Prepared Future Leaders: An Ethnographic Study Exploring the Culture of Succession Planning and Leader Development in Christian Higher Education

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Preparing Future Leaders: An Ethnographic Study Exploring the Culture of Succession Planning and Leader Development in Christian Higher Education

A Dissertation by

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Irvine, California
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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This study was inspired in part from a single line in a book. In Succession Principle: How Leaders Make Leaders, David L. McKenna, Ph.D., former university president, wrote “Our legacy will be written not in the good things that we have done as Christian leaders, but in the great things that our successor will do” (McKenna, 2014, p123). I remain challenged by this assertion, and pray that those who follow me will do great things.
ABSTRACT

Preparing Future Leaders: An Ethnographic Study Exploring the Culture of Succession Planning and Leader Development in Christian Higher Education

by Andrew Barton

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model. In the face of unprecedented disruption and complexity, the review of literature suggested the higher education sector in the United States is largely underprepared for the upcoming exodus and shortage of leaders. With religiously-affiliated institutions accounting for more than one in five colleges and universities in the US, there were no visible studies attending to succession planning and leader development in Christian higher education. Given the important contribution of these faith-based institutions to the educational landscape it is both important and significant to understand the culture of succession planning and leader development in this environment. The study identified nine themes related to the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, a member of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities. These themes were 1) Developing future leaders is a clear priority of the president, 2) Historic cultural and religious traditional norms are influential, 3) Purpose of the programs are clearly understood by participant, 4) Exposure and interaction with other leaders is highly valued, 5) Participants associate deep value with their engagement in programs, 6) Intentional and ongoing efforts to connect with the Nashville community is important, 7) Clarity around ongoing plans for participants is challenging, 8) Board of trustees prioritize succession planning efforts, and 9) Intentionally developing leaders who understand the changing landscape of higher education is critical. The results of the study
have significant implications for presidents and board chairs as they consider the need to identify, develop and prepare the next generation of leaders for their institutions of Christian higher education.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The commitment to higher education in the United States has never been greater, with roots in 17th century New England as Harvard College, now Harvard University, and a founding motto ‘Veritas pro Christo et Ecclesia’, namely Truth for Christ and the Church.

Research suggests 50% of senior administrators will turnover in the next decade, along with 25% of college and university presidents (Klein & Salk, 2013; Mallard, 2015). This drain of executive leaders, coupled with the economic, political and human resource pipeline challenges, has led many to speak of an impending leadership crisis within higher education (Grossman, 2014; Richards, 2009). Of significant concern to many in face of this crisis is the apparent unpreparedness of higher education institutions, especially those religiously affiliated, to develop future leaders through a process often experienced as counter cultural (Luna, 2012; Stripling, 2011).

The growth in higher education enrollment and expenditure has occurred in a sector facing widespread disruption through weakening institutional finances, alternative business and delivery modalities, and increasing accountability for student outcomes (Henry, Pagano, Puckett, & Wilson, 2014; Selingo, 2013). Institutions of Christian higher education have faced the additional impact of cultural shifts which have placed pressure on religious protections, hiring and community standards (Dockery, 2008). It is critically important to appreciate this landscape when considering the sophisticated skills, experiences and competencies required by leaders of 21st century academic institutions to navigate such complex waters.
In face of this complexity, higher education administrators are projected to leave at alarming rates. While not always as effective or successful as desired, in the past two decades the tangible connection between succession planning, developing leaders and organizational sustainability has become common practice in the for-profit sector (Barnett & Davis, 2008). The reality that the staid halls of US colleges and universities have, at best, shown a lack luster and weak strategic commitment to this intentional leader development planning calls for examination (Bornstein, 2010).

Why is this important? Many have argued that the societal impact of higher education is as vital, if not more, than the missions of for-profit organizations, and were troubled that these institutions were wholly unprepared for developing future leaders (Coleman, 2013). Concerned specifically with extending the missional impact of Christian organizations, McKenna (2014) contended it was time for leaders, such as Christian university presidents, to shift from aspirations of personal success to a responsibility for succession. The challenge for these leaders is to plan and prepare in such a way so as to leave the Christian university better resourced and oriented in the hands of a leader who has been properly identified and prepared to succeed them.

The future vitality and relevance of Christian higher education depends on current and developing leaders applying distinctively Christian thinking and vision very differently than just a decade ago (Dockery, 2008). With religiously-affiliated institutions accounting for one in five of all private higher education colleges and universities, the need for intentional engagement of succession planning efforts to develop sustainable leadership pipelines is critical.
Background

History of American Higher Education

Emerging from the roots of ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt, the modern US higher education system has lineage through the high middle age European cities of Bologna, Oxford, Cambridge and Paris, and through 17th century colonial Massachusetts. From the founding colleges of Harvard, Yale, and William and Mary, American higher education is imbued with a rich heritage in the liberal arts, albeit one that has shifted significantly over the course of almost 400 years (Glyer & Weeks, 1998; Hoeckley, n.d.). In the face of unprecedented economic and demographic expansion, these institutions have journeyed to new heights of complexity and, in doing so, broadened the mission from the pure liberal arts to include professional and public schools (Kotler & Fox, 1985; Lucas, 2006).

The first colonial colleges, and the majority of those that followed, were founded with a Christian mission typically for the purpose of training church preachers (Woodrow, 2006). While the 20th century saw most of these colleges transition to a secular premise, the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish communities of faith established and nurtured hundreds of colleges for the public good (Martin & Samels, 2009).

Landscape of Christian Higher Education

According to most current data there are 4,716 public and private higher education institutions, of which 884 (18.7%) are religiously affiliated and serve 1.9 million enrolled students (CCCU, 2015). The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU), established in 1976, was one higher education association which
seeks to support its 154 American institutions and their leaders, while advancing the cause of Christ-centered higher education.

Despite this important footprint, Christian colleges and universities experienced the same disruption as secular institutions of higher education from advances in technology, changing regulatory environment, shifting student expectations, new models of delivery and business operations, and falling revenues. The social, cultural and legislative shifts, especially in more politically progressive states, provided unique challenges for the presidents of Christian higher education as they sought to navigate their institutions through uncharted terrain (CCCU, 2016a).

The new landscape caused some to suggest Christian institutions had quickly moved into a post-Christian world and, in order to thrive, would have to embrace uncertainty and innovation and chart a new course for integrating faith and learning in a higher education setting (Hulme, Groom, & Heltzel, 2016; Reynolds & Wallace, 2016). Whatever the future shape, some suggested it was clear that leaders of Christian higher education would require an increasing level of sophistication, capacity and experiences to effectively manage and lead change in a volatile environment (Kadlecek, 2016).

**Developing Future leaders**

An uncomfortable reality for American higher education, affirmed in the literature, was an apparent unpreparedness in face of an impending leadership crisis (Luna, 2012). With aging leaders, unprecedented turnover rates, reduced budgets, and an increasing reluctance of upcoming leaders to pursue institutional leadership, many pointed to the limited pipeline of future leaders in higher education institutions (Bornstein, 2010).
While the foundations of leadership theory evolved significantly in the 20th century, the emergence of modern leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, elevated the leader-follower relationship as a central concept in understanding effective strategies for leader development (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). The principle of succession has historic roots in the beginning of human history, but it was not until the 20th century that concepts of administrative succession and replacement planning entered the for-profit vernacular and the intentional consideration of the economic benefit of sustained leadership (Hall, 1986).

In the context of leadership development as a continuum, replacement planning was considered the short-term solution at one end which often lacked deep purpose or philosophy (Heuer, 2003). At the other extreme was a succession planning approach which took a proactive, organized, aligned and flexible approach to the planned development of people (Wolfe, 1996). The latter led many corporate boardrooms to move people, or ‘talent’ as some view their human resource, management strategies out from being solely a function of the human resources office and into the very fabric of the organization and its comprehensive strategic priorities (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Beck & Conchie, 2012; Geroy, Caleb, & Wright, 2005). Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Chief Human Resource Officers (CHROs) focused not only on recruiting the best and brightest, but also intentionally created the organizational space for these employees to grow and flourish in order to create continuity and connectedness in organizational leadership.
Succession Planning

Rothwell (2010) defined succession planning as “a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement” (p.10). Succession planning strategies in the for-profit sector was extensively documented, with General Electric, Johnson & Johnson, Allstate, Proctor and Gamble, Hewlett-Packard, Lincoln Electric, Southwest Airlines, and Whole Foods Markets touted as exemplars (Beck & Conchie, 2012; Charan, 2005, 2008; Greer & Virick, 2008). These companies, and others, made the connection between intentionally developing leaders, largely for purposes of a strong internal leadership bench and a robust future bottom line. Through this work, a rich cadre of frameworks and best practice models of succession planning emerged illustrating the need for it to be a strategic priority, organizationally deep, differentiated, flexible, clear and replicable (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Rothwell, 2010; Singer & Griffith, 2010; Wolfred, 2008).

While these activities expanded in corporate America, the concept of intentionally and systematically developing future leaders was uncomfortable and frequently counter-cultural in higher education. Stripling (2011) went as far to suggest, given the culture in academe, that succession planning was anathema to higher education. Despite the toil, and in light of the strong evidence pointing to the benefit of succession planning in the for-profit environment, many considered it important not to abandon the examination of succession planning as a means to intentionally develop leaders for institutions of higher education (Beck & Conchie, 2012).
The University President

An effective succession planning process was seen much more broadly than simply developing leaders for the role of CEO or president. The literature highlighted that the process needed to go far beyond the C-suite leadership team and also that the role of a president/CEO was critical to champion leader development and leadership continuity through developing future leaders (Groves, 2007; Kesler, 2002). It was important in this context to understand the role and responsibilities of the president in the university or college setting.

Unlike the CEO of a for-profit organization, the university president wears many hats, namely as academic leader, financial manager, fundraiser, public intellectual, civic leader, administrator, politician, entrepreneur, and more (Bornstein, 2002; Cohen & March, 1974). The modern president is no longer considered merely a scholar of scholars but one leading a very complex organization with a number of distinct subcultures (Kauffman, 1980). This has contributed to significant turnover in executive leadership. The known benefits of succession planning to the overall health of the organization highlighted the increasingly need for university presidents to fully engage in a process to identify and develop emerging leaders for higher education institutions (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Simon, 2009). Unfortunately the succession planning in higher education literature was not deep, but did assert that for reasons of tradition and culture, succession planning in higher education lacked both planning and preparation (Stripling, 2011; Witt/Kieffer, 2008).
Succession Planning and Higher Education

A quick review of the literature revealed a dearth of both study and practice of succession planning in higher education. The quest to examine why higher education has been left behind in such practice unearths a common assertion that while higher education leaders are largely comfortable with the principle of succession planning, the old traditions of the academy and shared governance die hard - leading to a lack luster or weak strategic commitment (Klein & Salk, 2013; Pitre Davis, 2015; Richards, 2009).

In context of Christian higher education who are fishing from an even smaller proverbial pond, given the commonplace prerequisite for their employees to profess an active and engaged religious faith, some have considered it increasingly relevant for their boardroom and office of the president to embrace the systematic development of a diverse pool of future leaders aligned with a Christian faith and mission (McKenna, 2014). The absence of literature on succession planning in higher education from a Christian perspective communicates the significance of this study.

Despite the millions of dollars invested in succession planning efforts each year, only 53% of for-profit organizations felt they had a sufficient CEO pipeline to be successful in the future while 44% reported developing top talent remained the greatest near-term challenge (Hewitt, 2013). Intentionally developing future leaders, even in the for-profit environment, appeared challenging. The disparity between the for-profit sector and higher education appeared significant, especially in the financial investment in training and development initiatives (Riccio, 2010). In addition to finance, some of the challenges for effective succession planning were the tyranny of the urgent, lack of clarity in the framework and lack of senior leader engagement (Conger & Fulmer, 2003).
While the literature for this in higher education was very shallow, unique challenges to succession planning in this context were suggested as academic culture, rigid practices, and ironically a perceived lack of a learning approach to developing future leaders.

**Mission-Critical Endeavor**

Faced with a shifting national economic, labor, social and political landscape, the ability of higher education to develop leaders who are prepared to navigate their institutions through this complexity will be a key determiner as to whether they can effectively implement their mission (Sambolin, 2010). For a variety of reasons, higher education has in large part been unable to embrace and uniquely engage the extensive learning around leader development and succession planning strategies in for-profit organizations.

Christian higher education continues to make a seminal contribution in society, seeking to maintain both an arduous belief and vibrant conduct of integrating faith and learning (Dockery, 2008). However, if the mission of a Christian college or university is to offer deep meaning, be intensely personal, and bring about far-reaching positive societal change, then the consideration of who is being prepared to lead and shape these efforts is of profound significance (Woodrow, 2006).

**Statement of the Research Problem**

Despite investing billions of dollars in succession planning in recent years, 56% of executives in the US reported a shortage of leaders in their pipeline for key positions (Ferry, 2014a). While not always as effective or successful as desired, the past two decades has made the tangible connection between organizational sustainability and succession planning and therefore become common practice in the for-profit sector.
(Barnett & Davis, 2008). It is also known that the engagement and leadership of the chief executive officer/president is critical to the effective embrace of succession planning within the organization (Rothwell, 2010).

Richards (2009) and Clunies (2004) revealed a dearth of research around succession planning in higher education, with the limited studies heavily weighted towards public community colleges (Adams, 2013; Coleman, 2013). While succession planning and leader development was addressed, very few other works concentrated on private university or college settings (Klein & Salk, 2013; Luna, 2010). With religiously affiliated institutions making up one-fifth of all private post-secondary institutions, and the CCCU educating more than 1 in 5 students in this classification, what was not known was the experience of succession planning specific to Christian higher education.

McKenna (2014) was one of few leaders who comprehensively challenged Christian leaders to consider whether they are leaving future leaders the authority of trust and character, and in doing so acknowledge their role in the holy task of Christian leadership. It was clear that Christian higher education faced unprecedented financial, structural, cultural and leadership challenges. Of concern was that institutions of Christian higher education appeared largely unprepared to intentionally develop the pipeline of leaders necessary to lead and navigate in an increasingly complex future. This reality and McKenna’s call elucidated the need for a landmark examination of how succession planning fits within this leadership crisis and the culture of Christian colleges and universities.
Purpose Statement

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model.

Research Question

The research question at the heart of the study was: What is the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University?

Significance of the Problem

With recent research consistently pointing to colleges and universities being largely underprepared for the upcoming exodus and shortage of leaders (Klein & Salk, 2013; Luna, 2012), trustee boards and academic executives will be required to grapple with how they can intentionally develop a robust pipeline of leaders from deep within their institutions. While the entire higher education sector faces unprecedented disruption and complexity, it is felt no more acutely than within Christian higher education who, through their faith employment requirements alone, experience a smaller pool of candidates from which to draw leaders.

Although there is a well-attended body of research focused on succession planning, the most substantial portion is directed towards for-profit organizations and a small percentage looks at higher education. It is noteworthy that most studies in higher education are attuned to the community college landscape, and occasional private institutions, but a lack of data exists related to Christian higher education. With religiously-affiliated institutions accounting for more than one in five colleges and universities in the US, and no visible studies attending to succession planning in Christian
higher education, it is both important and significant to better understand the culture of succession planning in this environment.

Trustees and presidents of Christian higher education may find this study helpful as they consider how to strategically develop and successfully position leaders with the breadth of experience and competency to navigate a very challenging and uncertain future. College and university human resource professionals may use the findings of this study to help them more readily reflect on the culture of succession planning and leader development at their institution and the opportunity to shape efforts to deploy succession planning initiatives more successfully. In the same vein, university presidents may be interested in the study’s examination around barriers in succession planning and leadership development in light of how employees’ best engage in such programs.

If members of the board of trustees, presidents and other executive leaders of Christian higher education do not take a more concerted interest in the topic of succession planning, and position their efforts accordingly, the very missions of their institutions may be at severe risk. The lack of a vetted and prepared internal leadership pipeline, along with unprecedented disruption and complexity in the higher education sector, may cause some already fragile institutions to simply fail and many more destined to a future of mission ineffectiveness and struggle. This future is not beyond the realm of likelihood, which imbues this study with a tangible air of urgency (Richards, 2009).
Definitions

This section provides definitions of the terms that are relevant to the study.

Churches of Christ. Autonomous Christian congregations associated with one another through common beliefs and practices. They seek to base doctrine and practice on the Bible alone in order to be the church described in the New Testament.

Christian Higher Education. An institution beyond high school that integrates the Christian faith and learning, allowing the development of Christian perspectives in all areas of life and thought (Holmes, 1987).

Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU). A Washington, D.C.-based higher education association of 182 Christian institutions representing 35 protestant Christian denominations as well as the Catholic Church. The nonprofit organization represents 117 member campuses in North America who are all regionally accredited, comprehensive colleges and universities with curricula rooted in the arts and sciences. In addition, 65 affiliate campuses from 20 countries are part of the CCCU (CCCU, 2016b).

Leader. An individual exhibiting leadership.

Leader Development. The expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes (Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010)

Leadership. The process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2010).

Succession Planning. The deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement (Rothwell, 2010).
University President. The Chief Executive Officer of a higher education institution who has the responsibility to lead and manage the University as set forth by the board of trustees or board of regents.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the aspects of a study that can be controlled and, in doing so, provide the boundaries of the study (Simon, 2011). With 884 religiously affiliated colleges and universities in the United States of America, the study was delimited to the 117 institutions full members of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities located in North America (CCCU, 2016a). These 117 institutions represented the population of the study.

In order to study the culture of succession planning and leader development the study population was further delimited to identify university presidents who were exemplary in engaging the organization in leader development and succession planning efforts. The researcher narrowed the scope of the study in this way based on three factors:

1. National recommendation: The president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities highlighted her personal experience of the president’s intentional and innovative succession planning efforts and approaches to leader development at Lipscomb University.

2. Peer recognition: The university president at Lipscomb University was recognized for his leadership and commitment to holding employees in the highest regard by other CEOs in the region. The university president was named most admired CEO by the Nashville Business Journal in 2012.
3. Proven experience: The Lipscomb university president has had a diverse experience, holding employed leadership positions at four institutions of Christian higher education, and served as a board of trustee at two additional institutions of Christian higher education.

Therefore the study was delimited to one full member of the CCCU, Lipscomb University located just outside of Nashville, Tennessee. The sample of 16 participants to be interviewed was further delimited into five categories of people who have shaped, delivered, and/or participated in one of the succession planning and leader development initiatives. These categories were the president, board chair, administrators, faculty/staff participants, and local community members.

