves marriage and family responsibilities, including lack of mobility, spouse support, and family size (Harris et al., 2004; Olcott & Hardy, 2005). Findings in the current study indicate that among the eight personal impediments, the impediment with the greatest strength and highest mean score is “balance professional/personal life.” Gerdes (2003) surveyed women leaders who said that factors in their personal lives made their lives equally harder and easier with both positive and negative effects on their professional lives. Another stronger personal impediment of the present study is “unwillingness to move; geographic immobility.” Women leaders continue to perceive their lack of mobility as an issue in their advancement. As Eddy and Cox (2008) found in their qualitative study, many women leaders would not consider a job that required them to move away from their family.

**Organizational/external structure impediments.** Organizational/external structure impediments were evident in earlier studies of women leaders and the community colleges in which they held positions (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006; Harvard, 1986). According to Winship and Amey (1992), organizational structure impediments may be a “source of both overt and subtle impediments to women’s advancement” and may include “gender and age discrimination, lack of managerial support, and not having their skills taken seriously” (p. 24). Findings for the current study confirm organizational structure impediments persist in women leaders’ perceptions of impediments to advancement.

Marginality within the organizational structure of community colleges was indicated in earlier studies of women leaders. The marginalization of women and minorities as “outsiders”

(Caldwell-Colbert & Albino, 2007; Cejda, 2008; Eddy & Lester, 2003) refers to women leaders' perception of a lack of structural support to integrate them into the organization as effective leaders. In the current study, findings indicate the structural impediment of a "marginalization of women as 'outsiders'" is not among the highest mean scores of the eight organizational structure impediments, but it was ranked closer to a "slight impediment" rather than "not an impediment."

Hiring and promotion practices present an additional barrier to advancement that falls within the organizational structure of community colleges. Munoz (2010) stated that this impediment contributes to maintaining the status quo of community colleges by historically hiring males in leadership positions. In the current study, women leaders' perceptions of hiring and promotion practices, as well as salary gap, was the strongest with the highest mean score of all eight of the organizational structure impediments.

**Organizational/external culture impediments.** In the literature, organizational culture is defined as "a powerful though subtle and largely invisible force in the lives of students, staff, and administration" (McGrath & Tobia, 2008, p. 43). Organizational culture holds an institution together by providing shared interpretations by socializing members into common patterns of perception, thoughts, and feelings (McGrath & Tobia; Schein, 2004) and providing "a sense of identity, clarity of mission, and a focus to decisions, strategies, and practices" (McGrath & Tobia, p. 44).

The findings for the present study provide support for the existence of organizational culture in community colleges and its capacity to enhance b to advancement of women leaders. The organizational culture impediment that women leaders perceived as the strongest of all eight impediments was the existence of a "good ol' boys' network and culture of power." Chin et al. (2007) described the "good ol' boys network" as "a solid barrier to advancement because it

filters out those who the network members believe can lead and those who they believe should not be allowed to lead” (p. 240). In addition to being the organizational culture impediment with the highest mean score, the “‘good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” impediment also had the highest mean score of all 24 impediments.

Findings for the current study also indicate the composite score for the organizational culture subscale was the strongest, having the highest mean composite score of all three subscales. This finding indicates women leaders perceive their institutions’ culture—above their institutions’ structure and their own personal impediments—to have the greatest impact on impediments to their advancement in community colleges.

### **Classification Settings and Impediments to Advancement**

The Carnegie Classification system provides the recognized classifications of community colleges based on institutional settings and sizes (Carnegie Foundation, 2010). Rural, suburban, and urban classification settings were established to describe two-year, public institutions. These settings provide another set of descriptors to investigate the characteristics of community colleges. The literature points to some clear differences in the nature of these college settings, especially in relation to the mission, location, culture, and constituencies of rural, suburban, and urban colleges (Eddy & Murray, 2007; Eller et al., 1999; Katsinas, 1996; Valadez & Killacky, 1995).

Leadership in community colleges has also received some limited attention from investigations using classification settings as a factor. Katsinas’ (1996) study of community colleges by classification setting noted the gap in literature in the study of leadership preparation, recruitment of leadership, and leadership characteristics and qualities factored by classification



setting. No other studies have focused on the underrepresentation of women leaders in community colleges based on the classification of community colleges.

Findings in the present study indicate the impact of classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) on women leaders' perceptions of impediments to advancement in community colleges. Of the items in the personal impediments subscale, the highest scoring impediment across all eight items was "balance professional/personal life" for all three classification settings, but women leaders in urban settings scored this impediment higher than did suburban and rural leaders. Another personal impediment with a higher score across three settings was "unwillingness to move; geographic immobility." Suburban leaders who were unwilling to move from their current positions scored this impediment higher than both rural and urban leaders. Overall, the composite score of all items of the personal impediments subscale factored with all three settings indicate that urban leaders scored personal impediments more highly impactful than did their rural and suburban counterparts.

