



VOLUME 17.1 Winter

# *LEADERSHIP*

JOURNAL FOR POST-SECONDARY LEADERS

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# TABLE of CONTENTS

## THE CHAIR ACADEMY

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The Academy Leadership Journal  
Volume 17.1 Winter  
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Leadership is indexed in Current Index to Journals in Education (ERIC).

ISSN# 1086-1149

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Send address changes to:  
The Chair Academy  
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1025 North Country Club Drive, Suite 313  
Mesa, AZ 85201

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## EDITORIAL

Let's Celebrate!

*Gary Filan* 2

**2011 PAUL A. ELSNER  
INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE  
IN LEADERSHIP HONOREE**

Dr. Bill Lamb 3

**2011 PAUL A. ELSNER  
INTERNATIONAL EXCELLENCE  
IN LEADERSHIP HONOREE**

Dr. Gordon Nixon 11

**LEADERSHIP IN THE  
TWO-YEAR COLLEGE DURING CRISIS**

Applying Bill George's Lessons

*Sharon Kennedy* 19

**YOU KNOW HOW IT WORKS,  
IT IS A DANCE, AN ART, NOT A SCIENCE**

Decision Making by Public

Two-Year College Presidents

*Chad Coquette* 23

**20TH ANNUAL  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

28



# Let's Celebrate!

By Gary Filan

We have gathered to share our work, tell our stories, learn from luminary keynote speakers, network for success, and celebrate the exemplary leaders among us. We will come together again for our 20th Annual International Conference in Dallas, Texas March 22-25, 2011. This issue of *Leadership* begins the celebration!

We will honor two of our outstanding leaders at the conference with the Paul A. Elsner International Exemplary Leader Award. Our first two articles capture the essence of these dedicated leaders. Each leader has advanced our work in post-secondary education with insight, innovation, hard work, and authentic leadership. Dr. Bill Lamb, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa and Dr. Gordon Nixon, Vice President Academic, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Calgary, Alberta share their journey in transformational leadership.

We are always proud to have highly respected keynote speakers at our conference. Last year at the 19th Annual International Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota we

heard from Bill George, leadership author and legendary CEO of Medtronic. Chosen as one of the Top 25 CEOs in the past 25 years, Bill shared his message on *7 Lessons for Leading in Crisis*. In this issue of *Leadership*, Sharon Kennedy, Vice President for Learning, Blackhawk Technical College, Janesville, Wisconsin puts those lessons to a test with her leadership in post-secondary education.

Decision making is at the core of all we do. "It's a Dance, an Art, Not a Science" by Chad Coauette investigates the qualities of personal adaptability, role flexibility, and sound judgment as keys to effective transformational decision making. Chad's research can inform the leadership within each of us.

Four terrific keynote speakers, pre-conference workshops, participation in the Advanced Leadership Academy, engagement in cutting-edge concurrent sessions, opportunities to congratulate International Award Honorees and Exemplary Leaders are among the great benefits when you join us to celebrate our 20th Annual International Conference in Dallas, Texas, March 22- 25. Being a member of the Academy leadership family and celebrating our 20 years of dedication to leadership, each other, our teams, colleges, and communities . . . that is also worth celebrating!

See you in Dallas. Let's Celebrate!

*Paul A. Elsner*

## International Excellence in Leadership Award

2011



The Paul A. Elsner International Excellence in Leadership Award is named in honor of Dr. Paul A. Elsner, Chancellor Emeritus of the Maricopa Community Colleges. Dr. Elsner held the chancellorship from 1977 until retiring in 1999. Dr. Elsner is recognized nationally and internationally as an exemplary leader in post-secondary education.

Each year the Academy honors truly exceptional leaders who exemplify and support academic and administrative leadership with the Paul A. Elsner International Excellence in Leadership Award. This prestigious award represents the highest degree of excellence in the field of educational leadership.

This year the Academy honors Dr. Bill Lamb, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa and Dr. Gordon Nixon, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT), Calgary, Alberta with the 2011 Paul A. Elsner International Excellence in Leadership Award. These outstanding leaders are models of authentic leadership. Mahatma Gandhi said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Dr. Lamb and Dr. Nixon serve their colleges and communities with exemplary leadership and are most deserving of this international leadership award.