Organization of the Study

This study is apportioned into five chapters. Chapter I provided an introduction to the study, along with background information, the statement of the problem, the significance of the problem, definitions of terms, and study delimitations. Chapter II examines the literature on American higher education, and specifically Christian higher education, along with leadership development, the roles and responsibilities of the university president, and the best practices and challenges around succession planning in the for-profit and higher education sectors. Chapter III presents the methodology used in the study, including the population and sample as well as the criteria for selection of the individuals for the study. Chapter IV offers the findings of the study, including a detailed analysis of the data. Chapter V provides an interpretation of the data, draws conclusions based on the analysis, suggests implications for actions, and proffers recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter begins with an historical overview of higher education and the rise of Christian colleges in America followed by an examination of the current landscape and challenges faced by such institutions. The next section focuses on leadership through the lenses of theory, the different approaches to planning for future leaders, leadership development in higher education, and the role and leadership responsibilities of the university president. The chapter continues with a comprehensive review of the concept of succession planning, looking at best practice and impact, an appraisal of some of the efforts and important nuances around succession planning within institutions of higher education, along with challenges faced in both the for-profit and higher education sectors. The researcher developed a synthesis matrix which served as a foundation for the review of literature (Appendix A).

University presidents, boards of trustees and academic executives are grappling with a higher education sector facing unprecedented disruption, while simultaneously leading colleges and universities considered largely underprepared for the upcoming exodus and shortage of leaders (Klein & Salk, 2013; Luna, 2012). This issue has been felt no more acutely than within Christian higher education who, through their faith employment requirements alone, have experienced a smaller pool of candidates from which to draw leaders.

Although there is a well-attended body of research focused on succession planning, elucidated in this chapter, it is primarily directed towards for-profit organizations with a small percentage engaging higher education attuned to the community colleges and the occasional private institution. With religiously-affiliated
institutions accounting for more than one in five colleges and universities in the US, and no visible studies on succession planning in Christian higher education, it is both important and significant to better understand succession planning in this environment.

**Higher Education**

This study of succession planning and leader development is situated in the context of higher education. To better understand the succession planning and leader development efforts in this sector, it is important to be knowledgeable of the broader higher education landscape. For this reason this section addresses the rise of Christian colleges and universities in the United States, along with the current state of American Christian higher education, and the challenges faced by associated institutions.

**Brief History of Higher Education and the Rise of the Christian College in America**

The modern US higher education system has roots that run as far back as the high middle age European cities of Bologna, Oxford, Cambridge and Paris, and ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt. The early immigrant settlers in New England brought this influence and placed great importance on establishing institutions of higher learning. In a 1643 edition of the pamphlet *New England’s First Fruits*, it was written,

“After God had carried us safe to New England and we builded [sic] our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God’s worship, and settled the civil government: one of the next things we long for, and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity” (Miller, 1956, p. 323).

It was only eight years into operation when the general court of Massachusetts appropriated funds to establish the first college in English America which, after the death of a local minister and benefactor, was renamed Harvard College (Hofstadter & Smith,
1961). Established to train young men for deployment into the ministry, the first motto of the new college was ‘Veritas pro Christo et Ecclesia’, meaning ‘Truth for Christ and Church’ (Smith & Jackson, 2004). While the eight colleges that followed before the American Revolution experienced the divisive challenge of rising denominationalism, they shared Harvard College’s broad dual Christ-oriented purpose to train church and ministry leaders (Lucas, 2006; Woodrow, 2006). Not all agreed with attaching the discord between denominations to the emergence of these colonial colleges, but rather associated the ideological and religious forces of the First Great Awakening (Ringenberg, 2006).

Regardless of impetus, these founding colleges ensured American higher education was imbued with a rich heritage in the liberal arts, which Hoeckley asserted shaped the scholarly, gentlemanly and liberating liberal arts traditions. The founding hope for these institutions was to advocate a core philosophy of faith and learning which produced graduates to address the challenges and needs of the contemporary society and culture (Woodrow, 2006). Despite these primary strains, some commentators contended the orientation of liberal arts learning institutions shifted significantly over the course of almost 400 years (Glyer & Weeks, 1998). Historically, while these shifts over centuries changed the content offered or focus given by the college and university, the seismic disruption felt by the academy in the last decade and the ability to attract senior leaders with a desire and competency to manage this complexity was unprecedented (Bornstein, 2010). This was considered of critical importance for both institutions of higher education and for-profit organizations, placing succession planning as one of the most important issues leaders needed to have on their agenda (Rothwell, 2010).
As the colleges of colonial and antebellum America evolved through the 18th and 19th centuries, the liberal arts agenda was strongly shaped by milestone decisions such as the Dartmouth College Case in 1819 which safeguarded private institutions from legislative interference; the Yale Report in 1828 which affirmed a liberal arts non-vocational curricula focus; the Morrill Act of 1862 which expanded access to public higher education through permitting programs not previously allowed; and the second Morrill Act of 1890 which withheld funding to any state restricting access to land grant universities based on race (Lucas, 2006). Today the federal and state legislative landscape that faces leaders of Christian higher education involves proposals to amend laws which many in the Christian community believe encroach on the religious protections historically afforded to religiously affiliated institutions (Marsden, 2015).

The federal government gave meager support to educate African American students until the late 19th century, so it was Christian church bodies that sponsored and supported many black colleges in the southern states, such as Taladega College (1867), Benedict College (1871), Selma University (1878) and as many as two-hundred private and denominational colleges through the 1880s (Lucas, 2006). This period also saw the rise of the Bible college movement across the country, which Ringenberg (2006) maintained many historians largely ignored or dismissed as irrelevant. He contended that while the century saw most colleges transition to a secular premise, the influence of the educational and moral principles of the Christian college stood in contrast to those who de-emphasize the impact of this public good.

It is for this reason, among many, that some claimed it was too simplistic to view the story of 20th century higher education as merely the secularization of colleges.
preparing Christian workers, but rather a story of a country indebted to the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish communities of faith who founded and nurtured hundreds of colleges across the country for the public good (Martin & Samels, 2009). In the face of unprecedented economic and demographic expansion, these institutions with simple missions journeyed to new heights of complexity and size through the post-war period of the 20th century. In so doing, they broadened the mission of the college from the pure liberal arts to include professional and public schools (Kotler & Fox, 1985). It is in the face of this complexity and uncertainty that rose a need for a new type of leader in the academy, one with a breadth of academic, business and political experience and sophistication that was simply not necessary for success in the preceding centuries (Heuer, 2003).

The history of American higher education was intricately linked to the rise of the Christian college, with some saying the latter set both the pace and purpose for what the sector represents today (Martin & Samels, 2009). While not everyone subscribed to that view, almost all agree that Christian higher education maintains the ability to make a distinct contribution to the 21st century landscape of higher education.

**American Christian Higher Education today**

From the protestant-dominated model of early American college through the growth of the secular hegemony model in the late 19th and 20th centuries, some suggested the modern Christian college community had lost many of its best developed institutions (Ringenberg, 2016). However most agreed there was still a place for a Christian worldview in higher education that was relevant, personal, distinctive and deep in meaning (Woodrow, 2006). With a more evangelistic tone Dockery (2008) suggested the
modern Christian college provided a critical framework for the advancement of Christianity. Trueblood and Newby (1978) painted a powerful image of the role of a Christian college when they wrote, “Like Archimedes, we need a place to stand if we expect to move the world, and the genuine Christian college has precisely such a place” (p. 120).

It is in this space where some suggested Christian colleges could integrate faith and learning while maintaining a commitment to both an educational and a religious distinctive (Holmes, 1987; Ringenberg, 2016). Supporting this view, New York Times columnist David Brooks spoke of the unique role of Christian higher education in developing students in a manner than integrates faith, emotion and intellect (CCCU, 2016a).

As a result, Christian higher education still reflects an important swath of the American higher education landscape. The five largest Christian universities alone, which includes Liberty University, Grand Canyon University, Columbia College, Indiana Wesleyan University and Baylor University serve more than 250,000 students in 2015 (Collegestats, 2016). As outlined in table 1, religiously affiliated institutions represented 18.7% of the 4,716 degree granting postsecondary institutions and 9.2% (1.88 million) of all enrolled students in 2013. More than one in three students enrolled at a private institution attended one that identified as religiously affiliated.
Table 1

Number and student enrollment of degree-granting postsecondary US institutions by type for Fall 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall 2013</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Percent of Total Institutions</th>
<th>Total Student Enrollment</th>
<th>Percent of Total Student Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All institutions</td>
<td>4,716</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>20,375,789</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>19,802</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>1,313</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>12,120,534</td>
<td>59.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>2,398,360</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other public</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>206,862</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent nonprofit</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>2,089,266</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For-profit</td>
<td>1,416</td>
<td>30.0%</td>
<td>1,656,227</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiously affiliated</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>1,884,738</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, established in 1976, is a higher education association which seeks to support the promotion and leadership activities of evangelical Christian higher education in the public square (Kadlecek & Ostrander, 2016). It has been suggested that the CCCU, among many, promotes the belief that effective Christian institutions of the 21st century are not only environments to prepare people for full-time service in the church, but for a variety of careers, with a distinctive in the value development of students and helping them contribute in the workplace to the moral wisdom society needs (Holmes, 1987).

However despite this important footprint, the vast majority of Christian colleges and universities - and the presidents that lead them – have faced unprecedented change (Martin & Samels, 2009; Reynolds & Wallace, 2016). The challenges faced by modern Christian colleges helped shape a unique landscape for Christian higher education. It is
important to understand this as one considers the role of the university president in advocating the preparation of future leaders throughout the academic organization.

**Challenges for Christian Higher Education in the United States**

Presidents of Christian higher education institutions look at the future very differently than just a decade ago, with a complex landscape influenced by changes in delivery modalities, learning models, for-profit entities, accountability, special interest groups around sexuality and gender identity, federal funding, accreditation, religious liberties, and global demographic, economic and technology shifts, (Dockery, 2008; Hulme et al., 2016; Wolff, 2009).

Most commentators suggested higher education in the United States faced both peril, from a broken system and array of pressing challenges, and promise, with opportunities demanding creative and innovative solutions (Henry, Pagano, Puckett, & Wilson, 2014; Reynolds & Wallace, 2016; Selingo, 2013). Like all institutions of higher education, Christian colleges experienced this relentless pace of change in the 21st century – one that is both unprecedented and likely to continue into a future where leaders will have to reimagine Christian higher education in a post-Christian world (Reynolds & Wallace, 2016). It has been suggested that this pace of change has placed great pressure on university leaders to hold the natural tension between focusing on long-term financial sustainability and value versus the short term goals and emerging global issues that impact students, their families, and communities (Simon, 2009).

After four centuries of modelling excellence in many areas, the majority of today’s Christian colleges were considered fragile with business and student models under intense pressure (Martin & Samels, 2009). Of specific challenge to Christian
institutions was that these disruptive changes have occurred in the spaces of deeply held values, accentuating the difficulty for leaders around articulation, motivation, decision and leadership, and requiring uniquely Christian thinking (Dockery, 2008; LeBlanc, 2014). Reynolds and Wallace (2016) suggested these deep challenges would require Christian colleges and universities to embrace a clear identity in a post-Christian world, engage a disaggregated institutional models, and execute in response to changing student expectations. Others called upon Christian institutions, with a unique contribution, to strategically embrace the challenges and thrive in the chaos through reimagining instruction, learning, space and experience (Hulme et al., 2016).

To navigate this volatile and complex sector, Christian colleges would be required to have increasingly sophisticated, high capacity and diverse leaders that are developed with focus and intention (Kadlecek, 2016). Having reviewed the rise and current challenges faced by Christian higher education, and to more fully understand the dynamics of leadership in this environment, one must first examine the literature on leadership.

**Leadership**

While the foundations of leadership theory have evolved significantly over time, the role of leadership as a means to motivate people, direct resources, negotiate conflict and bring about transformational change has remained consistent.

**Brief History of the Development of Modern Leadership Theory**

Thomas Carlyle is considered by most commentators as the first modern writer on leadership, with his proclamation of heroic leadership and formulation of the Great Man theory (Bryman, 2011). His suggestion that great leaders were born and not made
evolved into the trait theory of the early 19th century, which moved away from the belief in inheritance to assert that leaders’ characteristics were simply different from non-leaders. The validity of traits in leadership theory declined significantly in the 1940s with research highlighting no connection between universal traits and effective leadership (Stogdill, 1948).

From this lack of connection emerged a focus on leadership behavior through research at The Ohio State University in the late 1940s, based on Stogdill’s work, and the University of Michigan in the 1950s under the leadership of Rensis Likert (Hayes & Likert, 1961). These studies both propagated people-oriented and task-oriented leadership behaviors, however the latter introduced participative leadership as a style of leadership which allowed others to grow and contribute within the organization at the same time.

The focus on the relationship or exchange between the manager and the employee brought about the rise of transactional theory of leadership (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003). Some saw inherent limitations in this theoretical direction because it suggested people were either leaders or not leaders based on organizational position or management authority, regardless of their interest in holding a mantle of leadership (Jackson & Parry, 2008). However others associated the rise of transactional leadership with an ability to view leadership as a process, and as an interaction between leader and follower. This non-linear interaction allowed leadership to be available to everyone, and brings in the elements of influence and common goals within groups (Northouse, 2010).

The growth of research and study in leadership led to many additional theories and frameworks in the 20th century such as, but no limited to, contingency theory
(Fiedler, 1965), charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1998), adaptive leadership (Heifetz, 2009), competency-based leadership, followership, authentic and transformational leadership (Avolio & Bass, 2002; Burns, 1978). It should be pointed out that Burns suggested a leader was either transactional or transformation, whereas Bass took the view of a continuum with an ability to mix both (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003).

James MacGregor Burns, commonly considered the father of modern leadership studies, noted two significant developments in the field of leadership studies (Burns, 2005). First he spoke to its ‘internationalization’ which moved leadership theory away from an American emphases and bias. Second he recognized benefit from the growing interdisciplinary nature of leadership research which renewed many of these respective disciplines.

The interdisciplinary efforts during the late 20th and early 21st centuries saw significant research and applied contributions to the fields of transactional and transformational leadership through case studies, development of questionnaires, instruments and new models (Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2001; Anderson, 2001; Avolio & Bass, 2002; Bass & Avolio, 1998; Podsakoff, Todor, Grover, & Huber, 1990).

It is important to appreciate the emergence of modern leadership styles because their acknowledgement of the important role and partnership of the leader-follower relationship was central to understanding effective strategies for leader development (Kouzes & Posner, 2008). As will be explored in more depth later in the chapter, succession planning is considered a fundamental element of a comprehensive leadership development strategy within an organization (Charan, 2005).
This work led to the development of a wide range of materials and frameworks for identifying and developing leaders based on a transformational perspective. From both a theoretical and practical perspective, the leading consensus suggested that transactional leadership alone was insufficient, but when combined with the notion of transformation, followers would perform beyond expectations (Jackson & Parry, 2008). The interaction between leader and follower, and the ensuing increased levels of motivation and morality, was a key distinctive of transformational leadership and drove both to reach their fullest potential (Northouse, 2010).

The transformational leadership approach affirmed the importance of the leader-follower relationship, regardless of formal power or authority, and that a legacy of leadership was largely built when the aspirations of a leader intersected with the willingness of the follower (Kouzes & Posner, 2008; Rost, 1993). Most agreed with the relational aspect of leadership and were increasingly aware of how leadership influenced strong organizational outcomes and effective partnerships between leaders and followers (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Traditionally, leader development was seen as a series of events, often formal, and generally directed at specific skills and competencies. However more recent frameworks, such as The Authentic Leadership model, showed a relational leadership style grounded in a commitment to partners through the leader’s positive psychological capacities, honesty and transparency, strong ethics and behavioral integrity (Avolio, 2003). Recent leader development strategies emphasized character development as a lifelong process and a commitment rather than a series of skills and competencies (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).
Day (2001) spoke to an important nuance between leadership development and leader development. The latter focused on the self-development and self-awareness of the leader, while the former was concerned with the behavior of the leader as they interacted with others in the organization. The early 2000s saw significant energy focused around approaches to leadership development such as skills development, mentoring, coaching, job rotation, career pathing and other talent management-oriented initiatives (Day, 2001). As one thinks about intentionally developing and planning for future leaders it is important not to become myopic but consider different approaches.

**Different Approaches to Planning for Future Leaders**

Ostrowski (1968) proffered that succession was “probably as old as the history of human organization itself” (p10). While it is true that succession as a process of inheriting a title, office or property reached as deep into human history as the kings, queens and other leaders of nations and people groups, the modern notion of succession planning as a management concept was often attributed to the industrial development period of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Grossman, 2014). Henri Fayol, a French innovator of business management, was the first documented business leader and organizational theorist to promote the value of stability in the tenure of personnel in his seminal work (Fayol, 1916). While Pryor and Taneja (2010) suggested many theorists recognized Fayol’s work around 14-points of management as having made a significant contribution to contemporary management theory and succession planning, not all shared this view (Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973).

Helmich and Brown (1972) submitted that administrative succession did not achieve widespread recognition until Max Weber analyzed it as a part of the routinization
of charisma. In a review of succession planning literature, Giambatista, Rowe, and Riaz (2005) took a different position and credited Grusky (1960) for moving the field forward by being the first to address the functional and dysfunctional consequences of succession on how an organization planned for leadership transition. Kesner and Sebora (1994) supported this analysis and suggested it was Grusky that observed the lack of systematic investigation and set succession literature on a more scientifically rigorous trajectory.

While the 1960s saw important theoretical perspectives laid out for the literature stream, the 1970s saw the research focus on relationships, and in particular highlighted new variables such as insider and outside succession (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). Mahler and Wrightnour (1973) wrote what is considered the first detailed description of how leading corporations should plan for the replacement of key executives. This work around replacement planning was built upon by Donald Helmich with attention to successor characteristics and relationships with the board (Helmich, 1974, 1977).

**Replacement planning.** Prior to the 1980s, when it became more common place to consider factors such as the high cost of retirements, recruiting talent and work teams, as part of the succession planning process, the primary focus within organizations was replacement planning (Burdett, 1993; Hall, 1986; Kesner & Sebora, 1994).

Kesler (2002) associated replacement planning with the common vernacular that spoke of planning for the possibility of ‘the boss getting hit by a milk truck’. He argued that while having a list of likely replacements may help with anxiety of board members, having a list does little to develop future leaders. Leadership development can be viewed as a continuum, with replacement planning and succession management at either end. Day (2007) described replacement planning as a minimal succession approach where
replacement employees are identified simply for the top two or three managerial levels, with little or no attention to the development issues. Often the primary purpose of replacement planning was simply to identify immediate successors to take over a particular position in the organization if it is vacated through a planned scenario or that of emergency or disaster (Ferry, 2014b; Grossman, 2014).

Heuer (2003) asserted that most intended succession plans end up being replacement plans because they have a short-term focus lacking both purpose and philosophy. In his study of community college leaders, Mackey (2008) identified the common misconception that succession planning and replacement planning are synonymous, declaring that the latter is simply a risk management approach. Others agreed with this risk management perspective and saw replacement planning as more reactive, restricted and narrow in attitude (Wolfe, 1996).