Findings for the organizational structure impediments factored with the three classification settings indicate the highest mean score for the impediment "hiring or promotion practices/salary gap." Urban leaders scored this impediment to advancement higher than both rural and suburban leaders, respectively. Rural leaders, however, scored the "existence of 'glass ceiling' effect" higher than either their urban or suburban colleagues. Although the "glass ceiling" effect was first identified in the 1990s as a barrier to advancement among leaders in corporate positions (Morrison, White, & Van Vlesor, 1992), higher education studies also used the term to describe the subtle, indirect obstacles that stem from labeling and stereotyping and impede the advancement of women leaders (Chliwniak, 1997). The findings of the current study

concerning the “glass ceiling” effect support the continued existence and impact of this organizational structure impediment on the advancement of women leaders.

The organizational culture subscale produced the highest of all mean scores for the “good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” impediment. Findings of the current study indicate that this impediment, factored by the three classification settings, impacted the perceptions of women leaders at rural community colleges as “a significant impediment” compared to all other mean scores of identified impediments. Urban and suburban leaders also responded with high mean scores for this impediment to advancement. The findings of the present study support the continued and prevalent existence of the “good ol’ boys” network as an impediment to women’s advancement in rural, suburban, and urban community colleges alike.

### **Unexpected Findings**

One unexpected finding from the current study was the continued strength of the perception of the “good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” impediment to advancement of women leaders in community colleges. Historically, many of the community colleges constructed during the 1960s boom in the growth of the national network of community colleges have experienced their 50-year anniversaries. As a result of the passage of time, many colleges have long since progressed past the original “good ol’ boys” networks that were instituted in newly constructed institutions. According to the literature, the “good ol’ boys” network continued to thrive through the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. In the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, women participating in the current study are still reporting the “good ol’ boys’ network and culture of power” as the strongest cultural impediment to advancement within their institutions.

Another unexpected finding from the present study was the continued existence of the “glass ceiling” effect, a barrier to advancement that was given its name in the 1990s in studies of the experiences of corporate women leaders and eventually in studies of higher education women leaders. Although the term “glass ceiling” is less prominent in the corporate world, women in the current study still consider the existence of the “glass ceiling” as more than a “slight impediment” within the structure of their institutions.

### **Conclusions**

Community colleges continue to face an impending need for presidents and chief operating officers (CEOs) as well as other senior level administrators. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) studies of presidents and CEOs continue to report the need for presidents and CEOs to fill positions of those 75% who plan to retire in the next 10 years (Tekle, 2012). The AACC study also indicates that in the 2012 study, only 27% of the responding CEOs were female (Tekle). An analysis of the factors at the core of the continuing underrepresentation of women leaders is essential to identify barriers and affect changes in the portrait and landscape of women leaders and their institutions.

### **Implications for Action**

The factors that constitute barriers and impediments to women leaders’ advancement in community colleges have evolved throughout the literature. A growing body of literature is devoted to women leaders and their leadership roles, leadership styles, career pathways, stories of personal situations and institutional experiences, perceptions of institutional cultures, and common experiences with gender diversity and gender gap. The findings of the current study extend the body of knowledge found in the literature that examines the perceptions of current women leaders to impediments to advancement in community colleges. The findings of the

present study also indicate the responses by mean scores to each impediment by its type, whether personal or organizational. Finally, the findings of the present study suggest the impact of classifications of community colleges (rural, suburban, urban) on the individual impediments and the types of impediments.

The findings of the present study suggest actions that would lessen the impact of personal and organizational impediments that women leaders perceived as having the strongest influence on their advancement. The findings of the current study indicate women's strongest responses to personal impediments include balancing their personal and professional lives, their unwillingness to move to pursue leadership positions, and their feelings of isolation and loneliness in senior level positions. Prospective and advancing leaders should spend time reflecting upon ways to diminish the impact of their personal barriers on their decisions to pursue or advance into senior level positions. Resolving family issues and considerations and finding ways to balance their professional and personal lives would lessen the effect of personal obstacles as women leaders advance in leadership positions.

The findings of the current study suggested women leaders' perceived impediments are partially rooted in organizations' structure and culture. While prospective and advancing leaders should be aware of the existence of these types of impediments as they pursue positions, they should familiarize themselves with the structure of prospective institutions. Given that the strongest perceived organizational structure impediment was "hiring and promotion practices," women leaders should familiarize themselves with the published hiring practices and trends of the institution, existing stated policies available to the public and prospective leaders, functions of human resources departments and hiring committees, and structural elements such as leadership roles, divisions and departments structures, and institutional work flow. Women

leaders should consider their knowledge of the structural workings of an institution as they apply for positions, prepare for job interviews, and consider their potential leadership strengths and weaknesses within the institutional setting.

In the current study, women leaders indicated their perceptions of organizational culture impediments were the strongest of the three types of impediments. Actions should focus on women leaders' awareness of the existence of such organizational culture impediments such as residual "good ol' boys" networks and cultures of power as well as established gender roles, gender gaps, and male norms that may reside within the often subtle and underlying culture of the institutions. A knowledge or understanding of the institutions' culture would enable prospective leaders or advancing leaders to decide if they are the right "fit" for an institution and its culture.