Dr. Lamb and Dr. Nixon will be honored at the Chair Academy's 20th Annual International Conference for Organizational Leaders to be held in Dallas, Texas March 22-25, 2011. We hope you can join us in recognizing and celebrating their exceptional authentic leadership.

*Paul A. Elsner*

## International Excellence in Leadership Award 2011

# Dr. Bill Lamb

---

**There are few vehicles in America more practical and pragmatic than a pickup truck. That is Bill Lamb's chosen transportation. The neat white Toyota workhorse ride fits the get-it-done, no-pretense style of this year's Paul Elsner Award recipient. Lamb's chosen auto befits a kind-mannered lifelong learner, equally at ease with Romantic Era verse and the life lessons gleaned from hours in a duck hunting blind.**

From his earliest days, Dr. Bill Lamb studied, taught and worked in Kansas. His current role as vice president for academic affairs at Iowa's Kirkwood Community College fits in philosophy and background as well as geography. Lamb started his higher education at Fort Scott Community College, then earned degrees in English Literature from the University of Kansas and Pittsburg State University, respectively. Lamb's doctoral work took him to Kansas State University a few years later.

Teaching at Coffeyville Community College honed his classroom skills and student needs. Nearly two decades at Johnson County Community College gave Lamb ample opportunities to explore leadership and forward-thinking education initiatives at a leading two-year paragon. Johnson County and Kirkwood share central roles in the League for Innovation in the Community College, where Lamb became familiar with the eastern Iowa community college. An academic vice president opening in 2007 gave him the opportunity to take his leadership to a new level in the Hawkeye State.

Lamb's Kirkwood colleagues consistently talk up his good humor and warm persona in describing his leadership style on the Cedar Rapids campus. "Bill is all





Dr. Bill Lamb (As Vice President Academic at Kirkwood Community College) tries his hand at driving an A-300 Bobcat used by the Horticulture program.

*“He naturally spreads humor while keeping us focused on the most important things to do for that day.”*

about developing the talents of those he works with,” said Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs John Henik. “He lives the community college mission and centers his decisions around what is in the best interests of students.”

Others point to Lamb’s natural strengths for easy rapport and his gentle Great Plains wit. Kirkwood Dean of Distance Learning and Secondary Education Todd Prusha says Lamb “makes the rounds to connect with people” on a consistent basis.

“When Bill is in the building we all know it. He has been incredibly supportive of me as a new dean at Kirkwood. He naturally spreads humor while keeping us focused on the most important things to do for that day,” Prusha added.

Dr. Bill Lamb recently discussed his rich career and philosophy with Kirkwood Public Information Director Steve Carpenter.

**Kirkwood: Do you remember the day, the time that you knew you would make education your calling?**

Bill Lamb: That’s a great question, because when I finished my Masters degree in English literature, the last thing I wanted to do was teach! I had been a graduate assistant at Pittsburg State and taught two first semester composition courses, and not very well. I was more focused on my own courses and my pretty lengthy reading list.

When I graduated with the MA, I went to work as an underwriter for a small insurance company in my hometown, two years of great people and many opportunities. They had branches in 27 states, which allowed me to travel to different areas of the country to work with branch personnel on multi-risk insurance plans. Sounds a long way away from teaching, doesn’t it? But the funny thing is that even though I enjoyed the job, I never felt like I was making a difference—the ideal I grew up with in my small Kansas home.

After 18 months in insurance, I knew I needed to give teaching one more try. I was offered an opportunity to teach at Kansas University in the fall of 1976, and from there, I knew the classroom was where I wanted to be. Because of my interest in essay writing in particular, I also soon learned that the university was not the place for me—too much of a focus on the study of literature. From that year in Lawrence at KU, I was able to find my first teaching job at Coffeyville Community College, a small Kansas college on the Oklahoma border. From that first semester, I knew I was in the right profession to make a difference. I’ve been loving every minute since.

**Who was your most influential teacher/educator in high school? In college? Who have been your key influences/mentors in the past decade?**

I've been very lucky to have some wonderful teachers, although like many of our students today, I was unaware of the care and nurturing that many of them gave me. In high school, I had two wonderful standout stars in the classroom: Mrs. German and Mr. Norman. Both had very different styles of instructional delivery, but their connection was that they both had a balance of high expectations for performance with a strong support system to help you get there. I have tried to incorporate those high values for learning with a caring and nurturing style in my own work.