By the mid-1980s, many or most Fortune 500 companies had adopted intentional succession planning and leader development programs - in part motivated by the success and attention of Jack Welch’s initiatives at General Electric as CEO. Welch infamously proclaimed “the rigor of our people system is what brings this whole thing to life. There aren't enough hours in a day or a year to spend on people” (Welch & Byrne, 2001).

Emerging from the perceived achievement of replacement planning in the for-profit arena came an emphasis on seeing people within organizations as talent.

**Talent management.** Replacement planning efforts in the 1990s were heavily influenced by the literature’s focus on the complicated relationship between the needs of the organization and that of the individual (Eastman, 1995). The notion of talent management arose in tandem with succession planning and the intentionally internal
development of future leadership. From this and other studies came attention highlighting the nature of this environment and the need to maximize competitive advantage through seeing people as talent and managing it in such a way as to provide for the leadership pipeline (Kesner & Sebora, 1994). While talent management focused on a small group of high-potential and/or high-performing employees, the flow of talent was an important element of a succession planning approach (Kesler, 2002).

In terms of talent management the McKinsey Quarterly article entitled *The War For Talent* was a seismic contribution with it touting the failure of such efforts (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels, 1998). Positioning the notion of talent as a binary proposition for companies, Chambers et.al (1998) openly called managing talent an issue too important to ignore, and a war which “may seem like a crisis, but like any crisis, it's also an opportunity to seize—or squander” (p57). Others saw this fundamental shift as a response to increasing mobility of employees, the need for managerial expertise and the rise of the information age (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). This promoted a fixation with talent at any cost. Pfeffer (2001) strongly refuted the notion of a talent war, asserting it was a dangerous practice for most organizations. The contention was that the preoccupation with pursuing talent left large portions of the work force demotivated, produced an arrogant attitude that made it hard to learn or listen, and focused the organization on always looking for better people from the outside.

While many did not, and still do not, subscribe to a win at all costs talent mindset, most agreed an intentional strategy focused on leader development was crucial to attracting and retaining high performers (Gladwell, 2002; Pfeffer, 2001). As the talent
mindset morphed into the new obsession of a new century, many corporate boardrooms
moved talent management strategies out from being solely a function of the human
resources office, and into the very fabric of the organization and its comprehensive
strategic priorities (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Geroy et al., 2005). Using this mindset,
CEOs and CHROs focused intently on not only recruiting the best and brightest, but also
intentionally creating the organizational space for these employees to grow and flourish
internally in order to create continuity and connectedness in organizational leadership. It
was this intentional attempt at leadership continuity which led to the emergence and
flourishing of the succession planning concept.

**Succession planning.** Differing from the narrow view of replacement planning
and ‘only the best’ attitude of talent management, succession planning represented a
proactive, organized, aligned and flexible approach to the planned development of people
(Wolfe, 1996). Rather than simply identifying talent, succession planning took a longer
range focus on organizational needs and the development of qualified talent to meet the
need (Walker, 1992).

In essence succession planning went deeper into the organization and focused not
simply on an emergency replacement, but instead considered multiple candidates for a
given role in the organization (Ferry, 2014b). The 2000s saw a shift in succession
planning approaches away from an exclusive focus on the C-suite towards efforts deeper
into the organization (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Rothwell, 2005). Experts preferred
succession planning to replacement planning as a means to encourage long-term
organizational sustainability (González, 2010; Rothwell, 2010).
The new century also saw succession planning begin to enter the not-for-profit sector, especially driven by a leadership crisis of retirements and scarcity (Mackey, 2008; Rothwell, 2005; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002). In the ensuing decades, new vocabulary entered the realm of succession planning literature in the form of terms such as job rotations, stretch assignments and cultural travelers (Hoffman, Casnocha, & Yeh, 2014; Sanaghan, 2016).

There were numerous definitions of succession planning, with most attributing meaning to the intentional process and structure which helped identify, develop and nurture future leaders (Cembrowski, 1997; Gray, 2014; Hall, 1986). The challenge was that for many the term was often used interchangeably with a variety of other idioms including talent management, workforce planning, and performance management (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Hewitt, 2013). However despite the lack of a singular description, a large portion of contributors and researchers in the field adopted the Rothwell (2010) definition of succession planning - “a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement” (p10).

Faced with a rapidly growing body of succession planning literature, Giambatista et al. (2005) advocated that the new millennium failed to produce a singular coherent theoretical or methodological framework for succession planning. While this may be the case, the reality of an aging workforce along with emergence of talent management, leadership development and workforce planning, the role of succession planning in
ensuring leadership continuity and employee advancement at all levels was considered more important than ever (Rothwell, 2010).

The focus on succession planning as a field of study gained significant traction from 2005, leading to an expansion of academic research as well as a rise of an industry devoted to succession planning and related products, tools and models (Berke, 2005; Ferry, 2014b; Hewitt, 2013). In an economic environment where scarcity of resources was reality for most for-profit and non-profit organizations, the need for effective and quality leadership was identified as critically important (Kesler, 2002).

While the predominance of succession planning literature was situated within the for-profit sector, the ability to engage or implement these concepts was not restricted to this segment of the workforce (Nonprofits, n.d). However there were distinct cultural difference and unique challenges that leaders faced when engaging with succession planning efforts in the non-profit setting of higher education (Bennett, 2015). Despite the strong evidence pointing to the benefit of leader development in the for-profit environment, it is important not to abandon the examination of intentionally developing leaders for institutions of higher education (Beck & Conchie, 2012).

**Leadership Development in Higher Education**

The body of literature on leadership development in higher education was meager. This reality is one of the reasons this study is significant. Kezar et al. (2006) suggested academic organizations were static, highly structured, and value-neutral in their leadership development postures. Reynolds (2012) supported this by positing academic organizations tended to have hierarchical leaders who use a command and control leadership style which distanced them from their internal community in the leadership
development process. This highly hierarchical governance structure common to academic institutions often bred a transactional style of leadership and narrow view of leadership development efforts (Gmelch, 2015).

Acknowledging this highly categorized structure, Morrill (2007) suggested universities would need to move their leadership development processes towards less hierarchical structures, designed to develop leaders increasingly more flexible and transformational in their style to help the academic community respond effectively to change. Others suggested process-centered collaborative models of leadership development would be needed to help university campuses better understand how individual leaders grow and develop (Kezar et al., 2006). This type of transformational leadership approach was considered neither beyond the academic setting or the leaders who could be developed in such a ways as to inspire, stimulate and energize those around them (Astin, Astin, & Kellogg Foundation, 2000; Filan & Seagren, 2003).

However one of the key challenges for leadership development in the university setting was the egalitarian nature of colleges and universities where to many it is unnatural and countercultural to single out a faculty or staff member with leadership potential (Barden, 2009). In a web article Bennett (2015) highlighted the danger of these poor leadership development efforts to institutions of higher education facing a turbulent landscape when he decried,

Higher education has a long and inglorious track record when it comes to identifying, developing, and selecting leaders….Leadership may have mattered less in a more munificent, less competitive, slower-to-change environment, but that no longer describes the situation.
Literature highlighted consensus around the critical role of a president/CEO in any successful organizational program which champions leader development and leadership continuity through developing future leaders (Groves, 2007; Kesler, 2002). It is in this context it is important to understand the role and responsibilities of the president in the university or college setting.

**Role and Leadership Responsibilities of the University President**

Most recognized that the role of the college president has changed significantly since Colonial America. The majority of presidents of the institutions in the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries were appointed from the clergy, and did not come through academic ranks (Burton, 2003). This shifted in the late 1800s through the mid-1900s when the president was typically more of a ‘scholar leading the scholars’ (Scott, 2011). The president of a current college or university oversees far more than just scholarly activity, with responsibility to manage and lead others through the complexity of a fast pace and changing educational and social landscape (Sanchez, 2009). A major distinctive of a university president in comparison to chief executives of other sectors, according to Gill (2012), was the complexity of expectations and perspectives of vastly different cultures, individuals and groups from multiple structures within one institution. Kauffman (1980) went so far as to describe a modern president as at the center of “a vastly complex and fragile human organization” (p111).

Unlike the CEO of a for-profit organization, the university president wears many hats, namely as academic leader, financial manager, fundraiser, public intellectual, civic leader, administrator, politician, entrepreneur, and more (Bornstein, 2002; Cohen & March, 1974). This is in keeping with the four decisional categories of the chief
executive – entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator – outlined in management literature almost thirty years ago (Mintzberg, 1989). For the university president this complexity is derived through the institutional tension between the academy and pressure for new business models common in the 21st century institution of higher education (Richards, 2009).

In his doctoral thesis, Sambolin (2010) asserted that this complexity was directly proportional to the rate at which higher education expanded and that the direct influence of a president, today, was not as extensive as many assumed. Others agreed that the president and his/her ability to lead change assertively from the ‘middle of an hourglass’ was impacted by the increasing influence of governing boards, faculty, alumni and donors (Fethke & Policano, 2012). The array of pressing challenges required university presidents to act with unprecedented clarity and vision in order to seize the strategic opportunities ahead (Henry et al., 2014b).

This highly complicated and multifaceted environment is a stressful and pressured one for university presidents. In a recent report of presidents of private colleges and universities the average tenure among presidents was reported as just seven years (Song & Hartley, 2012). Andringa and Splete (2006) reviewed data from all 4,200 accredited, degree-granting institutions, and saw that approximately half of all presidencies ended within five years, resulting in approximately 600 new presidents each year. This was considered a very significant churn in a strategic role. While most agreed with this analysis, Mallard (2015) suggested the average length of tenure for a president was longer and closer to ten years. Whether an average tenure of five or ten years, adaptability was highlighted as a required competency for a contemporary university
president in this environment (Sambolin, 2010). The ability to distinguish between disruptive and technical change was considered critical in the optimization and leverage of new and existing models of delivery (LeBlanc, 2014).

In this context, the role of the university president was considered far more one of influence and achieving goals through seeing faculty, staff, board and other constituency groups as followers not antagonists (Birnbaum, 1987). Influence was typically built over years and through meaningful common experience with colleagues. This was considered a deep challenge in the presidential ranks with retirement wave in the university’s top job (Stripling, 2011). With this significant turnover and the known benefits of succession planning to the overall health of the organization, the need for presidents to identify and develop emerging leaders was increasingly important for higher education institutions (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Simon, 2009). The challenge asserted by some was that for reasons of tradition and culture, succession planning had long been anathema to higher education, lacking in both planning and preparation (Stripling, 2011; Witt/Kieffer, 2008).

**Succession Planning**

With an understanding of the historic and current landscape of higher education in the US, the emergence of leadership development as both a field of interest and application in planning or future leaders, and the role and leadership responsibilities of the university president, this section will highlight the field of succession planning literature. This section reviews best practices in succession planning, its impact, the reality in the higher education environment, and challenges to the practice in both for-profit and higher education sectors.
Best Practice in Succession Planning

In the review of literature there appeared four major themes of best practice in succession planning, namely to be a strategic priority for the organization, with an organizationally deep focus that is flexible and differentiated, offers support, and is clear and replicable.

Strategic priority. The literature was clear in its indication that the most effective succession planning efforts start at the top of the organization, referred to by many as the “C-suite”. The ownership and involvement of the organization’s executive leadership and their consideration of succession planning as a strategic necessity was considered critical to successful implementation (Kesler, 2002). Most proponents of this factor downplayed the need for the CEO or president to be involved in the design or granular level execution, and suggested this can be done by the human resources office if necessary, but that their engagement in the strategic priority of the effort itself was vital (Cohn, Khurana, & Reeves, 2005; Fancher, 2007).

When considering best practice the literature provided significant weight to the view that effective succession planning needed to focus on the strategic deployment of human capital (Boudreu & Ramstad, 2005). With this in mind the best models and the most effective leaders of succession planning in their organizations saw the people, or talent, as a valuable resource shared across the organization, rather than owned by a single unit or department (Barnett & Davis, 2008; Rothwell, 2010). As outlined in the later section reviewing challenges to succession planning, the absence of seeing people as a shared resource was acutely common in higher education (Vaillancourt, 2012).
**Organizationally deep.** Succession planning appeared most effective when the approach avoided a narrow view on the C-suite, but rather focused on looking at layers deep within the organization. This deeper concentration allowed the efforts to provide a richer series of applied learning opportunities which in turn afforded the organization greater illumination as to the abilities and potential of employees not operating at the highest levels (Bernthal & Wellins, 2006; Cohn et al., 2005; Hoffman et al., 2014). Looking more deeply within the organization meant the positional and employee competencies could be more comprehensively assessed and aligned to ensure the best possible opportunity for fit and effectiveness (Clunies, 2004; Rothwell, 1994). A broader view also allowed employees to experience assignments within their region and over time opportunities to cross boundaries, all with the goal of better preparing future leaders for the organization (Naqvi, 2009).

**Flexible and differentiated.** Most prominent in the recent tranche of literature was the suggestion that best practice succession planning should ensure an offering was not simply a one size fits all program (Rothwell, 2010; Wolfred, 2008). Importantly these future leader efforts, through secondment, job rotations and talent pools etc., were most beneficial if targeted and differentiated for the employee so they could have the opportunity to acquire the specific and necessary experiences (Beck & Conchie, 2012; Charan, 2005; Cohn et al., 2005; Ferry, 2014b). The literature did not suggest an absence of consistency, but rather acknowledged a flexible approach where the needs, aptitudes and experiences of each leader would be different (Ferry, 2014a).

An important element of bringing this differentiation to light was through the active inclusion of mentoring or coaching in the succession planning process (Bernthal &
Wellins, 2006; Fernandez-Araoz, Groysberg, & Nohria, 2011; Landles-Cobb, 2015; McKenna, 2015b; Rothwell, 2005). The support of more seasoned and experienced colleagues, especially during times of stretch assignments and assessment, was a value-added component of an effective succession planning process (Martin & Ungemah, 2014).

**Clear and replicable.** Fancher (2007) suggested that the levels of transparency, trust and formality in the organizational culture around internal succession planning process was a key determinant of its success in retaining the talent necessary to perpetuate the development of leaders toward sustaining the organizational mission. The importance of a systematic process that was transparent and repeatable was not only important for the organization, but also for the employee (Berke, 2005; Hedge & Pulakos, 2002). A simple step as having the ability to bring organization-wide definition to words such as ‘potential’, ‘talent’ and ‘successor’, enabled the employee to know how he or she was doing, what was needed to reach the next step, and how they were provided input in refining the experience of the succession planning process (Martin & Ungemah, 2014).

**Impact of Succession Planning**

With the review of major best practice elements of the succession planning process, and in light of this study being situated in Christian higher education, it was important to consider how these practices intersected with the perspectives of a leadership bench, organizational performance and the Christian faith.

**Leadership bench.** Succession planning was historically considered and actualized in context of programs and initiatives focused on the replacing the chief executive or president (Berke, 2005). However studies consistently showed even this
approach was a challenge, with more than half of companies with revenue greater than $500 million having no meaningful CEO succession plan (Charan, 2005). The author continued to remark that despite the massive investment in succession programs the process in North America was as broken and no better than anywhere else in the world. A recent study declared that 56% of executives reported a shortage of leaders for key executive positions in their organizations (Ferry, 2014a).

Beck and Conchie (2012) asserted that a more effective response to this unpreparedness was to widen the lens from top administrative positions and embrace succession planning throughout the entire organization. This was supported by others, of which some research suggested every organization had seven potential CEOs within its ranks and should utilize succession planning efforts to cultivate what Jack Welch called a veritable CEO greenhouse (Ferry, 2014b; Greer & Virick, 2008). Organizations acknowledged that leadership was needed to be identified and developed at levels throughout the organization, and modern succession planning needed to reflect this complexity (Mercer, 2009).

As organizations recognized that good leadership was crucial to their growth and future, the role of sound succession planning practices to develop and strengthen the leadership ‘bench’ grew in importance (Barnett & Davis, 2008). The concept of bench strength shifted from the athletic vernacular to the realms of board rooms and human resource offices. Some, like Boudreu and Ramstad (2005), went as far as to assert that developing a strong bench of future talent-leaders, with the hope of facilitating improved organizational performance, required the same level of sophisticated segmentation and deployment of human capital as expected of marketing to customers.
**Organizational performance.** Research consistently connected enhanced organizational performance with succession planning or other intentional practices that identified and developed future leaders. For example companies scoring in the top quintile of talent-management practices outperformed their industry’s mean return to shareholders by 22 percentage points (Oladapo, 2014). In research into ‘great’ companies Collins (2001) discovered that ten out of eleven great organizations utilized intentional internal efforts to develop a successor for the CEO of the corporation. While not one of Collins’ great companies, Dow Chemical considered an internal hire rate of 75% to 80% as sign of success and optimal in support of high organizational performance (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). Following numerous studies utilizing a database of more than 20,000 leaders, Zenger and Folkman (2002) suggested effective leadership had a dramatic impact on organizational performance through profit, turnover, employee commitment, and customer satisfaction.

Studies looking at such strategies suggested internal hires exhibited higher retention rates of organizational knowledge, more rapid acquisition of competence for new roles, higher engagement, lower salaries and higher performance evaluations during their first 24 months at the company when compared to external hires in similar roles (Krell, 2015; Vaillancourt, 2012).

This type of data led organizations to focus on attracting and retaining promising employees. Some made a strong case that talent was attracted to companies known for strong development opportunities and well-managed diverse leadership pipelines – in turn dramatically increasing the probability the organization would appoint great leaders (Fernandez-Araoz et al., 2011; González, 2010; Greer & Virick, 2008).
The number of succession planning approaches touted by academics and consultants were as prevalent as varied, however the literature did point to elements and approaches that were considered best practice.

**Christian perspective.** There was a dearth of Christian perspectives on succession planning, with the limited works primarily focused on transition of pastors or ministry leaders (Bird, 2014; Reed & Worthington, 2016). A doctoral student performed an exegetical study of 1 Chronicles 28 through a lens of succession planning and proffered a seven step framework for a Davidic model of leadership succession planning (Hanchell, 2010). In effect there was a diminutive amount of research on succession planning from a Christian perspective.

The only substantive and focused contribution to a Christian perspective on succession planning was made by David L. McKenna, Ph.D, retired university president. In *The Succession Principle: How leaders Make Leaders,* he argued that a leader’s greatest legacy was to leave the organization better than they found it, with greater focus, resources and missional alignment (McKenna, 2014). He further asserted that Christian leaders have a solemn responsibility of eternal purpose to develop other Christian leaders, and that effective succession planning allows Christian leaders to be the ‘role player’ intended in the unfolding drama of God’s redemptive mission. In a later article McKenna described a factor that differentiated Christian leadership from non-Christian leadership, “To place oneself under the scrutiny of the Word of God and be cleansed for a holy task, not just for ourselves, but especially for those who follow us. Succession in Christian leadership turns on this pivot” (McKenna, 2015a). It was this pivot along with the
absence of literature on succession planning from a Christian perspective which communicated the significance of this study.