Further implications for action center on the findings of the present study that indicate the impact of classification of institutions on the women leaders' perceptions of impediments. According to the literature and the findings of the current study, differences do exist in the three classifications settings of rural, suburban, and urban community colleges. Rural, suburban, and urban women leaders' perceptions of impediments vary within the 24 identified impediments as well as among the three types of impediments (personal, organizational structure, and organizational culture).

Rural women leaders should be aware of the overall strength of structure impediments such as a lack of mentors or role models, double standards, and glass ceilings in their pursuit of positions in rural institutions. They should also recognize the ongoing and continuing cultural impediment of the "good ol' boys" network as a highly identified barrier to advancement in rural colleges. As women leaders attempt to advance or pursue positions in urban colleges, they

should recognize the personal impediments that may factor into their career decisions. In the current study, women leaders in urban institutions identified balancing professional and personal lives as the strongest personal barrier. Hiring and promotion practices constitute the strongest structure impediment for urban women leaders; these prospective leaders should practice “due diligence” and investigate hiring and promotion practices as they pursue positions in urban institutions.

### **Recommendations for Practitioners and Leaders**

Community college selection committees should have well established, clearly published hiring and promotion practices and policies that adhere to federal, state, system, and institutional policies. Institutional human resources departments should consider women leaders’ perceptions of impediments to advancement as they prepare selection committees for specific position appointments. Institutions should guard against structural gender inequity, double standards, salary gaps, glass ceilings, and other barriers within the organizational structure that prevent women from advancing or securing positions within their institutions.

Since women leaders perceive organizational culture impediments among the strongest barriers to advancement, rural and urban institutions especially should guard against overt and underlying cultural characteristics that form barriers to advancement. The lingering perception that the “good ol’ boys” network continues to exist, particularly among women leaders in rural areas, should be of concern to human resource administrators and search committee members. Additionally, the data from the current study concerning a lack of a “comfort zone” or ability to fit within institutional cultures, should give practitioners and current leaders and opportunity to address these potential identified impediments to attracting qualified female leaders.

Community college leaders should also recognize the value of mentors and role models to incoming women leaders. Without mentors or others to guide them in navigating around institutions' structure and culture, women leaders may feel isolated or marginalized in their new positions. Additionally, leaders should institute practices and support programs that successfully prepare women for advancement within institutions. Professional development and advanced degree attainment opportunities that encourage advancement within community college systems and institutions are essential in building career pathways for prospective women leaders to senior level leadership positions.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

The nationwide impending need for qualified senior level community college leaders and the continuing diminished representation of women leaders in senior level leadership positions suggest further study of the impediments to women's advancement into these crucial positions. While women's advancement and the gender gap has been one challenge for the community college and those who have studied leadership trends, the continuing existence of barriers to advancement should continue to be explored. Findings of these gender related impediments will suggest methods of personal and organizational change that will lessen the persistent level of underrepresentation of women leaders in community colleges.

Expanding the participant sample to include senior level women leaders beyond the eleven states of the current study would broaden the applicability and reliability of the findings. Although approximately 1700 senior level women leaders in 300 community colleges across the eleven states were invited to participate in the present study, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) currently represents 1,132 institutions nationwide. A larger sampling of colleges would provide a larger cross-section of community colleges in the

classification settings (rural, suburban, urban), one of the variables in the research questions for the current study.

Expanding the current quantitative study to include qualitative research would present opportunities to report community college women leaders' personal perceptions of barriers to their advancement. Using qualitative methods such as interviews and focus groups would produce findings that supplement and enhance the quantitative scale and subscale findings of survey instrument designed for this current study. Possible qualitative studies would include interviewing women leaders who volunteer as a response to the survey instrument, practicing women leaders who participated in community college leadership programs, and women leaders' holding positions in a specific classification setting (rural, suburban, urban).

Expanding the application of the survey instrument designed for this study would produce additional and comparative findings for the individual impediments, types of impediments, and individual/types of impediments by classification settings. Possible applications of the survey instrument would be to invite women leaders from other regions, an individual state or group of states, or groupings of leaders by their current positions to participate in the survey.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The current and future demand for community college leaders brings greater focus to the underrepresentation of women leaders in senior level leadership positions. The findings of inquiries into women leaders' perceived barriers and impediments to advancement provide opportunities for women leaders to reflect upon their personal and professional lives and consider institutions' structure and culture. Prospective and advancing leaders should recognize their need for balance in their personal and professional lives as they assume new positions, face



new leadership roles, and meet new challenges in finding their place and their fit in institutions' hierarchies of structure and subtleties of culture.