I often share my story of Lucile James, my community college composition professor. She was the one who predicted I might become an English major. Of course, at the time, I assured her there was no chance of that happening. In my second semester at KU, I changed my major from Political Science to English Literature; she probably laughed at the idea. Again, Ms. James was a teacher with a passion for content and for students. She danced around the room, reading passages from stories and essays while exalting the value of a particular word or phrase. We all watched, hoping she would not call on us. But she did, and often. We learned much about ourselves as writers and readers.

I've also been fortunate to work with many leaders who have mentored me through my various leadership roles—from department chair to vice president, and all the stages in between. Certainly Gary Filan has been both a friend and mentor for nearly twenty years. Through his work, I have learned much about leadership and coaching others to be successful.

Marilyn Rhinehart at Johnson County Community College gave me an opportunity to advance positions within the college—a difficult challenge in most community colleges. I learned about empathy and how to laugh at myself from Marilyn, and from others I worked with at JCCC.

Certainly, also Larry Tyree, who served for one year as the interim president at JCCC. Larry taught me many things about living your mission and valuing people. His caring honesty and willingness to listen deeply are attributes I strive to develop daily.

Finally, there's Al Rowe, my good friend and colleague at Kirkwood. Al has been willing to give me his time and expertise since I arrived on campus three years ago. I have learned much from his experience and his expertise, especially in strategic planning.

I wish I could name all the many people who have taken time to serve as coaches and guides to my own development.

**What motivates you most as an educational leader these days?**

Student success is my top personal motivator, which is why I love working with students and faculty, and I love looking for ways to better serve the needs of community college students. Much of my leadership is grounded in my knowledge and experience in the classroom as a teacher.

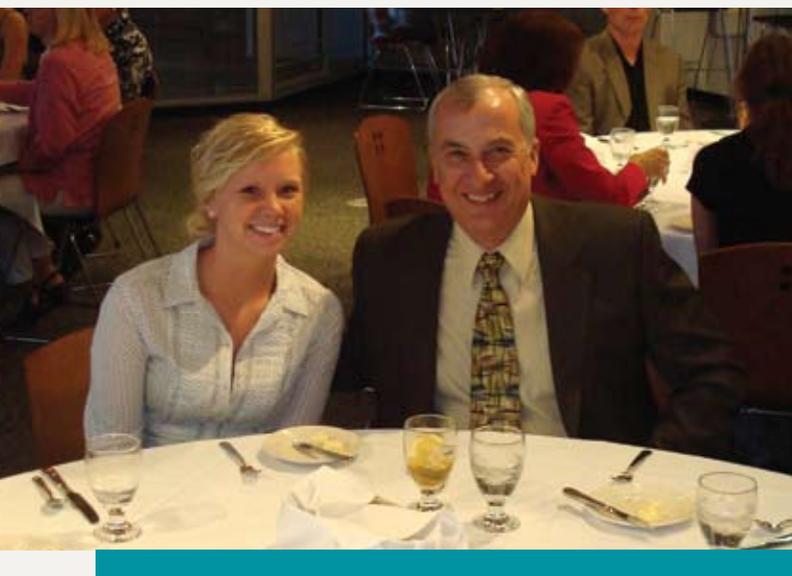
To me, the greatest benefit of working in a community college is that not only do we see the very best of the traditional students walk through our doors, but we also see the most disenfranchised learners—those without a connection to the educational process. Often they struggle mentally to make the trip through our doors. When they do, they are giving us a chance to help them accomplish their dream: a better job, a better education, a better future for their family.

**In this age of “Google-it-for-answers” and global communications options, is it still possible for students to grasp a sense of wonder, a feeling of personal discovery in education today?**

Sure, that is still a great possibility. But it is crucial for teachers to also get to that level of excitement about learning. The research shows that lecture is gone as a “teaching strategy” and active learning is a must to engage students. In my own teaching, I have lots



Bill and a colleague ready for a Halloween adventure at Harry Potter park after a day at the League STEMtech conference.



Dr. Bill Lamb and Honor's student at a Board dinner.

of discussion online and lots of interaction; it's an expectation of the course. From the faculty professional development days at Kirkwood, the message was the same: get students involved in their own learning.