**Succession Planning and Higher Education**

Despite the lack of literature from a Christian perspective on succession planning it was important to review succession planning at institutions of higher education. Bornstein (2010) spoke of the sacred nature and traditional process of selecting new leadership for higher education institutions. He was not alone in describing these institutions as bastions where old traditions died hard and change was resisted (Klein & Salk, 2013). Others were more stark in their critique of academic institutions, suggesting they simply failed at succession planning by ignoring the task of developing leaders (Bennett, 2015).

The base of literature around succession planning in higher education was certainly considerably narrower than for the for-profit sector (Luna, 2012). While some researchers identified and highlighted some good succession planning models in higher education (Santovec, 2010), most painted a picture of an egalitarian culture resistant to formal identification of heirs and performing well in developing students, but falling woefully short with respect to their faculty and staff (Lynch, 2007). Vaillancourt (2012) drew attention to research suggesting internal candidates were more successful than external and questioned why the higher education community took such a dim view of succession planning practices. Others proffered that the complex cultural differences between the for-profit boardroom and the college campus was a reason to consider a contrast in acceptance of traditional succession planning approaches (Rosse & Levin, 2003).
There were very few studies which highlighted succession planning in college environments (Adams, 2013). However Santovec (2010) described Leadership@Penn, a proprietary program at the University of Pennsylvania, and Emory University’s efforts to develop leaders internally as good examples of intentional succession planning strategies. Williams College’s leadership development program was also promoted for taking faculty to administration and back in an intentional effort to produce executive college leaders (Bornstein, 2010).

The literature suggested that the few colleges who genuinely committed to succession planning had the opportunity to create a dynamic roadmap toward institutional sustainability while engaging and motivating employees to remain (Morrin, 2013). Consistent in the literature was the notion that higher education institutions utilized more informal methods than their for-profit counterparts. While higher education had an interest in developing and maintaining a strong employee pool of future leaders, the disparity between the for-profit sector and higher education appeared significant, especially in the financial investment in training and development initiatives (Riccio, 2010).

**Succession planning frameworks in higher education.** In a scan of literature, sixteen succession planning frameworks were identified, of which only four were specific to higher education. Dr. Gayle Luna offered two models of succession planning: a three-step model focusing on goals, needs and trends, and a five-layer model connecting top-level support, customization, evaluation, feedback and strategic planning (Luna, 2010, 2012). Luzbetak (2010) also proposed a five-layer succession planning model but with specific consideration to advance women into higher levels of leadership in the
community college setting. The 5C model of Richards (2009) was the only one that considered culture, promoting the significance and integration of the institution’s culture, mission, values, and business model in the succession planning process.

It was clear from reviewing the frameworks and the background research that as large complex organizations, colleges and universities were not giving the attention to leadership redundancies and planning for unexpected succession at the same intensity or strategic foresight as comparable complex organizations in other industries (Olson, 2008). Common elements to these frameworks were a) that the succession planning process must be supported by the board and president in order to be successful (Bornstein, 2010), and b) at its best the process should engage people from across the institutions in creating plans, identifying and supporting emerging leaders, and ongoing evaluation (Pitre Davis, 2015).

With best practices of succession planning not as fully addressed in the literature the natural next step was to explore some of the challenges in both the for-profit organization and university setting which inhibited engaging in the practice.

**Challenges to Succession Planning Efforts**

Literature revealed many current challenges which served as barriers for effectively engaging succession planning within organizations. The following section outlines the three primary challenges most commonly experienced in the for-profit sector and those unique to higher education institutions.

**For-profit sector.** Research indicated 100% of global top companies and 72% of all other companies had a formal process for succession planning, but yet only 88% of the former and 53% of the latter felt they have a sufficient CEO pipeline to be successful in
the future (Hewitt, 2013). Literature revealed three primary challenges faced by corporate organizations in engaging succession planning efforts, whether at the CEO level or deeper into the organization.

First, most for-profit organizations experienced the ‘tyranny of the urgent’ as the greatest challenge to effective succession planning. In other words while philosophically supportive and engaged in the longer-term view, the prioritized intentional development of future leaders was often surpassed by the latest emergency or opportunity. Most firms understood the importance of succession planning, but the valuable implementation often lost out to more immediate concerns (Amato, 2013). Cohn et al. (2005) asserted that many corporate executives do not perceive the lack of leadership development as an equal threat to missed earnings or accounting errors. A recent study reported that 24% of respondents indicated their company lacked a clear basic understanding of their workforce's potential (Fallaw & Kantrowitz, 2013). This lack of understanding, along with the tyranny of the urgent, too often led to succession planning efforts devoid of strategy and thoughtful application (Amato, 2013; Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Day, 2007).

Second, the lack of engagement by senior leaders in succession planning was a critical challenge (Wolfe, 1996). The limits of and barriers to succession planning in the corporate arena were frequently stated as limited or lack of top-level engagement, leading to a silo work environment where collaboration around people development was too often disconnected or discouraged (Luna, 2012). If the senior leaders were not supportive of succession planning any efforts were unlikely to be effective. Sonnenfeld (1988) connected the degree to which a leader attached his/her image as a hero to the effectiveness of their engagement in succession planning and effective departures within
their organization. If the leader saw herself as a hero, she was unlikely to feel the need to prepare her successor and other future leaders. In the context of most CEOs and other executive leaders, a key challenge was simply the insufficient investment of their time in the succession planning process (Kittleman & Associates, 2007).

Third, the lack of clarity around succession planning and lack of connection to organizational strategy greatly inhibited effective succession planning efforts. Eastman (1995) spoke of the clandestine nature of succession planning which was common in many corporate organizations. Others spoke of the frequency of succession planning efforts which were narrow, episodic, rigid, unclear, overly-reliant on a single champion, and lacked fit with business imperatives and organizational culture (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Day, 2007). With these for-profit challenges and the landscape of this study in mind, it was important to consider the challenges succession planning faced in the halls of US colleges and universities.

**Higher education.** Despite the challenges faced by succession planning efforts in the for-profit sector, Bennett (2015) contended it was felt nowhere more acutely than in higher education. He went on to suggest that the failure to develop leaders and plan for their succession called into question higher education’s ability to succeed in an increasingly uncertain future. The literature revealed three primary challenges for succession planning in the context of higher education.

First, the culture of the academy was most commonly referred to as the primary barrier to effective succession planning within institutions of higher education. Whereas effective organization systems and structures were predominant in business planning, the culture and processes in higher education served as barriers (Luna, 2012; Mackey, 2008).
Bornstein (2010) described how the old traditions of higher education “die hard” and resisted change, highlighting that the percentage of new college presidents hired internally, at less than 28%, had not changed since 1986. Others agreed and described higher education as an entrenched culture vigorously and ably defended, too often the picture of the familiar adage where culture trumps strategy (Fethke & Policano, 2012).

Some suggested succession planning and/or singling out people for future leadership in higher education was at best uncomfortable in higher education and at worst counter cultural to the very notion of shared governance (Pitre Davis, 2015; Richards, 2009). In their qualitative study of presidential succession planning, Klein and Salk (2013) found that 72% of respondents felt succession planning went against the beliefs and traditions of the academy. To others this was a clear symptom of failed governance, where academic leadership was too often chosen on the basis of seniority, not talent or potential (Bennett, 2015; González, 2010).

Second, the inherently inflexible and uncreative practices of workforce planning were cited as a core challenge for succession planning in higher education. These rigid and bureaucratic hiring, development and promotion practices limited the ability of colleges and universities to respond to future needs and develop leaders accordingly (Adams, 2013; Mackey, 2008). Unlike in for-profit and even other not-for-profit organizations, where employees belong to the organization, academic departments or colleges see faculty as belonging to them – leading to little interest in serving the broader institution as well as the individual in the long term (Vaillancourt, 2012). Creative practices widely acknowledged in the corporate arena for their beneficial organizational impact, such as developing core transferable competencies through job rotations and
specific tours, were simply not accepted in higher education (Hoffman et al., 2014; Sanaghan, 2016).

Third, the failure of higher education institutions to fully connect the institutional ability to successfully engage future needs with its investment into people resources was a substantial challenge for succession planning. Some authors alleged colleges and universities as learning-centered organizations had neglected, or simply failed, the learning needs of their own faculty and staff when it came to developing future leaders (Bennett, 2015; Wallin, Cameron, & Sharples, 2005). This failure, others asserted, had led to a lack of a basic common language and best-practice models for succession planning in higher education (Barden, 2009; Washington, 2016). One of the impacts of this barrier was that current research indicated a woefully inadequate gender and racial diversity in leadership result (Washington, 2016).

In the light of the literature in the area of challenges to effective succession planning it was important to note the absence of study of this area specific to Christian higher education. While the research on succession planning in higher education was limited, it was all but non-existent in Christian higher education (Adams, 2013).

**Summary**

The review of literature storied the rise of higher education in America from humble beginnings in 17th century New England, through the growth of the public research-oriented institutions and to the very complex multi-model and multi-faceted institutions of higher learning that exist today. However the literature also highlighted the critical role of Christian higher education and other religiously-affiliated institutions
whose mission and purpose connected back to the original charge of Harvard College heard through its founding motto, ‘Truth for Christ and Church’.

The review of literature showed the emergence of leadership theory and succession planning as a specific and intentional leader development strategy which was both relatively recent in its origin and also largely adopted and endorsed by for-profit organizations that saw the long-term benefit and impact on sustained organizational performance. While much of the succession planning research and studies resided in this for-profit arena, the literature revealed a clear dearth of work around succession planning in higher education, and what could only be described as an absence of such work in Christian higher education. This reality was despite the overwhelming evidence all segments of higher education in America faced significant disruption, pressures, challenges and complexities at a level never before experienced in the academy.

Representing almost one in five postsecondary institutions and one in ten enrolled students, religiously affiliated institutions, and Christian institutions as a large subgroup, the literature revealed their important role in the American landscape of higher education and the future of the country. However the literature spoke to the increasing turnover in senior leadership through increasing rates of retirements and resignations. The ability to provide sustained and capable leaders to lead these institutions was a challenge nominally revealed in literature for higher education institutions at large, but one that was wholly unaddressed for Christian higher education.

Luna (2012) gave the exhortation, “In the American higher education landscape, where new threats linger while new opportunities open, institutions need to reshape the choreography of succession planning and leadership” (p70). The intention for this study
is to engage this choreography in light of the lived experience of the university community at an institution of Christian higher education.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Chapter I provided an introduction to the study and background to the research. The chapter provided the research question, the statement and significance of the research problem, definitions, delimitations, and the organization of the study. Chapter II reviewed the literature focused on higher education, leadership, and succession planning. The chapter highlighted the dearth of literature regarding succession planning in higher education and the absence of such study in the context of Christian higher education.

This chapter presents the methodology utilized to conduct the research study. It reviews the purpose statement and research question, along with the research design, population, sample, instrumentation, data collection and data analysis. The chapter presents the necessary detail to replicate the study, along with the steps used in the research to increase reliability and validity of the study (Creswell, 2013).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model.

Research Question

The research question at the heart of the study is: What is the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University?

Research Design

The purpose statement and research question lent to a qualitative inquiry approach and served to frame a study which required the issue of succession planning to be viewed
in depth and detail. While the quantitative method focuses on standardized measures and categories of predetermined response, the qualitative method allows field work unrestrained by such prearrangement (Patton, 2002). Because of the complexity of the subject matter and the multiple variables anchored in real-life context, along with the importance of understanding the culture of succession planning in an institution of Christian higher education, the qualitative ethnographic case study research design was the most appropriate approach for the study (Merriam, 2009).

The ethnographic case study research design was based on the two-fold definition around the scope and features of a case study offered by Yin (2014). First, the scope required the in-depth investigation of a culture to which the boundary with the real world context was unclear. The pursuit of the case study allowed the researcher to explore this important space between the culture and context (Yin & Davis, 2007). Second, the features of the case study definition recognized the presence of many variables, multiple evidentiary sources, and a theoretical proposition which guided the data collection and analysis (Yin, 2014). This breadth in features will be elucidated in the subsequent sections on instrumentation and data collection.

The result of this case study design was the opportunity to develop a rich and holistic account in a natural setting of the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University. Once the case study type was determined, Baxter and Jack (2008) asserted it was important and necessary to apply a conceptual or theoretical framework. The theoretical framework was considered a critical element of a rigorous case study and one that should be identified at the outset of the research design (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; Yin, 2014). The role of the theoretical framework
was to provide the foundation upon which the study sat and a lens through which to study the culture of succession planning (Anfara & Mertz, 2006).

Following an extensive review of the succession planning literature sixteen frameworks and models from for-profit and non-profit environments were identified, of which four had specific focus on higher education (Luna, 2010, 2012; Luzbetak, 2010; Richards, 2009). Figure 1 illustrates the Richards (2009) 5C’s model for succession planning strategies in the academy selected to serve as the theoretical framework for the study. This framework was designed specifically for the context of higher education, and was considered most appropriate because it was the only one reviewed that considered the culture of the academy as an element of succession planning in higher education. As an important issue facing succession planning efforts in higher education, highlighted in the review of literature, this served as an important lens through which to explore the culture of succession planning at Lipscomb University. The model was used to shape the data collection instruments (interviews and artifacts) and data coding and analysis.

Figure 1. 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy (Richards, 2009)
Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) defined population as a group of individuals who met a specific criteria and to which we seek to generalize the results of the research. The entire population for this study was the 117 full member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities located in North America (CCCU, 2016a).

Target Population

The target population was Lipscomb University, one of the full member institutions with a president identified as exemplary in engaging the organization in leader development and succession planning efforts. For this study identifying an exemplar president in the area of succession planning and leader development efforts was based on interaction and indicating from national experts, recognition by leadership peers and proven experience in these efforts in the industry. With this background the university president at Lipscomb University was chosen based on three factors:

1. National recommendation: The president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities highlighted her personal experience of the president’s intentional and innovative succession planning efforts and approaches to leader development at Lipscomb University.

2. Peer recognition: The university president was recognized for his leadership and commitment to holding employees in the highest regard by other CEOs in the region. The university president was named “Most Admired CEO” by the Nashville Business Journal in 2012.

3. Proven experience: The university president had a diverse experience, having held leadership positions at four institutions of Christian higher education, and
served as a board of trustee at two additional institutions of Christian higher education.

With the goal of selecting a strongly qualified centerpiece of the study the researcher pursued a screening procedure (Yin, 2014). The president of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities assisted the researcher with an introductory phone conversation with the Lipscomb University president. Following this phone call the researcher confirmed the criteria and the president’s commitment to intentionally and actively engage in succession planning efforts within the institution.

Sample

In relation to the population, McMillan and Schumacher (2014) defined the sample as a group of individuals within the population from whom data was collected. For the purpose of this study a non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to select 16 employees and community leaders of Lipscomb University to serve as a sample for a purpose (Patton, 2002). In order to increase the likelihood of illuminating the lived experience being studied, the researcher drew on practice, theory and subjective judgment to identify this sample with known or demonstrated experience in the area under investigation (Trochim, 2005).

This sample of 16 employees and community leaders were identified following a pre-study visit made by the researcher to the university campus on July 18, 2016. The researcher was helped by an employee in the office of the president at Lipscomb University to identify the name and contact information for those one-on-one interviews, and to develop a pool of employees who broadly represented the employees of the university e.g. gender, ethnicity, employee classification, and tenure length. While not
investigative in nature, the researcher was able to have a dedicated conversation with the university president, meet other faculty and staff employees, and develop an awareness of the campus culture.

The sample was comprised of five segments:

1. University President (1) – vision for programs
2. University Board chair (1) – supported President’s agenda
3. Administrators (2) – designed/delivered programs
4. Program Participants (9) – engaged in programs
5. Local Community leaders (3) – engaged in programs

**Instrumentation**

The researcher was often, and appropriately, considered the primary instrument in qualitative data collection and interpretation. This opened the approach to criticism of subjectivity and unscientific inquiry (Patton, 2002). In response, Patton (2002) suggested viewing the goal of a qualitative approach as to bring trustworthiness and authenticity to the role of the researcher. This could be done in part through appropriate interview questions.

**Researcher as an Instrument of the Study**

Due to the researcher being the instrument in a qualitative study, Pezalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) asserted that the unique attributes of the researcher would influence the collection of data. In other words as the primary instrument in interviews, the study was open to a number of potential biases around the researcher. During this study the researcher was employed in the office of the president at a CCCU
institution, so brought bias from personal experience in a setting similar to Lipscomb
University.

**Interview Questions**

A series of scripted interview questions were developed prior to the data
collection period. These questions were intentionally linked to the theoretical framework
underpinning the study.

**Validity**

Content validity, in terms of whether the measure represented the elements of the
construct, depended on the careful and appropriate construction of the instrument(s)
(Patton, 2002). In the context of this study and the researcher being the primary
instrument, the validity of the method depended largely on the competence and skill of
the researcher. The researcher addressed this limitation in part by the following steps:

1. Performed mock interviews with volunteer subjects, prior to the actual data
collection, and recorded on video. This video was reviewed by a colleague
and active researcher for feedback on deliver, pacing and other interview
techniques. This process helped validate that the interview skills of the
researcher were appropriate.

2. Developed and refined the interview questions, before deployment, through an
interactive process with the expert panel and with peer researchers. This
panel was formed of a current university president and two experts, with one a
subject matter expert in leader development. This process helped ensure the
instruments, whether person or question, were actually asking what was
needed to be asked for the purpose of responding to the research question. This process helped validate the interview questions developed.

**Reliability**

Reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results. Roberts (2010) described reliability as finding the same result if the researcher measures the same thing again. In the case study context, reliability referred to the consistency and repeatability of the research procedures (Yin, 2014).

**Internal Reliability of Data.** Consistency of the data collection, data analysis and interpretation was critical to internal reliability. In other words would another researcher come to the same conclusions review the same data? In this study the researcher employed data triangulation techniques using interview and artifact data collection strategies to strengthen the internal reliability (Creswell, 2013).

**External Reliability of Data.** External reliability measured whether another researcher would get the same results or conclusions by reproducing the study. This issue of generalization was not as significant for qualitative research such as this study because of the difficulty in recreating the unique situations, human behavior and interaction (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Because the results will not be generalizable, external reliability of the data is not a concern for this study.

**Inter-Coder Reliability.** Tinsley and Weiss (2000) defined inter-coder reliability as the extent to which autonomous coders evaluated a characteristic of an interview or artifact and reached the same conclusion. It is for this reason that the term inter-coder agreement is often used. Neuendorf (2002) asserted, "given that a goal of content analysis is to identify and record relatively objective (or at least intersubjective)
characteristics of messages, reliability is paramount. Without the establishment of reliability, content analysis measures are useless” (p. 141).

For this study another researcher was asked to double-code approximately ten percent of the data coding and interpretation performed by the primary researcher. The goal of 90% agreement in coded data was considered the best and 80% considered acceptable to ensure accuracy of themes from the coding (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002).