Community college practitioners and leaders should anticipate perceived gender and salary gaps while incorporating hiring and promotion policies and practices that will garner a professional, equitable educational setting, whether rural, suburban, or urban in size or by characteristic. They must also make policies and establish practices for professional development and career progression, mentoring programs and role model reinforcement, structural and cultural inclusiveness, and strategic goals to promote and grow their own leaders, who will be competitive and qualified in the demanding market for community college leaders.

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## Appendix A

### References to Impediments to Advancement

Table A1

#### *References to Personal Impediments to Advancement*

Identified Personal Impediments	References
1. Lack of terminal degree	Cejda, 2008
2. Lack of clear career strategy	VanDerLinden, 2004
3. Marital status—being single	Cejda, 2008
4. Low self-concept	Fobbs, 1988
5. Unwillingness to move; geographic mobility	Cejda, 2008; Grove & Montgomery, 1999; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Valdata, 2006; Winship & Amey, 1992
6. Balance professional/work life and personal/family life	Cejda, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997; Green, 2008; Grove & Montgomery, 1999; Johnsrud, 1991; Townsend, 2008
7. Family distraction	Jablonski, 1996
8. Lack of spousal/family support	Cejda, 2008; Eddy & Cox, 2008
9. Overly multitasking— multiple roles or conflicting roles	Cejda, 2008; Chliwniak, 1997
10. Isolation, loneliness at the top	Grove & Montgomery, 1999; Munoz, 2010; Valdata, 2006
11. “Tokenism”	Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010; Fobbs, 1988; Harvard, 1986; Munoz, 2010; Scanlon, 1997; Winship & Amey, 1992
12. Race/ethnicity	Green, 2008; Opp & Gosetti, 2002; Patitu & Hinton, 2003

Table A2

*References to Organizational Structure Impediments to Advancement*

Identified Organizational Structure Impediments	References
1. Marginalization of women as “outsiders”	Cejda, 2008; Eddy & Lester, 2008; Eddy & VanDer Linden, 2006; Munoz, 2010; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1998, 1999; Twombly, 1995
2. Disenfranchisement--structural	DiCroce, 1995
3. Lack of mentors or role models in leadership	Cejda, 2008; Gibson-Benninger, Ratliff, & Rhoads, 1996; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; VanDerLinden, 2004
4. “Role strain” or “role entrapment”	Scanlon, 1997
5. Gender equity in numbers	Townsend, 2008; Winship & Amey, 1992
6. Gender bias or stereotypes	DiCroce, 1995; Getskow, 1996; Growe & Montgomery, 1999
7. Hiring or promotion practices or policies or salary gap	Chliwniak, 1997; VanDerLinden, 2004
8. “Glass ceiling” effect	Chliwniak, 1997; Johnsrud & Heck, 1994; Scanlon, 1997; Schein, 2004; Winship & Amey, 1992
9. “Double standards”	Getskow, 1996
10. “Dry pipeline” or “failed pipeline”	Gibson-Benniger, Ratliff, & Rhoads, 1996; White, 2005
11. “Wall of tradition and stereotype”	Scanlon, 1997

Table A3

*References to Organizational Culture Impediments to Advancement*

Identified Organizational Culture Impediments	References
1. Knowledge or understanding of culture of institution	Brown, Martinez, & Daniel, 2002; Cejda, 2008
2. Organizational “double bind” or isolation due to relational norms	Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999
3. “Good ol’ boys” and culture of power	Chliwniak, 1997; DiCroce, 1995; Harvard, 1986; Munoz, 2010; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1998, 1999
4. Judged against “male norms”	Eddy & Cox, 2008
5. Perceived gender roles or gender gap	Chliwniak, 1997; Jablonski, 1996
6. Sex-role stereotypes/expectations	Grove & Montgomery, 1999; Harvard, 1986; Lester, 2008; Jablonski, 1996
7. Feelings of undervaluement and underinvolvement; cultural disenfranchisement	VanDerLinden, 2004
8. “Comfort zone” or ability to fit	Chliwniak, 1997; Fobbs, 1988; Winship & Amey, 1992
9. Gender socialization	Johnsrud, 1991

## **Appendix B**

### Survey Instrument

#### **Perceptions of Current Women Community College Leaders to Impediments to Advancement**

You have been chosen to participate in this survey because you hold an influential administrative leadership position in a community college located in eleven states within the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region. Your responses will help report the perceptions of women leaders to identified impediments to advancement within community colleges. More importantly, your answers will help women in leadership pipelines and community college institutions to be aware of the existence of these impediments as future leaders advance and fill positions.

**Completing this survey should take approximately 7-10 minutes. Thank you for participating in this study.**

Instructions:

- Please choose or fill in the appropriate answers to each question as they apply to you, based on your own personal history and community college career experiences.
- Please answer or respond to each question or impediment statement. The opening section will provide data to help answer research questions or provide descriptive data about the participants.