**Data Collection**

For the purposes of providing an authentic window into the lived experience of the Lipscomb University community in the area of succession planning and leader development, the researcher engaged three primary methods to collect data, namely interviews, informal observations and artifacts. Prior to a formal request to the university president to participate in the study, the application for research involving human or animal participants was submitted to the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) for review, recommendations and approval. Following BUIRB approval (Appendix B) an email was sent to the university president of Lipscomb University formally requesting to perform the study and schedule data collection during an immersive visit to the university campus in October 2016 (Appendix C).

**Types of data**

**Interviews.** Prior to data collection the researcher worked with an expert panel, consisting of one current university president of a Christian institutions of higher education and two leadership development professionals, to develop a list of pre-established open-ended questions designed to collect data focused on the theoretical
framework and allow additional probing questions allowing unanticipated data to surface (Patton, 2002). The questions were related to the experience of succession planning efforts at the institution and focused to address the study’s purpose and research question.

Distinct interview questions were designed for 1) president, 2) board chair, 3) administrators, 4) faculty/staff participants, and 5) community members who had interacted with the programs. These interview questions are found in appendix D, E, F, G and H respectively. The university president was interviewed individually at the beginning and end of the data collection visit to campus, while other employees and members of the community who had interacted with the university’s succession planning efforts were interviewed throughout the visit to campus.

Observations. The researcher engaged in direct observation as a way to source insight into the topic being studied (Yin, 2014). While fully engaged in the environment, but not collected as official data, the researcher was afforded the opportunity to observe a series of meetings within a leader development retreat led by the president and/or his implementation team. In addition to these occasions, the researcher kept a journal throughout the visit to collect data and reflections on the setting, physical and non-physical interactions between subjects, incidents and how decisions were made (Musante & DeWalt, 2010). The practice of keeping this reflective and observational journal allowed the researcher to observe the physical and social characteristics, and in doing so get a sense of what it meant to be ‘part of the scene’ while being immersed in a large amount of primary data (Spradley, 2016).

Artifacts. The researcher collected artifacts related to the succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University. Examples were program brochures,
program retreat agendas, invitation emails to participants, meeting materials and university magazine (Appendix J).

Data Collection Procedures

This section details the data collection procedures followed by the researcher in order that the study protocol could be easily replicated.

Interviews. Seidman (2015) referred to the primary purposes of interviewing as not being to evaluate or test a hypothesis, but rather to develop an in-depth understanding of the lived experience and meaning associated to it by the interviewee. He went on to assert that while observations and artifacts are important, the role of interview in elucidating the meaning of the experience was crucial. The following steps were taken in relation to the interviews of participants:

1. Conversations and observations during a pre-data collection visit to the campus of Lipscomb University on July 18, 2016 allowed the researcher to identify the best candidates for interview.

2. Following the pre-data collection visit, the administrator from the office of the president at Lipscomb University contacted each interviewee to request their participation in the study.

3. Prior to the data collection visit, the researcher arranged with a campus administrator to secure non-hostile and comfortable settings in which to hold the interviews. Interviewees were informed of the location ahead of time.

4. At the time of each interview, but before it began, the researcher reviewed both the study and the rights of the interviewee, including their right to stop and/or take a break at any time due to the voluntary nature of the interview.
5. An open time for any questions and answers was provided for the interviewee by the researcher.

6. The researcher then reviewed the informed consent form (Appendix I) and acquired the signature of the interviewee.

7. Interviews took place for approximately 30 minutes, starting with the scripted interview questions. Flexibility in the interview was allowed for follow-up questions. The interviews were electronically captured using a digital voice recorder as the primary device. An audio capture application on an IPhone served as backup.

8. Once the interview was concluded, the researcher thanked the participant and explained the next steps of sharing the transcription for review in the proceeding weeks. This was in keeping with interview best practice and raised the level of trustworthiness and credibility between the interviewee and interviewer (Seidman, 2015).

9. The researcher sent the audio files to a transcription service.

10. Once the transcription was received back and initially cross referenced with the audio file once again for accuracy by the researcher, the appropriate interview transcription was sent to the interviewee. This gave the opportunity to gain member clarity and allowed suggestion of correction or feedback.

**Artifacts.** Prior to the visit the researcher submitted a list of artifacts to office of the president and requested these be collated (Appendix J). Some examples of these artifacts were organizational chart, employees in the identified leadership track, institution’s annual report, brochures and materials related to succession planning. While
some artifacts were publically available, others were provided by the office of the president staff or respective department and held in confidence by the researcher. During the visit the researcher collected these and other artifacts that emerged during the data collection period. The artifacts were subsequently assessed, recorded, digitally scanned where possible, and stored for future review, security and analysis.

**Data Protection and Control**

The researcher took meaningful steps to protect data and minimize risk. Each interview was recorded with the permission of the participant(s). To protect the participants no personally identifiable information was collected, asked or referenced to. Instead each participant was given a letter to further protect participant identity e.g. Participant A. The digital files containing the recorded interviews, along with the transcriptions, were kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office. Only the researcher had access to these resources. Once the study was fully completed, the data files were destroyed, while the transcripts were kept in the locked cabinet drawer.

**Data Analysis**

The researcher employed a three-step model for analysis of the data which emerged and was collected from interviews, observations and artifacts during the university campus visit. In this model, Creswell (2013) outlined a process of 1) organizing and preparing the data, 2) reading and reviewing all the data, and 3) coding the data.

The researcher organized and prepared the data by having the audio recordings transcribed by a third-party transcription service. These transcriptions were shared with the interviewee to review accuracy, allowing opportunity for feedback.
logs and field notes were reviewed by the researcher, and the artifacts logged according to title and data elements within the artifacts. Following a comprehensive arrangement of the data, the researcher devoted time to read, review and reflect on all the data elements to allow general impressions to coalesce and begin to indicate some sense of overall meaning. A preliminary list of themes, patterns and categories emerged following this time spent in review. The data was then formally coded in an attempt to identify patterns and repetition that speak to categories, subcategories, themes, concepts and then assertions (Saldaña, 2016).

All of the data was reviewed on multiple occasions in a process of developing initial codes and themes. The coding process was designed to help arrange things into systematic order and allow the division, grouping and reorganization of data to bring meaning and develop explanation (Saldaña, 2016). The interview transcriptions were loaded into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software package, by the researcher to help in both the initial and ongoing refinement of the coding and theme identification process. In addition to interview transcriptions, observation logs/notes and artifacts were also scanned for codes.

The data coding process for this study involved three primary steps:

1. The codes were scanned for themes. More specifically, given the 5C succession planning in the academy theoretical framework used in this study, the researcher reviewed the themes of codes in light of culture, champions, communication, competency-based, and continuous.
2. Coding for frequencies. NVivo made identifying the frequency by which codes appeared simple. The frequency of codes was one indication of the strength of a possible theme coming from code.

3. Analyzing themes and frequencies. The researcher proceeded to use the codes, themes and frequencies information as a means by which to analyze and bring a new level of understanding to the data with respect to the lived experience of succession planning efforts at Lipscomb University.

**Limitations**

Limitations are features of the study that may adversely affect the results of the study (Roberts, 2010). The researcher acknowledged the inherent limitations to any research design, including the purposeful sampling qualitative approach of this case study. The single case study approach was especially open to critique and concern about the role of limitations. All research involves bias, in large part unintentional and unwitting, but it is important for researchers to be open and clear about the limitations of the study design so intentional strategies can be deployed to help strengthen the study (Patton, 2002).

The follow examples outlined efforts to decrease such limitation,

1. Researcher as instrument: In this study the researcher served as an instrument in the same manner as a rating scale or assessment test. This limitation was addressed by intentional strategies to prepare for interviewing and observation, developing interview and sub-interview questions with the expert panel, and having a firm grasp of the content. To minimize these biases the researcher undertook the training and became certified by the National
Institutes of Health (Appendix K). The researcher also acquired Institutional Review Board approval from his own institution before any research was conducted. In addition the researcher employed practice, feedback loops and input in developing other tools to offset the potential for such biases.

2. Sample size: The researcher acknowledged that the sample size of this study, namely one institution, presented a challenge for generalization. However the qualitative case study research approach typically involved small sample size, and was more about a fertile account of the culture in a natural setting rather than generalizations. However the fact that this study was undergirded by the 5C’s model for succession planning in the academy (Richards, 2009), strengthened this limitation and the connection to the wider population. The researcher cautiously identified the possibility of inference, but imposed self-limitation.

3. Self-reported: In this qualitative study, which utilized structured and semi-structured interviews, the fact that the participants self-reported the data was a limitation. The researcher addressed this limitation by using two more sources, namely informal observations and artifacts, as part of a triangulation technique to improve the validity.

4. Time: The data collection and analysis process of this study was time consuming and therefore presented a limitation. The significant time taken to collect and analyze the data adds to the workload of researcher may have negatively affected accuracy and rigor. This was addressed through the
allocation of sufficient time, along with the double-coding strategies with a peer research to check quality.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to help the reader understand and/or assist a future researcher replicate this ethnographic case study. The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model. The research question and research design helped focus on the lived experiences of the participants. The data collection and data analysis procedures were described and explained in detail. Chapter IV will outline and elucidate the results of the findings from this study.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter I provided an introduction to the study and background to the research. Chapter II reviewed the literature on higher education, leadership, and succession planning, and highlighted the absence of such study in the context of Christian higher education. Chapter III outlined the methodology of an ethnographic case study exploring the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University. This chapter presents a description of the participants involved in the study, the research methods, the data collection process and a detailed analysis of the research data in the form of summarizing the study findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model.

Research Question

The research question at the heart of the study was: What is the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The ethnographic case study research design gave an opportunity to develop a rich and holistic account in a natural setting of the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University. The researcher undertook a visit on July 18, 2016, prior to data collection, to meet the president and key administrators. Official data collection occurred during October 1-7, 2016. In this time the researcher interviewed 16
people, including the university president, board chair, administrators, employees and community members involved in two of the succession planning and leader development programs. The main form of data was collected from interview questions, and supplemented by artifacts. Informal observations were an element which helped the researcher acculturate and become more aware of the Lipscomb University culture at large. The interviews were transcribed and the artifacts logged. A theming process was performed using NVivo and the theoretical framework as a guide. This helped identify themes, findings, conclusions and implications for actions.

The role of the theoretical framework provided a rigorous foundation and a lens through which the culture of succession planning and leader development was studied (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). The framework used - Richards (2009) 5C’s model for succession planning strategies in the academy - was considered most appropriate because it was the only one reviewed to consider the culture of the academy as an element of succession planning in higher education. The framework shaped the interview questions as the primary data collection procedure.

**Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) defined population as a group of individuals who met a specific criteria and to which we seek to generalize the results of the research. The entire population for this study was the 117 full member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities located in North America. The target population was Lipscomb University, one of the full member institutions with a president identified as exemplary in engaging the organization in leader development and succession planning efforts. For this study, identifying an exemplar president in the area of
succession planning and leader development efforts was based on interaction with and indications from national experts, recognition by leadership peers, and proven experience in these efforts in the industry.

**Sample**

In relation to the population, McMillan and Schumacher (2014) defined the sample as a group of individuals within the population from whom data was collected. This sample of 16 employees and community leaders was identified through a pre-study visit by the researcher to the Lipscomb University campus on July 18, 2016, and with the assistance of an employee in the university’s office of the president. All participants had meaningful interaction with one or two of the programs intended to address succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University.

**Demographic Data**

The sample of 16 participants interviewed one-on-one by the researcher was formed to reasonably represent the most recently available Common Data Set faculty data for Lipscomb University (Lipscomb, 2016). The study sample represented 44% female, 12% employees of color and 6% international; compared to the university’s Common Data Set which indicated 40% female, 5% faculty of color and 1.5% international. Table 2 details the sample with regard to employee classification, gender and ethnicity, along with the range of age and years of service at Lipscomb University.
Table 2

Description of the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>60+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board Chair</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>60+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>60+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>11+</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>35-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>60+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>60+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation and Analysis of Data

The findings presented in this chapter arose from data collected through in-person interviews between October 1 and October 7, 2016. Sixteen individuals were interviewed once, while the president was recorded on two occasions. In the attempt to better understand the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, the researcher was more interested in the cumulative findings rather than extracting patterns from specific sources.

Table 3 outlines the allocation of hours spent by the researcher in observations, interviews and other acculturation activities at Lipscomb University during the data collection period.
Table 3

Allocation of hours spent by researcher during data collection period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal Observations</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifact collection</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending campus events</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal time on campus</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leader Development and Succession Planning Programs at Lipscomb University

From the initial visit in July, the researcher was made aware of three university programs focused on employee leader development. However during the data collection period in October it became clear that one of these programs – Leadership Lipscomb – had, for all intent and purposes, been phased-out. Leadership Lipscomb had been offered as a series of intentional events focused on a larger number of university leaders as a leadership communication/resource mechanism. However due to scheduling conflicts and perceived lack of value most of these events in recent years did not occur.

Therefore the data collection focused on two primary programs offered by the executive leadership of Lipscomb University with intentional focus on leader development and succession planning. These two programs were Connect and Bridges.

Connect Program

Started approximately seven years ago, the Connect program is a year-long program designed to expose a group of 24 Lipscomb University faculty and staff to other organizations and leaders in the wider Nashville community. Based on the model of Leadership Nashville, a cohort of employees travel and engage the community together one day a month throughout the year. These monthly meetings and engagement days are
with regional leaders in industries such as transportation, safety, K12 education, tourism, economic development, healthy communities, chamber of commerce, and other downtown partnerships. These programmed interactions with Nashville-area leaders focus on the trends, challenges and opportunities related to the key issues in their specialty field. The president and senior administration see this program as one of exposure and general leader identification.

**Bridges Program**

The Bridges program at Lipscomb University was started by the president in Fall 2015 as a year-long program intended to deepen the leadership skills and knowledge of issues surrounding higher education and faith based universities. According to the program brochure, Bridges provides an intentional path for people who demonstrate leadership potential, strong core management skills, initiative, innovation and the desire to become even more valuable to the university.

Participants in Bridges commit to two national and/or international team trips, six one-day experiential sessions at different sites in Middle Tennessee, opening and closing events, along with individual reading, assessments, coaching and feedback sessions. Between 12 and 15 employees are selected by senior university leadership and invited to join the program each year. The president has stated he wants 75 employees to have participated in Bridges by summer 2020. The president and senior administration see this program as one more focused on assessing leaders for potential senior roles and succession planning purposes.
Development of Themes and Frequencies

Following the data collection, audio transcription and verification, the researcher scanned the data to form preliminary list of themes. An additional researcher was engaged to review and refine the nomenclature of this list. This preliminary list of eleven themes was used in NVivo as a basis of the formal data coding process. Through this process the number of themes were reduced to nine, returning healthy frequency to affirm them as legitimate themes. Table 4 outlines the nine themes and frequency developed from the data analysis process.

Table 4

*Themes and frequency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sources (of 17 total)</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Developing future leaders is a clear priority of the president</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Historic cultural and religious traditional norms are influential</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Purpose of the programs are clearly understood by participants</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Exposure and interaction with other leaders is highly valued</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Participants associate deep value with their engagement in programs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Intentional and ongoing efforts to connect with the Nashville community is important</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Clarity around ongoing plans for participants is challenging</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Board of trustees prioritize succession planning efforts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Intentionally developing leaders who understand the changing landscape of higher education is critical</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>254</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These themes were then assessed in light of the theoretical framework and the definition given to each of the 5Cs by Richards (2009). In her study, Richards offered this model to help institutions move beyond a leadership development paradigm and into one which deliberately includes a systemic succession plan in its planning activities. She
suggested institutions of higher education frame their succession planning strategies through the lenses of culture, champions, communication, competency-based, and continuous. Table 5 outlines the researcher’s perspective as to how the themes and 5Cs aligned.

Table 5

Themes and theoretical framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5Cs model of succession planning in higher education (Richards, 2009)</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culture:</strong> Align with educational culture, mission, vision and values</td>
<td>1,2,4,6,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Champions:</strong> President/CEO/Board of Trustees/Strategic HR Implementer</td>
<td>1,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication:</strong> Communicate in a way that values all employees</td>
<td>3,5,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competency-Based:</strong> Organizational and individual competencies</td>
<td>3,4,6,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous:</strong> On-going conversations and evaluations of people and plans</td>
<td>5,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter in keeping with this alignment of the nine themes and the 5Cs of the theoretical framework. While some themes are represented in more than one C-strategy, the perspective of the theme as it relates to the C-strategy will be different.

**Culture**

The first of the framework’s strategies for succession planning in the academy was culture. Richards (2009) concluded that institutions intending to follow a deliberate and systematic succession planning strategy should closely align their strategy to the institution’s culture, mission, vision and values. In context of Lipscomb University the researcher saw three aspects in which the relationship of the institutional culture and
strategies for succession planning either aligned or were problematic. These were highlighted through themes 1,2,4,6 and 9.

The first aspect of culture considered important was the acknowledgment that Lipscomb University’s culture has been shaped by the last 11 years of a president who at his core believes the long-term success of Lipscomb University lies on having ‘better’ leaders who can understand and adapt to the rapidly changing environment for higher education.

**Theme 1: Developing future leaders is a clear priority of the president**

Participants spoke both directly and indirectly to the cultural influence of a president who possesses a confident and dominant personality. It was evident to the researcher that the president’s priorities become the focus for the institution. While this is not unusual for an institution, the researcher garnered a quick and palpable sense that when the president had a strong opinion on a subject or program, it generally happened. While the president did not necessarily agree with this view, especially when he spoke of other issues he felt he had been unsuccessful in moving forward, it was clear to the researcher that the president was the executive in charge and that he placed very high value on the need to develop leaders. This theme of him prioritizing the development of future leaders was explicitly mentioned by all 16 participants and referenced 43 times. This was the highest frequency theme in the analysis of the data. The president was very clear about this purpose and priority when he said,

> When I think of the help a president needs, it is that I need better people. This is a hard industry and a messy place and I need better people. When I came in, clearly
the charge was try and figure out how to pick up 15 years we lost and get to a point where we're competitive institution.

It was obvious to the researcher that the president was operating from the position in which he felt it necessary to shape the culture at Lipscomb to be more proactive and strategic, rather than reactive and small minded. The president illustrated his focus on succession planning in the following statement to participants gathered for the opening retreat of the Bridges program,

Instead of waiting until there’s an opening, my vision is that we will have ten of the best people in the nation, no matter where they are and where they are working. When that opening comes we don’t start from scratch but we start from a list of people we already know about.

The researcher interviewed a president who was confident in his mandate to advance the mission of a 125-year old faith-based academic institution, and believed one of most pressing strategies was to develop capable and high-quality leaders for the future. It was also clear that the historic cultural and religious roots of Lipscomb University had served, and continues, to shape the institutional landscape in which he was sought to advance his agenda.