#### **PROFESSIONAL/EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

1. Current leadership position you hold

- President
- Provost
- Vice-President
- Vice-President, Assistant
- Chief Academic Officer, Chief Financial Officer, etc.
- Dean
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Number of years in your current leadership position

- 1 – 3 years
- 4 – 6 years
- 7 – 9 years
- 10 – 12 years
- 12+ years

3. Highest educational level you have attained

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Ph. D.
- Ed. D.
- Professional degree (MD, JD, DDS)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## YOUR INSTITUTION

1. What was the approximate number of unduplicated headcount at your current institution as of Fall 2010? \_\_\_\_\_
2. According to the Carnegie Foundation classification system, what is the classification setting for your current institution? (Note: If you are not sure of your college's designation, you can find the information by searching for your institution at this link: [Carnegie Foundation: Institution Lookup](#). Be sure to open another browser and copy the link to the address bar so that you do not exit the survey.)
  - Rural:** Institutions that are physically located within Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs) or Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with populations less than 500,000 people, or not within PMSAs or MSAs

- **Suburban:** Institutions that are physically located within Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with populations exceeding 500,000 people
- **Urban:** Institutions that are physically located within Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs) with populations exceeding 500,000

## DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Your age at your last birthday? (Specific number) \_\_\_\_\_
2. Race and ethnic background
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Hispanic
  - Two or more races
3. Marital status
  - Married
  - Single—never married
  - Divorced
  - Separated
  - Widowed

## PERCEPTIONS OF IMPEDIMENTS

To what extent have the following identified impediments impacted your advancement to leadership in community colleges? Please choose one ranking for each item.

1. Not an impediment
2. A slight impediment
3. A moderate impediment
4. A significant impediment
5. An extreme impediment

	1	2	3	4	5
Unwillingness to move; geographic immobility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of mentors or role models	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Existence of gender roles or gender gap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Balance professional/work life and personal/family life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Existence of “glass ceiling” effect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of career strategy or terminal degree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Double bind” or isolation due to relational norms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiring or promotion practices/ policies or salary gap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Comfort zone” or ability to fit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Dry pipeline” or “failed pipeline”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge or understanding of culture of the institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiring practice of “tokenism”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marginalization of women as “outsiders”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

1. Not an impediment
2. A slight impediment
3. A moderate impediment
4. A significant impediment
5. An extreme impediment

	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of spousal/family support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sex-role stereotypes or expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender inequity in numbers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Race/ethnicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Good ol’ boys” network and culture of power	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family distractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural disenfranchisement or underinvolvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Role strain” or “role entrapment”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Isolation, loneliness at the top	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Double standards”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Judged against “male norms”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



## Appendix C

### Panel of Experts Invitation

Date:

Subject: Perceptions of Women Community College Leaders Content Validity Assessment

Dear <<Name>>,

I would like to thank you for agreeing to serve as a subject-matter expert for my dissertation study, entitled *Perceptions of Impediments to the Advancement of Women Leaders in Community Colleges*. Your input is extremely important, and I appreciate your taking time out of your busy schedule to participate.

Although the literature focuses on the barriers and impediments to women leaders' advancement in community colleges, studies have yet to address the impact of institutions' classification setting (rural, suburban, urban), the number of years in current positions, and race/ethnicity on leaders' perceptions of these impediments. We believe, therefore, this study will fill a significant void in the literature.

To address these issues, this study will survey senior level administrators at community colleges in eleven states located in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region. As a subject-matter expert, you play an important role in assessing the content validity of the proposed survey instrument.

To participate in the expert panel, please:

- review the attached study purpose and research questions;
- click on the Survey Assessment link below to assess the proposed instrument.

In order to ensure your input can be carefully considered, I would appreciate your completion of the assessment by <<date>>.

Once again, thank you for your participation and your contribution to this study. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [xxxxx019@odu.edu](mailto:xxxxx019@odu.edu) or 276-964-xxxx.

Sincerely,

xxxxxx xxxxx

Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University  
Coordinator of Library Services, Southwest Virginia Community College

Link to Survey Assessment: <<url>>

## Appendix D

### Purpose and Research Questions for Content Experts

#### Purpose

The purpose of this cross-sectional study is to examine women leaders' perceptions of impediments to advancement in community colleges in a variety of classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban). The study will test three gender-based models of impediments used to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions. The participants in the study are senior level women leaders identified at community colleges from eleven states in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region of the United States. An online survey will be conducted with these participants to examine their perceptions of the impediments to advancement in community colleges. Participants will also provide professional, institutional, and demographic descriptive data, including information about their institutional classification settings (rural, suburban, and urban), the number of years in their current position, and their race/ethnicity. Variables of the study include the independently surveyed perceptions to impediments and the three composite subscales of impediments (personal, organizational structure, and organizational culture). The main independent variable of the study is the organizational classification setting (rural, suburban, and urban). Other independent variables include the number of years in leadership positions and race/ethnicity.

#### Research Questions

1. What are women leaders' perceptions of personal/internal impediments to advancement in community colleges?
2. What are women leaders' perceptions of organizational structure impediments to advancement in community colleges?
3. What are women leaders' perceptions of organizational culture impediments to advancement in community colleges?
4. Does the community college classification setting (rural, suburban, urban) of an organization impact the perceptions of impediments to leadership?