**Theme 2: Historic cultural and religious traditional norms are influential**

This theme was the second highest frequency theme with 43 references from 12 sources, and referred to the cultural and religious traditional norms that shaped or at times conflicted with the culture of succession planning and leader development the president was attempting to create.
**Cultural Traditions**

The president frequently called out the first cultural norm which was one of expecting average. On more than one occasion during data collection the president referred to a conversation early on in his tenure when an employee asked “Don’t you understand we’re just an average school for average students?” The president recoiled at this notion as he sought to establish a leadership culture of excellence and innovation in future leaders. This philosophy was best articulated by the president when he said,

> It just seems to me that as leaders you are going to have to think about whether or not we are the school on the other side of the tracks, because we are the poor Church of Christ school that did not want to be connected to the world. Or can we take this faith into the world in a way that’s sophisticated enough that it can work in the world?

Another cultural norm that was not explicitly referred to frequently in interviews, but was often referred to informally in other conversations and contexts, was the idea of Lipscomb being entrepreneurial under the current president’s leadership. From interactions with participants the researcher identified a shared sense that this president was wanting to try things and see if they worked. Participant G described the culture over the last 11 years as one that is “Entrepreneurial. I do joke about ready, shoot, aim, but it is true. A lot of schools are ready, aim and don't shoot. So if you had to pick, there's pluses and minuses”. Participant H affirmed this positively through his own experience with the culture of leadership,
I have been pushed to a point of thinking what can we do next? What’s next out there that Lipscomb can be on the forefront of, as opposed to just sitting on our hands and being okay with just being Lipscomb?

While the historic cultural influence of ‘average’ has certainly shaped the responses of the president and others at Lipscomb University, the researcher found the traditional religious norms as having equal, if not, stronger influence on the perceived ability for succession planning efforts to be successful.

**Religious Traditions**

One of the traditional norms which stood out to the researcher as being a point of tension for succession planning strategies at Lipscomb University was the religious traditions rooted in the Church of Christ. While this association of autonomous churches are different in many ways, Lipscomb University has clear roots and living connections as a Church of Christ school. Most if not all of the senior executive team are members of Church of Christ churches, as are many of the faculty and staff. While the institution has a historic tradition of only hiring Church of Christ members as employees, the data suggests this has shifted over the years and continues to do so. Participant A described it as a hiring challenge,

> We continue the Church of Christ in hiring, but we’ve finessed that a little bit. We are trying to hold to a center and be consistent with the deed of the university but also not put the institution in jeopardy. That’s kind of a hiring challenge.

The Church of Christ view of women in leadership is observed from a complementarian perspective. This theological approach holds that men and women have different but complementary roles in life and leadership. Complementarianism is
lived out in such a way that women are seen as only able to assist in decision making but not able to lead or teach in many areas of life. The culture of not affirming women in leadership presents a challenge for 21st century succession planning strategies which typically do not distinguish by gender, but rather competency and ability. The researcher found participant perspectives that suggested this has been, and will continue to be, a challenge for institutions similar to Lipscomb University. For example Participant E said,

It’s not a great atmosphere for women. I think a lot of that comes out of our church history and conflict of church teachings. There is this conflict of old school and more progressive churches, and that conflict is playing itself out in the church world and on campus.

Participant O spoke to the personal impact of this religious tradition at Lipscomb when they said,

There are still some concerns about the role of women. I would be really surprised if we had a female president anytime soon, largely because of the relationship with churches who very much think women should not be in leadership positions. Historically our presidents have been preachers and so they go into churches and preach. A woman couldn't go into a church and preach or pray or anything else in most Church of Christ, and so you have that dynamic as well.

Participant E went on to speak to their perception that even the current succession planning strategies were highlighting the lack of women and diversity in general, “Maybe this is showing us that there aren’t that many women who are ready or that there aren’t many African Americans or Latino employees here that can move into these programs”.

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In considering the influence of these historic traditions and how succession planning efforts aligned with the culture of the institution, the researcher found evidence that the role of women in the process was a source of tension and potential conflict. The tension between church doctrine and daily operation of the university maybe obscured but has tangible implications for the development of future leaders. But while participants spoke of the strong Church of Christ influence in the hiring and leadership at Lipscomb University, two specifically spoke out in support of the president who was seen to be advancing the preparing of future leaders who are female. The president was seen as one who is trying to hold this tension while pulling in a progressive direction.

Participant E said,

I do think Randy is concerned about women in leadership. He has done a lot to help develop women leaders, but at levels below that it isn’t always the case. The provost, he is good with that too. In other areas and other levels and just even in peer relationships, it’s very often not a voice.

Participant M affirmed the president’s role in advancing the cause of female leaders when they said,

The president had Susan and a lot of amazing women in place to set up this new initiative, and that’s not always the norm here. He just chose the right person and empowered them and it didn’t matter. But that freaked out some of the old guard. But then some of the things that he’s done on diversity and inclusion makes people nervous in the south.

The data suggested that the religious traditions at Lipscomb University were an important consideration and source of conflict for strategies designed to meet the future
needs of the institution. However the next theme which impacts cultural alignment was less controversial and far more positive in nature.

**Theme 4: Exposure and interaction with other leaders is highly valued**

With 24 references from 11 sources, this theme captures the popular experience and reflection from participants that the relational interaction with leaders, both internally and externally, is highly valued by both the program designers and participants alike. Participants spoke of the strong bonds which were created with colleagues through the program, most of whom they had never met and/or worked with before. They spoke of the value of camaraderie built with people from other divisions in the university, and how this interaction and exposure broke down institutional silos and communication barriers.

Participant K talked about how the Connect program was a big learning process for her, exposing her to people she had not met and leaders of external organizations that they had never heard of. Participant L described how the experience created a new network of leaders across campus who they now knew and could help them collaborative address issues and challenges. Participant N reminisced about working on a project to help solve a problem an academic dean was having at the institution. Their relationship was birthed and developed through participating in the Connect program a number of years ago.

The data showed that while many of these relationships were internal to Lipscomb, born out of shared experiences of intense times of travel and common encounters, the exposure to leaders in and around Nashville was equally valuable. Participant J spoke of the Connect program as being the best work program they had ever participated in. In doing so the Participant J highlighted this duality of value,
The intent is to build us up for leadership. I think the bigger focus is to connect with the people around you that you wouldn't otherwise get a chance to see. For example, bounce off the experiences and then take those back and make your world better. I took the experiences in Nashville to heart. I try to take any kind of opportunity which exposes me to not be close minded. I asked, what can I learn from this? How can I benefit from it? What can I do to make my life better on a day to day basis? How can I improve the life of others that work with me?

The president was very intentional in his design that this exposure to leaders would not only be with those within Lipscomb University, but very importantly to leaders in the wider Nashville community from other industries and contexts. The researcher observed a president with a committed belief that institutional success would be built upon deeper connection with the wider Nashville community, and that Lipscomb leaders would grow in their leadership effectiveness through being exposed to other leaders outside the Green Hills campus and outside of higher education.

**Theme 6: Intentional and ongoing efforts to connect with the Nashville community is important**

It was very evident to the researcher that connecting leaders to the wider Nashville community was part of the president’s strategy in developing leaders. 23 references were made to this strategy from 11 sources. The most comprehensive articulation of many other analogous comments was made by Participant D who said, Connect was very important for him [president] when he first came here. It was a program to broaden the perspective of our faculty and staff. We were a pretty insulated community and we weren’t really that active in the Nashville
community. His motto from the beginning was ‘We have to serve before we sell. We have to serve before we sell.’ That meant we need to be out in the community. People need to see us.

In other words the Connect and Bridges program, but especially the former, have been used to both develop internal relationships between Lipscomb leaders, but also provide rich and deep strategic relationships with the leaders, influencers and businesses in Nashville. Participant I described the president’s roll-out of the Connect program as a master stroke in that he used Nashville as the incubator to develop leaders while at the same time putting Lipscomb University on the map. The same participant went on to say,

You'd be amazed how many times people are thinking of Lipscomb University punching above their weight. A lot of it has to do with talented and capable people here that are out in the community. Connect has done that.

The monthly interaction between the aspiring leaders of Lipscomb University with the leaders of public and private entities in Nashville has created significant profile and benefit for the university, while also providing opportunity for faculty and staff to serve by delivering needed solutions in the community. These opportunities have provided great satisfaction and reward for the Lipscomb employees. Employees spoke of creating new programs because of their interaction with Nashville through the Connect program. Others identified how the firsthand learning in the city allowed them to bring experience, experts and challenges back into the classroom to provide real-world conversations and engagement.
The culture at Lipscomb University, influenced in the largest part by the current president, is one in which developing leaders is not simply seen as learning from within 'the tent’, but through partnership and engagement with the larger city of Nashville. This is important to appreciate not only to understand the perspective of the president, but also to appreciate that the culture of succession planning and leader development strategies at Lipscomb University are centered around relationships with other leaders more than leadership books on a shelf. That is not to say the programs do not utilize seminal written works as part of their development of future leaders, but they are not primary.

The last theme in context of how the institutional culture intersects with succession planning strategies was that the president did not just want to fill leadership gaps with anyone, but with those prepared for the complex environment that is 21st century higher education.

**Theme 9: Intentionally developing leaders who understand the changing landscape of higher education is critical**

This theme speaks to the element of culture the president is trying to enshrine at Lipscomb University, namely that the institution needs to understand and respond in such a way that recognizes the significant shifts that are happening in higher education. This theme was referenced in interviews 17 times by 7 participants. This theme captures the intentionality of the programs’ design to help leaders develop a deeper understanding of the context of where they work and make decisions. The president highlighted this as he described the philosophy of his efforts in this area,

There is something that’s just very pragmatic. If we don’t understand the industry we are in and we don’t understand the context in which it works, we are not going
to be very good at managing it to accomplish what our purpose. You are going to be exposed to discussion and information about all of those issues this year. We want you at the end of year to say ‘I think I understand my industry. If somebody gave me higher education test 101, I’d pass it’.

Many participants in the programs repeated this principle of understanding the context, which the president was seeking to imprint in the culture at Lipscomb University. For example Participant P said,

He's very big into trying to help people understand the context, especially when we think about higher education. I think it’s a better understanding of the realities that are in front of us. Whether its challenges we face as an institution with a relatively small endowment, or whether it's challenges that we face in terms of how we manage the institution financially or organizationally, process wise. You know you get to have those conversations in a pretty open and honest way especially with Bridges.

Other participants spoke specifically to the impact of the Bridges program in intentionally engaging them in a deeper dive into the current and future issues of higher education. Participant L observed this mindset,

What they're looking to do is broaden our mindset about higher education and how we intersect not just education but economic development. They want to give us the bigger picture. You can be a faculty member and love your discipline, history, but do you understand how the institution is run? Do you understand how we impact others?
It was clear in speaking to the participants that all were keenly aware of the changing educational landscape and the president’s desire to identify and develop leaders aware and ready to lead beyond his own tenure.

In way of summary of this section on culture, it was clear that the intentional succession planning and leader development strategies of the president and executive leadership had caused them to encounter the deep and cultural traditions of Lipscomb University. The president had benefitted greatly from 11 years as chief executive in which he had molded and shaped a culture that was more accepting to these practices. The data reflected that some of these steps had been strategic master strokes, while other cultural and religious traditions provided a measure of tension and conflict.

**Champions**

Richards (2009) affirmed the importance of executive commitment to the process of succession planning. For the purpose of this study the researcher considered executive commitment to equate with the president, the board chair and other senior members of the office of the president. This level of executive commitment was very evident in the data collected at Lipscomb University, as illustrated through elements of themes 1 and 8.

**Theme 1: Developing future leaders is a clear priority of the president**

The notion of the university president clearly prioritizing the development of future leaders at Lipscomb University was not only unmistakable from the opening moments of data collection, but also overwhelmingly affirmed by participants throughout the data collection period. This theme was explicitly referred to by every one of the 16 participants interviewed, and articulated a total of 43 times. In other words, on average,
participants mentioned the president as clearly prioritizing the development of future leaders almost three times during the course of every interview.

Whether through direct conversation with, or simple observation of, the president, participants saw the development of future leaders as a clear priority and mantra. For example Participant F described the president as, “without a doubt incredibly thoughtful about succession planning”. This thoughtful approach was supported by other participants, such as Participant J, who articulated their view of the president’s priority, “I think he’s [president] all about leadership…..I know he wants to develop people. He’s really big on giving people tools and resources to be a better version of themselves”.

The study participants clearly saw the president as publicly and privately advocating the intentional development of future leaders. However they also perceived the president as one not only focused on developing leaders per se, but for the purpose of addressing the longer term needs of the institution. The president was seen as moving to intentionally and strategically position the university for continued growth beyond his own tenure. For example Participant B said, “no other president that I’m aware of, and I’ve worked for five of them here, had any concept of who’s next”. Participant D affirmed this with the comment, “I think he [president] is just thinking ‘What am I leaving here? Who is going to be the next?’ Bridges, I believe, is his attempt to try to address that question”.

While no participants indicated an expected transition date, after 11 years in the presidency and given his age, it was clear to the researcher that participants viewed the president’s language and actions as an indication of his attention to his post-presidential legacy.
What was also vibrant in the data was a president who believed intentionally thinking about the future leaders meant looking deep into the organization. He was seen as personally and heavily invested in this agenda. The researcher found this sense of presidential attention stood in contrast to other institutional initiatives for which his attention was described as fleeting and haphazard. Participants felt the president was genuinely and fully invested in these leader development efforts. Participant K said,

I feel like our best advocate is our president because he has really supported these programs, the Bridges and Connect. For example he was really with us most of the times. He was there for us. He was our main consultant, the main facilitator for the Bridges programs. I feel like he is really, really wanting to develop future leadership for this institution and perhaps for other institutions as well.

Participants portrayed a president doing this work fully aware that Lipscomb University may not be the only beneficiary. In other words he knew that some of the identified leaders would ultimately leave for other Christian colleges and universities. The president endorsed this perspective with strong conviction. He mentioned that he and other presidents, who operate in an increasingly complex and challenging environment, need better people and more sophisticated leaders. He articulated that whether it was for Lipscomb or another institution, the need for identifying and developing these leaders was critical. He described discussions with the board and other institutional leaders,

We had a long conversation saying ‘How much do we invest in people who may not lead our institution?’ Our sense was that we're involved in Christian education, and our passion is for Christian education. If they end up at APU
that’s great. If they end up at Wheaton, that’s great. I mean we won’t lose any sleep when our people are asked to come have leadership roles in other Christian colleges. We will feel like in some strange weird way we had something to do with it.

In addition to the spoken and institutional priority given to these efforts, another theme in the data was the associated financial and people resources devoted to it by the university.

Participant K spoke in acknowledgement of the significant resources being invested and how it expressed the strong advocacy of the president,

In order to institute something like Bridges and Connect you have to have the resources to be able to do that. So, for the president to put aside the resources for this, I think it just shows how important it is to him and the vision that he has for the institution.

While recognizing the benefit of the investment, other participants challenged whether the funding for these programs was sustainable because of the high expense and people requirement to deliver. Participant D spoke of the high number of people required to develop and deliver these programs, all with other primary full-time jobs at the university, “You need people with creativity, people with vision, people with the time. Who will commit the time? That’s huge”.

In addition to the president, the board of trustees, with special mention of the board chair, were widely credited with great influence and encouragement of leader development and succession planning efforts at Lipscomb University.
**Theme 8: Board of trustees prioritize succession planning efforts**

The board chair or wider trustees were mentioned 18 times from 6 sources as prioritizing the succession planning efforts on campus. Participants quickly pointed to the board chair as the source motivation and primary cheerleader for the president to focus on succession planning at Lipscomb University. The chair’s significant corporate experience and very public commitment to the value of hiring and retaining the best people was touted by both short term and longer serving employees at Lipscomb University. Participants used words like ‘pushed’, ‘concerned’, and ‘intuitive’ when describing the board chair’s significant influence on the president and the institution in the area of succession planning. Participant G said,

> The board chair really champions it. He's always been on to the president to do something in this area. He pushed the president to focus some time and energy in this space. The president really didn't see anything out there that's was as good as he wanted it - at his standard, so he set about creating his own.

Interviewing the board chair provided the researcher with a first-person confirmation of what other participant’s perceived. He described significant and direct conversation with the president on the need to identify and develop future leaders. The board supported the president in the significant financial and people investment in these efforts. The chair best illustrated the strength of this support, and experience outside of higher education when he said,

> I understand why things are the way they are, as much as a non-academician can, but there is also some really good leadership science from industry that can be applied to higher education. I really encourage Randy that we should be
identifying people that can be future leaders. We need to make sure that they have had the right experiences, the development, and that we are investing in them. They need to know that they are being invested in. He was bold enough to take steps to do some of that.

The role of president and board chair of Lipscomb University as prominent advocates – champions – of succession planning and leader development was abundantly clear in the data. Participants across the spectrum knew these efforts were owned and driven from the very top of the organization. The researcher was surprised at the strength of alignment of this association throughout the data. Everyone knew the president and board chair was committed to identifying and preparing to place future leaders so clearly that most knew the president wanted 75 people to go through the Bridges program by 2020. There was no question this was a strategic priority for the institution.

In summary the strategy of champions in succession planning at Lipscomb University was the most strongly supported by the data. The researcher found significant data that spoke to how the succession planning and leader development strategies at the institution were clearly championed by the president, the board of trustees and other senior leaders. The researcher saw this as a significant strength for Lipscomb University.

Communication

Richards (2009) suggested that carefully crafted communication plans, and how they relate to those included and not included, may be one of the most influential elements of an effective succession planning effort in the academy. The data suggested the communication has lacked consistency and not been comprehensive, especially for
those not included in the programs. The communication strategy of the model is illustrated through elements of the themes 3, 5 and 7.

**Theme 3: Purpose of the programs are clearly understood by participants**

This theme occurred frequently in the data, 43 times from 15 of a maximum of 17 sources. Almost every participant spoke to the fact the program was clearly understood by them. It is important to note that all of the data in the study came from either participants, content specialists or leaders in the program(s). Therefore there was a collective sense of understanding given their experience. Participant G spoke for the majority of fellow participants when they said, “We were told. We were told it was to help with succession planning and the next generation of leaders”. However a couple of participants did reflect on whether some participants in Bridges were expecting a Connect 2.0, rather than a focused succession planning and leader identification program.

Conversely there did arise, within this theme, an issue of how participants believed the program was not understood by non-participants. Participants expressed concern that the wider Lipscomb University community did not understand the purpose of the programs. For example Participant D said quite confidently of the wider community,

> They don’t really know the whole context and purpose. The program participants have said it would have been helpful if the community knew the purpose of Bridges. We have never rolled out Bridges holistically to the whole community. There was never really a formal presentation to the community.

So while the data suggested relatively strong communication of purpose to the participants in the programs, there appeared a gap in the knowledge-base of the wider
campus community. Participants spoke to the challenges presented by this variance in that some colleagues wondered why they had to devote the time away from tasks, while others challenged the justification to invest university money in travel and program offerings.