## **Appendix E**

### **Evaluation Instrument for Content Experts**

Thank you for serving as a subject-matter expert. As you proceed through the survey, it is not necessary for you to provide answers to the items although you may do so if you like.

Please do answer the “Evaluation” questions which appear after each item and at the conclusion of the survey.

Thank you for evaluating this survey instrument.

### **Perceptions of Current Women Community College Leaders to Impediments to Advancement**

You have been chosen to participate in this survey because you hold an influential administrative leadership position in a community college located in several states within the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region. Your responses will help report the perceptions of women leaders to identified impediments to advancement within community colleges. More importantly, your answers will help women in leadership pipelines and community college institutions to be aware of the existence of these impediments as future leaders advance and fill positions.

**Completing this survey should take approximately 7-10 minutes. Thank you for participating in this study.**

Instructions:

- Please choose or fill in the appropriate answers to each question as they apply to you, based on your own personal history and community college career experiences.
- Please answer or respond to each question or impediment statement. The opening section will provide data to help answer research questions or provide descriptive data about the participants.

## PROFESSIONAL/EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

### 1. Current leadership position you hold

- President
- Provost
- Vice-President
- Vice-President, Assistant
- Chief Academic Officer, Chief Financial Officer, etc.
- Dean
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluation: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

**Disagree    Neutral    Agree**

- |  |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This item should be included in the survey instrument. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is representative of the research questions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is clear and unambiguous.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### 2. Number of years in your current leadership position

- 1 – 3 years
- 4 – 6 years
- 7 – 9 years
- 10 – 12 years
- 12+ years

**Evaluation: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

**Disagree    Neutral    Agree**

- |  |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This item should be included in the survey instrument. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is representative of the research questions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is clear and unambiguous.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## 3. Highest educational level you have attained

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Ph. D.
- Ed. D.
- Professional degree (MD, JD, DDS)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluation: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

**Disagree    Neutral    Agree**

- |  |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This item should be included in the survey instrument. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is representative of the research questions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is clear and unambiguous.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### YOUR INSTITUTION

3. What was the approximate number of unduplicated headcount at your current institution as of Fall 2012? \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluation: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

**Disagree    Neutral    Agree**

- |  |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This item should be included in the survey instrument. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is representative of the research questions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is clear and unambiguous.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4. According to the Carnegie Foundation classification system, what is the classification setting for your current institution? (Note: If you are not sure of your college's designation, you can find the information by searching for your institution at this link: [Carnegie Foundation: Institution Lookup](#). Be sure to open another browser and copy the link to the address bar so that you do not exit the survey.)

- **Rural:** Institutions that are physically located within Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs) or Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with populations less than 500,000 people, or not within PMSAs or MSAs
- **Suburban:** Institutions that are physically located within Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) with populations exceeding 500,000 people
- **Urban:** Institutions that are physically located within Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs) with populations exceeding 500,000

**Evaluation: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

**Disagree    Neutral    Agree**

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| This item should be included in the survey instrument. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| This item is representative of the research questions. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| This item is clear and unambiguous.                    | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## DEMOGRAPHICS

3. Your age at your last birthday? (Specific number) \_\_\_\_\_

**Evaluation: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

**Disagree    Neutral    Agree**

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| This item should be included in the survey instrument. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| This item is representative of the research questions. | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| This item is clear and unambiguous.                    | ○ | ○ | ○ |

4. Race and ethnic background

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Hispanic
- Two or more races

**Evaluation: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

**Disagree    Neutral    Agree**

- |  |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This item should be included in the survey instrument. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is representative of the research questions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is clear and unambiguous.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

### 3. Marital status

- Married
- Single—never married
- Divorced
- Separated
- Widowed

**Evaluation: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

**Disagree    Neutral    Agree**

- |  |                       |                       |                       |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| This item should be included in the survey instrument. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is representative of the research questions. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| This item is clear and unambiguous.                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## PERCEPTIONS OF IMPEDIMENTS

To what extent do you agree that the following identified impediments impacted your advancement to leadership in community colleges? Please choose one ranking for each item.

1. Not an impediment
2. A slight impediment
3. A moderate impediment
4. A significant impediment
5. An extreme impediment

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Unwillingness to move; geographic immobility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of mentors or role models	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender roles or gender gap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Balance professional/work life and personal/family life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Existence of “glass ceiling” effect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of career strategy or terminal degree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Double bind” or isolation due to relational norms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiring or promotion practices/ policies or salary gap	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Comfort zone” or ability to fit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Dry pipeline” or “failed pipeline”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge or understanding of culture of the institution	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiring practice of “tokenism”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marginalization of women as “outsiders”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of spousal/family support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



1. Not an impediment
2. A slight impediment
3. A moderate impediment
4. A significant impediment
5. An extreme impediment

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Sex-role stereotypes or expectations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gender inequity in numbers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Race/ethnicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Good ol’ boys” network and culture of power	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Family distractions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural disenfranchisement or underinvolvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Role strain” or “role entrapment”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Isolation, loneliness at the top	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
“Double standards”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Judged against “male norms”	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Evaluation: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements.**

**Disagree    Neutral    Agree**

This item should be included in the survey instrument.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This item is representative of the research questions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This item is clear and unambiguous.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Summary Evaluation:**

1. Please share your thoughts about any topics which were insufficiently addressed in the instrument.
2. Please share any general comments to improve this instrument.

**Thank you so much for taking the time to serve as a content expert for this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated.**

## Appendix F

### Pilot Group Invitation

Date:

Subject: Dissertation Pilot Study Group Participation

Dear <<Name>>,

I am preparing to conduct my dissertation study entitled *Perceptions of Impediments to the Advancement of Women Leaders in Community Colleges*. I am a doctoral candidate at Old Dominion University, seeking a Ph. D. degree in Community College Leadership.

Although the literature focuses on the barriers and impediments to women leaders' advancement in community colleges, studies have yet to address the impact of institutions' classification setting (rural, suburban, urban), the number of years in current positions, and race/ethnicity on leaders' perceptions of these impediments. I believe, therefore, this study will fill a significant void in the literature.

To address these issues, this study will survey women senior level administrators at community colleges in eleven states located in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region. As a leader in a senior level administrative position outside of the sample population, you can play an important role in providing input about the proposed survey instrument. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to participate in a brief pilot study to assess the validity and reliability of the survey instrument. In a few days you will receive another email inviting you to participate and providing the link to the online survey.

Your participation will involve two steps with a test/retest pilot model:

1. You will be asked to complete: (a) the brief online survey, which will eventually be administered to women senior level administrators, and (b) an evaluation of the instrument's content validity.
2. Approximately two weeks later, you will be asked to complete the online survey again. I will use the data from the test-retest of the survey to assess the instrument's reliability.

I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this pilot study. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [xxxxx019@odu.edu](mailto:xxxxx019@odu.edu) or 276-964-xxxx.

Sincerely,

xxxxxx xxxxx

Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University

Coordinator of Library Services, Southwest Virginia Community College

## Appendix G

### Pilot Group Survey Instrument and Questions

Date:

Subject: Dissertation Pilot Study Group Participation

Dear <<Name>>,

Thank you for considering participating in the pilot study for my dissertation study entitled *Perceptions of Impediments to the Advancement of Women Leaders in Community Colleges*.

The purpose of this non-experimental, cross-sectional study is to examine the perceptions of women leaders to impediments to advancement in community colleges in a variety of classification settings (rural, suburban, urban).

To address these issues, this study will survey women senior level administrators at community colleges in eleven states located in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accrediting region. As a leader in a senior level administrative position outside of the sample population, you will play an important role in providing input about the proposed survey instrument, which will eventually be administered to approximately 900+ women senior level administrators.

To participate in this test-retest pilot study:

- Please complete the survey by clicking the survey link below before <<date>.
- At the end of the survey, you will be redirected to an evaluation instrument to provide input about content and clarity of the instrument.
- In approximately two weeks, you will receive an email asking you to complete the survey again for the test-retest reliability of the instrument.

Again, I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this pilot study. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [xxxxx019@odu.edu](mailto:xxxxx019@odu.edu) or 276-964-xxxx.

Sincerely,

xxxxxx xxxxx

Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University  
Coordinator of Library Services, Southwest Virginia Community College

Link to Survey: <<url>>

## Appendix H

### Pilot Group Evaluation Instrument

1. How long did it take you to complete the survey?

2. Considering the survey you just completed,

Yes    No

Were the instructions clear?

Were the questions clear and unambiguous?

Were there any components that might be construed as offensive?

3. Please provide any comments or suggestions to improve the instrument.

**Thank you for participating in this pilot study!**

## Appendix I

### Pilot Group Survey Instrument for Retest

Date:

Subject: Dissertation Pilot Study Group Participation

Dear <<Name>>,

Thank you for agreeing to complete the retest of the pilot study for my dissertation study, entitled *Perceptions of Impediments to the Advancement of Women Leaders in Community Colleges*.

Several week ago, you provided input to improve the survey instrument to be administered to senior level women administrators in community colleges in eleven states of the SACS accrediting region.

As step two of the test-retest pilot study model, the retest results will provide data toward the reliability of the instrument. Your completion of the survey again will provide this important second test.

To participate in this test-retest pilot study:

- Please complete the survey again by clicking the survey link below before <<date>.
- At the end of the survey, you will be redirected to an evaluation instrument to provide input about content and clarity of the instrument.

Again, I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate in this pilot study. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at [xxxxxx019@odu.edu](mailto:xxxxxx019@odu.edu) or 276-964-xxxx.