On the subject of clarity of purpose, an interesting data point was the president’s belief in a key element of these programs. Not unsurprisingly the president articulated a view that an important purpose of the program was to watch and assess the participants. No participant gave this same perspective when interviewed by the researcher. The president said of this observation purpose,

One of the things they don’t understand in the Connect program is how careful that we watch them. This Connect program is not simply a program of come get on the bus but some have a good time in Nashville. We're watching them very, very carefully in terms of how they interact with each other and how they're interacting in all the site visits and with community people. There are people that will step out and surprise us and there are people that never get into it like you would hope they would. I don’t think they know that, and we're not going to broadcast that. We're looking for that person who will say, ‘You know we were down at wherever and I got an idea where the university might be helpful. That’s a particularly impressive moment because they are taking the learning and they're bringing it back to the institution. Again, a few will get there but many will just think it’s a nice field trip.

The data suggested that a gap did exist between the clarity of what participants know of the purpose and those not in the programs.
**Theme 5: Participants associate deep value with their engagement in programs**

This theme was mentioned in 10 sources and referenced 24 times, and reflected the positive value felt by those who participate in the programs. In the context of communicating a value for all employees, the data inferred that for those participating in the program there was definitely an association of deep value. Participant H described this theme preeminently when they said,

First of all it was an honor for the president to ask me to come on board and be a part of it, really having not known me as an individual. I thought wow, I’m part of this group and the president sees me as one of his individuals.

Other employees used words and phrases which described a sense of value in being included in the programs and the willingness of the university to invest in them and their development. One participant suggested that the communication of their inclusion in the Connect program was a glimpse in how to be treated and how to treat others. The researcher found no negative association attached to participants being included. However the missing data in this theme was the sense of value non-participants felt in not being included. These employees were not included in the scope of the study.

**Theme 7: Clarity around ongoing plans for participants is challenging**

This theme was mentioned 21 times in 8 sources. While not the most frequently referenced, this theme about on-going plans for participants after involvement in the program is an important one to consider largely because the data articulates a lack of clarity.
Participant H summed it up best for those who highlighted the issue,

What’s next for this group? It’s just not okay that you had your one year and you go. There need to be continued conversations. Even the president, whose genesis were the programs reflected on this missing element, “There's something we haven’t created yet that says ‘How do we keep you engaged? If we assumed all 75 were still here five years from now, what would that mean?

Consistently across this theme the respondents highlighted a glaring lack of clarity as to what follows the involvement. The suggestion was that the one-year Connect program was now a well-oiled and significantly effective program, and Bridges program was going in the same direction in its second year. However the challenge at hand, in terms of communicating value to employees as well as meeting the objective of preparing future leaders, was the question Participant K raised, “What next?” Participant G had experienced the Bridges program but was left reflecting,

When do you let go of things for the next generation? That's the hurdle that wasn't really covered. When do proven executives who can do it, have a track record with the president, when do they start shifting responsibilities? So I think that's the next horizon, when do you shift and how do you do it? I think Bridges may help or has helped identify who has competencies, but there's also a transitional process. When do you go to the bridge process of actually delegating those duties, and what time frame do you delegate? How long do you plan on that? That's the missing piece.
In summary, the data strongly suggested that Lipscomb University lacked clarity both in terms of communicating and executing on what is next for participants of their succession planning and leader development strategies.

**Competency-Based**

Richards (2009) noted that colleges and universities that commit to succession planning activities should also invest the appropriate resources to align the competencies of future leaders to strategic organizational initiatives for the purpose of delivering on key outcomes. While the researcher did not find this to be a strong element in the data, it was nominally addressed through themes 3, 4, 6 and 9.

**Theme 3: Purpose of the programs are clearly understood by participants**

Only a few participants spoke to the purpose of programs as being to develop competencies towards institutional goals. Participant D saw the purpose of the Bridges program as clearly to develop future leaders to fill an impending gap,

I think the president has had succession on his mind. We are on the cusp of losing some vast institutional knowledge. Our provost, our CFO, our president all about the same age, are all probably going to leave within a couple of years of each other, whenever that is. Bridges I believe is his attempt to try to address that question and give the opportunity and plant the seeds and give it some water, in those people who will be the next, to then grow and flourish and for them to take that to the next level.

Participant E affirmed this general view when they spoke to the role of Bridges as choosing many ‘number 2’ people with the goal of developing competencies for being future ‘number one’ people. Participant H experienced the Bridges program as “building
leaders, by giving some different leadership type of scenarios that you’re looking at”.

Participant I saw the program as specifically “developing leadership capability within the staff that can be utilized by Lipscomb”.

**Theme 4: Exposure and interaction with other leaders is highly valued**

The data suggested a clear purpose for the Connect and Bridges program was for participating leaders to develop the competency of collaborating with other colleagues. By exposing participants to other leaders, the president wanted to move the needle of the institution’s goal to develop more collaborative and cross-functional teams and solutions.

This competency and skill development was attested to by three of the participants in particular who described their growth in competency as being able to “move across the organizational chart” (Participant F); or “I can collaborate with anybody on campus whatever the situation may be” (Participant H); or developed a new practice of “networking and building relationships” (Participant L).

**Theme 6: Intentional and ongoing efforts to connect with the Nashville community is important**

As mentioned earlier, in conversation with the researcher, the president clearly stated that he saw his mandate as to pick up 15 years that had been lost and position Lipscomb University to rediscover its competitive advantage. In the context of developing programs which align leader competencies with key organizational outcomes, the Connect program was clearly one. The president saw a deficiency in leadership relationships with the Nashville community, but also saw the opportunity to develop Lipscomb University leaders while making strategic connections toward the goal of
rediscovering a competitive advantage. Participant G stated that “the purpose of Connect is to totally connect Lipscomb with the Nashville community”, while Participant E said,

My sense was that the president wanted to do this as part of his whole initiative and really his whole presidency. It has been his effort to be a greater part of Nashville. Before that we were isolated. That’s my understanding of Connect.

The data alluded to the successful outcomes following seven years of this intentionality through the Connect program. Participant I reflected,

You're seeing Connect participants part of task forces, part of Mayor's initiatives, part of regional activity that goes beyond Davidson County or this Green Hills area. I think you would find evidence if you went to those class members for the last 6 or 7 years and looked at their path beyond Connect. You're going to find that they're engaged here, they're engaged there, and they're actually part of the solution.

Participant M described the Connect program as a “super strategically focused program” which serve to develop the competency of Lipscomb University leaders being able to relate and engage with leaders outside of higher education, and in doing so strategically positioning the institution as a solution in the community.

The researcher found the overarching purpose of the programmatic efforts to be oriented around building soft skills rather than hard competency-based skills.

**Theme 9: Intentionally developing leaders who understand the changing landscape of higher education is critical**

Covered in depth in the segment on Culture strategy, this theme was referred to 17 times in 7 sources, so enough to bring credibility. In context of developing

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competency, the president was quite clear that he saw the role of these succession planning programs as to mature the participant’s understanding on the changing landscape. As mentioned earlier, he wanted participants to be experienced and conversant in the current and future issues of the higher education industry. He wanted every one of them to be able to pass the hypothetical higher education test 101. The president articulated the need to develop the competency of visioning. He remarked in front of the Bridges group that he did not know how to teach it or make leaders see it,

It seems to me for the leader, that vision is going to be an element that's really important. There are 900 faculty and staff at Lipscomb. There has to be some of them that can see beyond what is, to what could be.

The president confessed that part of this desire to grow the competency of his leaders was selfish,

I mean if my people are better, my life is better. If I have got somebody else who's saying ‘the department of education is about to do X, Y, or Z’ and I didn’t know about that, I'm glad they do. It is a real selfishness which says ‘folks, I shouldn’t be the only one that understands the industry.

Participant L described how the role of the programs was to develop a competency in the leader that “broadened their mindset about higher education and how we intersect with not just education but economic development”.

In summary the researcher found some evidence that indicated alignment between the competencies of future leaders to strategic organizational initiatives for the purpose of delivering on key outcomes. However the evidence was not strong, and focused largely
on the president’s goal of having Lipscomb leaders be strategically connected and invested in the Nashville community.

**Continuous**

Richards (2009) advocated for continuous evaluation of both the people in the talent pool and the process that make up the succession plan, in order to ensure both were clearly focused on meeting the desired organizational objectives through a customized approach while still honoring the traditions of the academy.

This overall strategy was clearly weak in the data, with a noticeable absence of a continuous mindset. The Connect leaders had managed to ensure the continuity of the program over seven years, to ensure it was more effective, but there was no evidence of a continuous approach to evaluating and identifying the stages of employee talent management. Themes 5 and 7 touched lightly upon this strategy.

**Theme 5: Participants associate deep value with their engagement in programs**

Participant H was the only one to articulate an experience which connected his experience in one of Lipscomb’s succession planning programs with a deep value in being identified for the next assignment.

It was an honor. After I finished Connect, I was asked to be part of the planning team for the Connect experience for the next three years and that was an opportunity for me to step into a leadership role that was visible on campus. It was definitely one that was noticeable coming out of the president’s office. I felt that again I was being molded in order to do some bigger and better things.
While this participant felt a continuous forward-moving approach to their one-year experience in Connect, the president spoke of a clearer and specifically continuous approach. He said,

What I hope for is an office there will the top 25 critical positions in the university. There will also be a list of 10 or 15 people we know in the country that are Church of Christ and are in positions that could be like that. When we start the search process we accelerate very quickly.

The sense of value for employees in the absence of such a thoughtful and intentionally continuous mindset approach was clearly lacking in the data gathered.

**Theme 7: Clarity around ongoing plans for participants is challenging**

As explored in more detail in the previous Communication strategy segment, the data revealed a significant lack of clarity both in terms of communicating and executing on what is next for participants of the Lipscomb University succession planning and leader development strategies. Participant D did acknowledge the lack of an official continuous evaluation process with regards to talent management and future leaders. In addition the researcher did not find evidence of any plans under consideration to do so.

**Summary**

This chapter has provided a detailed review of the purpose statement, research question, and methodology, including the data collection process, population, and sample. A comprehensive presentation and analysis of the findings developed from the data which included 16 interview participants, informal observations, and artifacts.

This study was designed to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning
in the academy model. Nine themes emerged from the data and were aligned with each of the five effective strategies for succession planning in the academy, namely culture, champion, communication, competency-based and continuous.

Chapter V presents a final summary of the study, including major findings, unexpected findings, and conclusions from the results of the study. These are followed by implications for action, recommendations for further research, and concluding remarks and reflections.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this ethnographic case study was to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model. This Richards (2009) 5C’s model identified the five strategies to be culture, champion, communication, competency-based and continuous. The research question at the heart of the study was: What is the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University?

The entire population for this study was the 117 full member institutions of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities located in North America. The target population was Lipscomb University, one of the full member institutions with a president identified as exemplary in engaging the organization in leader development and succession planning efforts. For this study, identifying an exemplar president in the area of succession planning and leader development efforts was based on interaction with and indications from national experts, recognition by leadership peers, and proven experience in these efforts in the industry.

A sample of 16 employees and community leaders who had meaningful interaction with one or two of the programs intended to address succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University were identified after a pre-study visit on July 18, 2016 and interviewed during a second campus visit from October 1-7, 2016.

Major Findings

Following the data collection, and using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model as a theoretical framework, the researcher made the following assertions of how each of the 5Cs were manifested at Lipscomb University:
Culture

It was clear that the intentional succession planning and leader development strategies of the president and executive leadership had caused them to encounter the deep and cultural traditions of Lipscomb University. The president had benefitted greatly from 11 years as chief executive in which time he had molded and shaped a culture that was more accepting to these practices. The data reflected that some of these steps had been strategic master strokes, while other cultural and religious traditions provided a measure of tension and conflict.

Champions

The succession planning and leader development strategies at the institution were clearly championed by the president and the chair of the board of trustees. The positive role of these two individuals in particular, as advocates of this intentional focus, was the most strongly supported finding in the data. The visibility and clarity of the president and board chair as the organizational front runners in succession planning and leader development strategies was found to be a significant strength for Lipscomb University.

Communication

The data strongly suggested that Lipscomb University lacked clarity in terms of communicating the purpose and value of succession planning and leader development strategies to the university community. The leadership of these efforts also failed to clearly communicate and execute on the next steps for participants following their involvement in the two primary programs.
**Competency-Based**

Little evidence existed that indicated alignment between the competencies of future leaders to strategic organizational initiatives for the purpose of delivering on key outcomes. The evidence that was present focused largely on the president’s goal of having Lipscomb leaders be strategically connected and invested in the Nashville community. The act of assessing specific future needs and intentionally developing appropriate competencies in the leaders was absent.

**Continuous**

Little evidence existed to indicate a clear and continuous path for participants who completed one or both of the succession planning and leader development programs. Indeed to the contrary, participants were found to be openly questioning what was next. The researcher considered ‘Continuous’ as the weakest strategy as the president and board attempt to realize an effective succession planning strategy.

Using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model as a theoretical framework, the researcher isolated nine findings:

1. The president of Lipscomb University has clearly established a cultural expectation that developing future leaders is a priority.
2. The board chair is one of the primary advocates for succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University.
3. Lipscomb University invests significant financial and people resources into the succession planning and leader development strategies.
4. The religious traditions of Lipscomb University are a quiet but clear challenge to typically effective succession planning strategies, especially related to
aspiring leaders who are female and/or not members of the Church of Christ.

5. Participants are clear on the purpose of the programs they were involved in, but believe the wider community is unclear.

6. The president believes exposing leaders within Lipscomb University to a variety of non-academic leaders and organizations in Nashville is both important and strategic.

7. The president believes leaders who better understand the complex and changing landscape of higher education are more valuable to the institution.

8. Participants associate deep value with the relationships formed between leaders inside and outside of Lipscomb University as part of these succession programs.

9. There exists a lack of clarity around ongoing plans for participants involved in the succession planning programs.

**Unexpected Findings**

The researcher found three unexpected elements following the data collection process at Lipscomb University. First, the researcher did not expected the frequency in which employees indicated knowledge that succession planning and leader development were one of the president’s top priorities. It was unexpected, and frankly surprising, that every participant in the study would articulate this fact. Second, the researcher was surprised at how the president had utilized one of the leader development programs to connect so strategically with Nashville. It was unexpected that with clear intention and effective execution the president had not only exposed his university leaders to leaders in other industries, but in doing so had appreciably enhanced and repositioned the reputation
of Lipscomb University in the greater Nashville area. Third, the researcher was surprised at the lack of focus on building specific competencies for future leaders. It appeared at this stage that the program efforts emphasized exposure and identification over building competency.

Conclusions

Based on the research findings of this study and connected to the literature, the researcher drew eight conclusions which infer deeper insight into succession planning and leader development strategies at full member CCCU institutions.

Conclusion 1

CCCU presidents who prioritize an institutional culture of succession planning are more likely to become preferred destinations for employees. 100% of participants in the study spoke to an experience that the president of Lipscomb University personally owned and prioritized succession planning and leader development efforts. The overwhelmingly positive correlation between the role of a president/CEO and a successful organizational effort to champion leader development and leadership continuity was clearly affirmed in the literature (Cohn, Khurana, & Reeves, 2005; Fancher, 2007; Groves, 2007; Kesler, 2002).

In order to help their institutions confidently navigate the growing complexity of the 21st century higher education landscape and be the stand-out institution where the best talent wants to work, CCCU presidents must prioritize efforts on creating a culture of succession planning which allows engaged employees to experience growth, flexibility and leadership exposure.
Conclusion 2

The board chair alongside the president is instrumental in delivering an effective vision for succession planning at CCCU institutions. Almost half of the participants identified the prominent role of the board chair in advocating for succession planning and leader development efforts at Lipscomb University. The practical impact of this advocacy role was made even more significant with the corresponding vision of the president. The literature identified that succession planning developed most effectively where it was a strategic priority. In order to successfully develop future leaders in a complex culture, which is sometimes antithetical to the notion of singling out talented employees, the board and president must have a unified vision for leader development.

Conclusion 3

CCCU institutions that place additional restrictions on who can be a leader will struggle to fulfill their missional potential in an increasingly competitive labor market. The body of literature for this study focused on for-profit organizations and public institutions of higher education which did not consider the intentional restriction of labor in the context of leader development. These entities simply wanted the best employees and the best leaders to deliver on the organizational goals. The requirement of faith-based institutions, especially the majority of CCCU institutions, for employees to profess a personal testimony of Christ inherently shrinks the pool of prospective leaders. Lipscomb University’s additional religious and cultural restrictions on employment and promotion, expressly around gender and church affiliation, appears to further challenge its leadership potential. Those institutions who do not reassess these culturally imposed
restrictions on the identification and development of leaders will be challenged in their ability to be missionally effective in the future.

**Conclusion 4**

Succession planning and leader development strategies are most effective when both participants and non-participants have clarity on the purpose and selection process of the programs. The literature identified a systematic process which was transparent and repeatable was not only of great importance for the organization but also for the employee (Berke, 2005; Hedge & Pulakos, 2002). The data suggested the communication in this area at Lipscomb University lacked consistency and reach, especially for those not included in the programs. Richards (2009) suggested that carefully crafted communication plans, and how they relate to those included and not included, were the most influential elements of an effective succession planning effort in the academy. However culturally challenging it is critical for academic institution to embrace such transparency in communication.

**Conclusion 5**

Exposure to leaders and industries outside of the academy significantly contributes to the growth of leaders in Christian higher education. The literature widely acknowledged the role of creative methods in the corporate arena benefitting organizational impact, but at the same time highlighted such practices were simply not accepted in higher education (Hoffman et al., 2014; Sanaghan, 2016). The researcher considered the programs at Lipscomb University which focused on engaging university leaders with external practitioners as one such creative practice. With the current reality that higher education and other industries are interconnected like never before, the
institutions which will be successful in the long-term will be those who are able to grow
and expose their leaders from inside the organization out into the communities in which
they are situated. Leaders in the academy have much to learn from those outside of it.
The strategic leaders will embrace this reality.

**Conclusion 6**

In order to take advantage of the emerging trends in higher education, CCCU
institutions must build a cadre of leaders who are conversant in the challenges,
opportunities and associated strategies. Reynolds & Wallace (2016) suggested that
Christian colleges experienced a relentless and unprecedented pace of change in the early
stages of the 21st century. This will likely continue into a future where leaders will have
to reimagine Christian higher education in a post-Christian world. The president of
Lipscomb University has sought to create programs which expose and stretch leaders to
this reality while giving practical collaborative experiences focused on solutions. To
meet the challenges of the emerging trends, CCCU institutions will need leaders with
more than discipline-specific competence but a well-rounded comprehensive
understanding of the higher education landscape.

**Conclusion 7**

Higher leader engagement and retention rates result from collaborative
experiences with leaders inside and outside of the institution. Morrill (2007) suggested
universities would need to move their leadership development processes towards less
hierarchical structures, while Kezar et al. (2006) suggested process-centered collaborative
models of leadership development were needed to help university campuses better
understand how individual leaders grow and develop. This was seen at Lipscomb
University and supported by the deep sense of value and engagement felt by participants. If CCCU institutions want to engage and retain leaders, then creative ways in which to provide collaborative learning and engagement experiences inside and outside the university will have to be explored.

**Conclusion 8**

Succession planning and leader development programs which connect to ongoing employee development opportunities are more likely to be effective in developing future leaders. Richards (2009) advocated for continuous evaluation of both the people in the talent pool and the process that make up the succession plan, in order to ensure both were clearly focused on meeting organizational objectives while honoring the traditions of the academy. The execution of this strategy was weak at Lipscomb University, with a noticeable absence of a continuous mindset. While prioritizing and starting such succession planning efforts is very significant in academic institutions, they will not achieve the ultimate objective of delivering well-prepared future leaders if it remains disconnected from ongoing development opportunities.

**Implications for Action**

In light of this ethnographic case study and the critical need for leaders who can chart the course for institutions of Christian higher education to thrive in a rapidly changing and complex environment, the researcher recommends the following nine implications for action. These recommendations are directed to presidents and boards of trustees of institutions of Christian higher education, whether they be members of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities or not.
If the board of trustees and president want to see the future of their institution and its mission be one of vibrancy and excellence then these implications for action should be embraced as essential next steps to develop the next generation of leaders.

**Implication for Action 1**

Institutions must establish comprehensive well-funded succession planning and leader development efforts which are advocated for by executive leaders. Haphazard and inconsistent approaches to developing future leaders are broadly ineffective in for-profit environments and therefore should not surprise anyone when they are equally feeble in Christian higher education. While such unpredictable efforts are good for individual leaders, they do nothing to develop a broader pipeline of leaders. The identification and development of future leaders should be advocated, funded and acclaimed from the executive suite of the institution. While it may be operationalized by the office of human resources, or others, such comprehensive initiatives should be wholly owned by the president and board. Developing leaders is critically important and should be funded accordingly.

**Implication for Action 2**

Succession planning must be elevated in strategic priority such that it is both a frequent and focused conversation between the board chair and president. In the words of retired chairman and CEO of General Electric, Jack Welch, "The rigor of our people system is what brings this whole thing to life. There aren’t enough hours in a day or a year to spend on people" (Kesler, 2002). A university president and board chair need to elevate the substance and frequency of conversations on succession planning and leader development to this level. The reality for an institution of Christian higher education is
that the president and executive staff team will focus and deliver on the priority of the board of trustees. Therefore the board chair must demand a president can articulate and deliver on a comprehensive people strategy which leads to the institution becoming a destination of choice for the best leaders.

**Implication for Action 3**

CCCU presidents must reframe institutional budgets so that employees are seen as an investment not an expense and, in doing so, reallocate specific funding to succession planning and leader development programs. Too many executive teams see their employees as the ‘largest expense’ and fail to believe it is the largest investment in achieving the mission of the institution. Presidents must have the difficult conversations with the board and CFO to reorder historically misaligned budgets that under-invest in the development of employees and those seeking positional leadership. Succession planning efforts cannot simply be a minor add-on to the office of human resources budget, but rather should be an intentional and larger slice of the budgetary pie.

**Implication for Action 4**

CCCU institutions must reevaluate their hiring, promotion and diversity policies and practices in order to maximize the leadership pipeline of Christ-centered faculty and staff. The hiring landscape is more competitive than ever. Advances in technology, ease of movement and accessibility means leaders with a profession of Christ and a desire to contribute to an academic mission have greater choice. Increasingly such leaders are opting for non-Christian work environments offering superior resources and development opportunities. If CCCU institutions want to be serious about maximizing the pipeline of future leaders, they will need to ask serious questions about their hiring, promotion and
diversity policies and practices that lie outside of the principle tenet of claiming a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. CCCU presidents and boards may be uncomfortable with questioning the role of their denominational and/or religious traditions in these practices, but it is necessary and, in some cases, of great urgency.

**Implication for Action 5**

The president must clearly communicate the purpose, selection process and goals of any succession planning and leader development efforts to all employees. Even programs and initiatives with the best intentions can fail to be effective because of ill-thought out communication. Given the importance of comprehensive succession planning and leader development efforts, and the increased possibility of confusion and misunderstanding, it is crucial the president be clear in their communication. The purpose, goals, parameters and avenues for access must be clear for the benefit of those selected and not selected. Poor communication will increase the chance of failure and unnecessary angst in the academic community.

**Implication for Action 6**

CCCU institutions must develop programs that intentionally engage their leaders with learning opportunities and leaders from other industries. Every leader aspiring for greater leadership at the institution should have active relationships and knowledge of the leadership challenges in other industries. A simple action step for a CCCU institution would be to offer a program in which 20 of its current and/or prospective leaders spent intentional and structured time with other regional leaders out in their non-academic environment. As illustrated at Lipscomb University, such a program would return
significant dividends in terms of leadership lessons, employee engagement, institutional brand, recruitment, academic partnership opportunities and more.

**Implication for Action 7**

To enhance the exposure and learning associated with the broader issues of higher education, CCCU institutions should establish fellowship programs that support leaders in shadowing university leaders at both private and public institutions outside of the CCCU. Current and future leaders of CCCU institutions have much to learn from other higher education leaders outside of the council association. While internal CCCU conferences and programs are extremely value, it is critical that future leaders have exposure and understanding to higher education issues in the non-faith based environments of other privates and public institutions. A fellowship program at an institution that funds a number of leaders each year to intentionally spend time at other institutions, shadowing colleagues, will be an invaluable resource. This program should be more than just a day or two visit but a more substantive time of acculturation and immersion in issues and operations at one or more other institutions. The idea generation which would come back to the funding institution would be very significant and well worth the investment.

**Implication for Action 8**

CCCU institutions should develop programs which allow leaders to work on collaborative projects around real issues with leaders inside and outside of the college or university. Leaders are best evaluated for future roles through how they perform with others in actual projects. A program which offers leaders the chance to actively collaborate with leaders from other academic disciplines and divisions will help
illuminate the strengths and weakness of those in the pipeline. Acknowledging the significant interface the modern academy has to have with the community, this assessment opportunity would be even stronger and strategically valuable if the project or assignment involved one or more community organizations. In other words this program should not exclusive be one to test how leaders work together on an internal issue, but the opportunity to see how they work with each other and external leaders on an opportunity for the institution to connect with a community issue(s).

**Implication for Action 9**

Succession planning programs should focus on developing clear competencies for leaders and provide continuous connections to employee development plans, competencies, assessments, evaluations, stretch project assignments, promotions, mentoring and/or coaching. The succession planning program offered by the institution must prioritize developing specific competencies for the future roles of individual leaders. These efforts must also provide continuous connection with the employee evaluation and/or development system. It must be accompanied by a suite of tools which provides comprehensive assessment of the leader’s strengths, competencies and areas of development. Executive leadership needs to intentionally think through specific assignments, on a per-leader basis, which will stretch the leader and help the institution understand their potential. While not guaranteeing promotions, executive leadership should shape programs to offer developmental experiences, mentoring and resources tailored to the leader. This intentionality is a great opportunity to invest in mentoring and/or coaching relationships, inside and outside the institution, to provide additional
support, evaluation and insight for the growing leader. Succession planning cannot simply be a once a year conversation.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Based on the findings of this study the researcher recommends further research in the following areas in order to expand the understanding and knowledge of succession planning and leader development in Christian higher education.

1. Extend the study to include those employees who have not participated in succession planning or leader development programs. This study focused on those employees who had participated in succession planning program and did highlight questions around how these efforts are understood and received by those non-participants. This is a gap in understanding that needs to be addressed.

2. Replicate this study at other types of Christian higher education institutions with differing influences of denomination, faith tradition and background. It would be valuable to explore how other institutional cultures inform and shape the embrace and efficacy of succession planning and leader development programs.

3. Undertake a comparative study of culture of succession planning and leader development programs at public and private institutions of higher education, including other institutions in the CCCU.

4. Explore the cultural and religious barriers and impediments more deeply. While this ethnographic study did highlight the existence and impact of cultural and religious traditions on the culture of succession planning and
leader development, a more in-depth study is warranted. Efforts at Christian higher education institutions would benefit from a deeper understanding of barriers and traditions and the way in which they might influence practice and success in developing future leaders.

5. Study the relationship between a presidents and board chairs in the context of developing and implementing succession planning efforts in Christian higher education. While this study illustrated a strong and vibrant relationship at Lipscomb University, a deeper understanding and exploration of the opportunities and challenges faced by others in developing a unified vision and priority would be helpful.

6. Perform a program evaluation study of a succession planning and leader development program at one or more institutions of Christian higher education. Rather than a study of culture, which this study represented, a more practically focused evaluation could help develop best practice and models for Christian higher education which speak to the unique challenges, influences and opportunities.

7. Study the impact of succession planning and leadership development efforts in institutions of higher education on the retention of faculty and staff who participate in such programs.

8. Study the understanding and perceived need for succession planning efforts among presidents, board chairs and senior academic leaders across the CCCU. This study looked at the challenges for organizational leaders to prioritize the implementation of succession planning efforts. It would be both interesting
and helpful to better understand the perspective and understanding of leaders who are very influential in how their institutions engage in the intentional development of future leaders.

**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

In my office hangs a piece of wood on which the following question is inscribed, “Am I using my life for any great purpose?” This was a question General Eva Evelyn Burrows, AC, the international leader of The Salvation Army from 1986 to 1993, would often challenge those she met around the world to ask themselves. This dissertation process has in small part revealed a glimpse of that purpose for me. I am grateful to have been able to explore this dissertation topic in the context of Christian higher education, which I believe has a wonderfully great purpose to pursue.

At the beginning of my doctoral journey a friend challenged me to take the time to select a dissertation topic that, in his words, would still ‘excite’ me a couple of years into the program. He claimed that undertaking the task of writing a doctoral dissertation was difficult and challenging enough, without adding a subject matter to which one was indifferent. Fortunately I listened to Dr. Albright. I realized that in the context of organizational leadership, what stirred deep in my heart was the tension between a belief that Christian higher education had a very significant and critical role to play in the world, with an observation that such institutions were wholly unprepared in ensuring the leaders would be in place for the next generation of students and employees.

As I close this dissertation, I remain excited and inspired by the contribution of Christian higher education institutions and the prospect of the great things its future leaders will accomplish. However one of my fears for the leaders of such institutions,
some represented by the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, is that they will focus more intently on their own legacy than that of the leaders who will follow. While publicly leaders of Christian colleges and universities talk persuasively about the need to meet the challenges of a complex world that awaits, I too often see initiatives and efforts which are shaped around the ability to deliver closure in time for a retirement celebration or a catchy sounding date, like 2020. Sometimes I wonder whether leaders, including me, do not take sufficient time to think in the context of a longer timeframe and of those who are following. Too often I am guilty of thinking about what I can do while I am here, rather than thinking about what I can do that will enable those who follow me to be even more successful.

In Tennessee I observed executive leaders who sensed a divine call for Lipscomb University to mean more to its students, to mean more to Nashville, and to mean more to a world it could impact in the name of Jesus Christ. I saw a president and board chair that had admitted this ‘more’ was likely to be achieved and realized by the leaders that would follow them. At Lipscomb University I saw leaders who felt the responsibility to create a space where the next generation of leaders could be discerned, developed, grown and prepared within the unique culture of a Christ-centered academic institution.

My dream would be that a president or board chair would read this study – even just parts of it – and be inspired by the imperfect efforts of colleagues at Lipscomb University to start intentional succession planning and leader development efforts at their own institution. If you are one, or can influence one, I pray your legacy will be found in the great things your successor will do.
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APPENDICES
## APPENDIX A

### Synthesis Matrix

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Dear Andrew,

Congratulations, your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the Brandman University Institutional Review Board. Attached you will find a copy of the IRB Review Form. Please keep this for your records as will need to be included in your research appendix.

This approval grants permission for you to proceed with data collection for your research. If any issues should arise that are pertinent to your IRB approval please make immediate contact at BUIRB@brandman.edu.

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank you.

Dr. Doug DeVore

Dr. Doug DeVore
BUIRB Chair
Brandman University
16375 Laguna Canyon Road
Huntington Beach, CA 92649
buirb@brandman.edu
www.brandman.edu

A Member of the Chapman University System
APPENDIX C

Email to President requesting permission to collect data

From: Andrew Barton <abarton@mail.brandman.edu>
Subject: Dissertation Research
To: Randy Lowry III

Dr. Lowry:

Thank you once again for your hospitality last month when I visited your beautiful campus. I enjoyed our conversation and hearing your passion to develop leaders for the future of Lipscomb University, along with Christian Higher Education at large. I appreciated your interest and support of my study focusing on Lipscomb University.

Now that I have received IRB approval from my institution of study, Brandman University, I would like to request permission to visit your campus in the fall to formally undertake my research. This research will involve formal interviews, observation of some of your succession planning / leader development program elements, and the collection of printed related artifacts.

As you suggested during my last visit, I am happy to work through the logistics of this visit with Dr. Paden in your office.

I look forward to hearing from you, and anticipate visiting with you once again later in the year.

--
Andrew Barton
APPENDIX D

Interview Questions (president)

The purpose of this study is to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University. Therefore:

1. How do you define succession planning, and what have been some of your personal experiences with succession planning?
2. Do you see a distinction between succession planning and leader development? If so, how would you articulate this distinction?
3. Why do you advocate and resource programs such as Leadership Lipscomb, Bridges and Connect?
4. How do you think the participants in these programs, whether university employees or community members, perceive the purpose of these programs?
5. What are the key elements of these programs that you think will help Lipscomb University successfully prepare its future leaders?
6. What impact do you think these efforts have had on the culture of developing leaders at Lipscomb University?
7. Finally, what have been some of your biggest learnings when it comes to succession planning and developing leaders at Lipscomb University?
APPENDIX E

Interview Questions (Board chair)

The purpose of this study is to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University. Therefore:

1. How do you define succession planning, and what have been some of your personal experiences with succession planning?
2. Do you see a distinction between succession planning and leader development? If so, how would you articulate this distinction?
3. What has been your role and/or that of the board of trustees in advocating succession planning and leader development efforts at Lipscomb University?
4. What do you see as some of the opportunities at Lipscomb University in this area?
5. What do you see as some of the challenges at Lipscomb University in this area?
6. Finally, what could Lipscomb University learn from the approach of for-profit organizations toward succession planning and leader development?
The purpose of this study is to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University. Therefore:

1. What has been your personal experience of being prepared for leadership at Lipscomb University, and how have you helped others prepare for leadership?

2. Why do you think the university president advocates and resources programs such as Leadership Lipscomb, Bridges and Connect?

3. How do you think the participants in these programs, whether university employees or community members, perceive the purpose of these programs?

4. What are the key elements of these programs that you think will help Lipscomb University successfully prepare its future leaders?

5. What do you see as some of the challenges at Lipscomb University in this area and how have your sought to overcome them?
APPENDIX G

Interview Questions (Faculty/Staff participants)

The purpose of this study is to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University. Therefore:

1. What do you understand the purpose of programs such as Leadership Lipscomb, Bridges and Connect, to be?
2. How has your interaction with one or more of these programs prepared you for leadership?
3. Who are the advocates of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University and what do they do to promote these agendas?
4. How would you describe the culture of developing leaders at Lipscomb University?
5. What do you see as some of the opportunities for succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University?
6. What do you see as some of the challenges for succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University?
APPENDIX H

Interview Questions (community members)

The purpose of this study is to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University. Therefore:

1. What do you understand the purpose of the Bridges and Connect programs, offered by Lipscomb University, to be?

2. From your perspective, what are some of the opportunities Lipscomb University has in terms of developing future leaders?

3. Also, what are some of the challenges Lipscomb University has in terms of developing future leaders?

4. What could Lipscomb University learn from how your organization approaches succession planning and leader development?

5. Finally, how would you describe the culture of developing leaders at Lipscomb University?
APPENDIX I

Informed Consent Form

INFORMATION ABOUT: Preparing Future Leaders: An Ethnographic Study Exploring the Culture of Succession Planning and Leader Development in Christian Higher Education.


PURPOSE OF STUDY: You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Andrew Barton, Ed.D. candidate, a doctoral student in the Brandman University School of Education, part of the Chapman University system. The purpose of this research study is to explore the culture of succession planning and leader development at Lipscomb University, using the 5C’s: Strategies for succession planning in the academy model.

This study will fill in the gap in the research regarding succession planning and leader development in both higher education, with specific focus on Christian higher education. The review of literature revealed a dearth of research around succession planning in higher education, with the limited studies heavily weighted towards public community colleges. While succession planning and leader development is addressed, very few other works concentrate on private university and none on religiously affiliated institutions.

The results of this study may assist university boards, presidents and human resource professionals to better understand the culture of succession planning in a Christian university setting and the barriers that face effective implementation of such efforts. This study may also provide much needed contribution to a body of wider research that has a gap in succession planning and religious affiliated institutions.

By participating in this study I agree to participate in a one-on-one interview, focus group and/or observation setting. The one-on-one interview and focus groups will last between 30 and 45 minutes and will be conducted in person. The observation will likely last 60 minutes. This research will begin and conclude between September 2016 and February 2017.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.

b) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding leader development and succession planning in institutions of Christian higher education. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will
provide new insights about the study of succession planning and leader development which I participated. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

c) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Jeffrey Lee, Ed.D. at jlee1@brandman.edu.

d) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the Investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the “Research Participant’s Bill of Rights”. I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

_____________________________________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

_____________________________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator

_____________________________________________________
Date
BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.
APPENDIX J

Email requesting collation of artifacts

From: Andrew Barton <abarton@mail.brandman.edu>
Subject: Dissertation Research – artifact request
To: Matt Paden <mtpaden@lipscomb.edu>

Dr. Paden:

In preparation for my visit to Lipscomb University and my dissertation study, I am hoping you can help collate some artifacts that will be very useful to my data collection. If you are able to pull some or all of these together before my visit, that would be great. Otherwise I can connect with you or a colleague during my visit to collect them.

Specifically I would like to collect information related to the budget, curriculum, meeting calendar, attendee list and evaluation/feedback reports relative to the succession planning/leader development programs in question, namely Leadership Lipscomb, Bridges and Connect. In addition I hope to be able to look at the communications related to these programs, whether to internal or external audiences.

I suspect it will help for us to have a phone conversation on this topic, and look forward to hearing from you.

Thanks again for your support.

--

Andrew Barton
List of Artifacts

Bridges Program Brochure 2016.

Bridge Program Retreat Agenda, October 2-4, 2016.

Connect Program Nashville 1-Day Meeting Materials.

Connect Program Retreat Agenda, September 13, 2016.

Connect Program Participant invitation letter from the president


APPENDIX K

National Institutes of Health Certification

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Andrew Barton successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 07/12/2015
Certification Number: 1794588