Sincerely,

xxxxxx xxxxx

Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University  
Coordinator of Library Services, Southwest Virginia Community College

Link to Retest: <<url>>

## Appendix J

### Invitation to Participate in the Survey

Date:

Subject: Dissertation on Perceptions of Women Community College Leaders

Dear Dr./Ms. <<Name>>,

As a part of my doctoral dissertation at Old Dominion University, entitled *Perceptions of Impediments to the Advancement of Women Leaders in Community Colleges*, I am conducting a survey of senior level women leaders at community colleges to gather data on the perceptions of women leaders to the impediments to advancement within community college institutions. Additionally, I am investigating the impact of institutional classification settings (rural, suburban, urban), the number of years in leadership positions, and race and ethnicity on these perceptions. A proposed outcome of this study is to provide data and findings to help community colleges meet the impending need for senior level administrators.

Your response as a senior level administrator to the attached online survey will make an important contribution to this study. Participation in the survey should take seven to ten minutes, and your participation is vital to the success of the study. Your responses to the survey will remain completely confidential. All data will be stored in the aggregate, and it will not be possible to associate you or your institution with your response.

To participate:

- Please choose or fill in the appropriate answers to each question as they apply to you, based on your own personal history and community college career experiences.
- Please complete the online survey by <<date>>.
- Please click on the URL below to participate in the survey:

<<url>>

As a senior level administrator, you are extremely integral to the successful leadership of our community colleges. The time that you take out of your day to complete this survey will be most appreciated and will provide valuable data for the study. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to be informed of the results of the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [xxxxx019@odu.edu](mailto:xxxxx019@odu.edu) or 276-964-xxxx.

Sincerely,

xxxxxx xxxxx

Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University

Coordinator of Library Services, Southwest Virginia Community College,

Richlands, Virginia

## Appendix K

### Follow-up Invitation to Participate in the Survey

Date:

Subject: Dissertation on Perceptions of Women Community College Leaders

Dear <<Name>>,

Several days ago, you received an invitation to participate in my dissertation study, entitled *Perceptions of Impediments to the Advancement of Women Leaders in Community Colleges*.

If you have already responded to the online survey, thank you very much for your input as a senior level administrator.

If you have not yet had an opportunity to complete the survey, please consider doing so today. Your input in the collection of data for this study is vital to its success. As the need for leaders to fill senior level positions increases in the near future and as these positions provide opportunities to close the gender gap in leadership in community colleges, individuals and community colleges need to be poised to fill these positions. Research findings about the perceptions of impediments to advancement will inform these individuals and community colleges for successful advancement to leadership.

Completing this online survey should take approximately seven to ten minutes. The survey will remain open until <<date>>.

<<url>>

Thank you for your consideration of participating in this dissertation study. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to be informed of the results of the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at [xxxxx019@odu.edu](mailto:xxxxx019@odu.edu) or 276-964-xxxx.

Sincerely,

xxxxxx xxxxx

Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University  
Coordinator of Library Services, Southwest Virginia Community College,  
Richlands, Virginia



## VITA

TERESA ALLEY YEAROUT  
 Old Dominion University  
 Darden College of Education, Room 210  
 Department of Educational Leadership and Counseling  
 Norfolk, VA 23539

### EDUCATION

Ph. D. (ABD), 2015, Community College Leadership, Old Dominion University  
 M.S.I.S., 2000, Information Sciences, University of Tennessee  
 B.A., 1981, 1993, Secondary English Education/Media Specialist, Clinch Valley College  
 A.A.S., 1979, General Studies and Education, Southwest Virginia Community College

### EXPERIENCE

2003-Present	Coordinator of Library Services, SWCC Library Southwest Virginia Community College, Richlands, VA
2003-Present	Instructor; Assistant Professor; Associate Professor Southwest Virginia Community College, Richlands, VA
1983-2003	Secondary English teacher; Library Media Specialist Tazewell County Public Schools, Richlands, VA
1994-2003	Evening and summer Library assistant; Special projects Southwest Virginia Community College, Richlands, VA

### PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Yearout, T., and Carroll, B. (2014, November). Making Online Library Services Work in Your Social, Global Worlds. Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Sociology/Global Studies Peer Group Conference, Roanoke, VA.

Brenner, J., and Alley, T. (2011, Spring). Research on short-term study abroad trip. *CCID International News*, 16-17.

Brenner, J., and Alley, T. (2011, Spring). Southwest Virginia Trip to China. *CCID International News*, 15-16.

Brenner, J., and Alley, T. (2008, April). What's Up with Students' Cultural Knowledge? Virginia Community College System (VCCS) New Horizons Annual Conference, Roanoke, VA.

### SERVICES

- Professional Development Virginia Community College System (VCCS) State Committee, SWCC representative, 2014-2015
- Professional Development Committee, Chair, Southwest Virginia Community College, 2010-2014
- Appalachian Heritage Writers Symposium, Registrar, 2011-present
- Delta Kappa Gamma Society International (professional honorary society of women educators), 2004-Present