**What was a recent opportunity for YOU to feel a sense of wonder or surprise in learning?**

Of course, I learn a lot from my kids, so the best example is one most of us can relate to—a new cell phone. As we gain a level of comfort with our phones, we experience real wonder when we jump to a new technology. I had this experience recently and watched as my kids pulled the phone from me and started to push buttons.

As I explained to them, they have the knowledge but they aren't helping me to learn. The event became a great surprise in learning as we worked through the screens and found common applications.

**If you could erase one fear or thought process from modern higher education, what would it be?**

I would eliminate the historical image of the college student and tell every adult there's a place for them at the higher education table. I fear we lose potential adult students because they were not successful in high school and have a fear of failure in college. The reality for most of those individuals is that they are very different people today than they were as teenagers, and their wonderful wealth of experiences could catapult them through a higher degree or greater training opportunity. I wish I could erase the fear of failure for all students and let them see the wonderful world of learning from a strengths based approach.

**How would you characterize your leadership style?**

I work very hard to be a transformational leader. For me, that starts in inclusive decision-making—working to build teams with a focus on consensus and shared responsibility. I believe in listening and discussing issues openly in a transparent environment, and I believe in positive reinforcement by building on a person's strengths. With my team, we have worked to understand our own strengths and the strengths of others in our

daily work. This has helped us to work collaboratively together, rather than competitively.

**Bill, think of a couple of the students you've had over the years that exemplify the most satisfying or rewarding teaching experiences for you. What made them special?**

One student that immediately comes to mind is Mary, a student I recently had here at Kirkwood. Mary was a single parent with three young children and had been involved in an abusive marriage. I learned this over time as she submitted essays and sought feedback on her improvement as a writer, and she did grow and flower over time. The most interesting part to me was how hard she worked to improve, and with every change, she gained more and more confidence as a writer. Her voice matured, as did her content. She won a prestigious award from a community organization after the course was finished, and her essay—read to the audience at the event—reflected her confidence and growth as a writer. She was a memorable student for sure.

Another memory goes back to my early days at Coffeyville Community College and a football player named Bryan. He was an inner city African American student with a wonderful ability on the football field. Unfortunately for Bryan, his football ability had not supported his ability as a student and in particular, as a writer. To say it mildly, he had quite an ego.

We worked together, however, and through humor and respect, he learned that he would not survive to make it to the professional ranks if he could not survive at the university level. He put in the extra time and effort to overcome his literacy issues, and as a bright young man, he gave over his ego to learning and development. He went on to play at a major university and eventually had a successful career as a professional football player. He kept in touch for a while, but I've often thought about him when working with a student who does not have the prerequisite skills to be successful. Bryan—like many students we see at any community college—had a bit further to go to get to the college level than others.

Kirkwood Community College has embraced the spirit of innovation and inventive possibilities since its founding in 1966. Its location in east central Iowa is a starting point, with involvement and engagement extending around the globe.

Kirkwood served about 70,000 individuals in the past year, with more than 26,000 students enrolled in college credit classes, corporate training and a myriad of courses and workshops through its burgeoning Continuing Education division. The college offers more than 120 credit study programs and is a leader in student/graduate transfers to four-year colleges and universities.

In the past decade Kirkwood has built innovative teaching and training facilities including a Healthcare Simulation Center that draws nursing, allied health and emergency responder trainees from around the region. In the summer of 2010 one of the most innovative training facilities in North America opened: The Hotel at Kirkwood Center. The 71-room upscale teaching hotel provides a full-service restaurant, catering and conference/event facilities amid a continual atmosphere of learning.

Students from more than 100 nations know it. Hotel guests amazed by cuisine and hospitality discover it. Iowa employers with a better-trained workforce count on it. Nearly 70,000 alumni believe it. At Kirkwood Community College, you can Start Here and Go Anywhere.



**Oprah Winfrey has been known to ask her guests, “What do you know for sure?” Bill Lamb, what are some things you know for sure?**

I believe strongly in people. I often joke when I am presenting a workshop on performance appraisals that the person you think of in your mind as the worst, most ineffective employee in your organization comes to work every day with the mindset that he or she will do a great job today, just like they have every other day. To help develop people in terms of understanding their value-add, a good leader/manager needs to share examples with each individual to help with their development. This is the essence of the workshop that I do: helping people to grow. I know for sure that when confronted with the facts about your work, anyone will want to improve, or decide that this work is not for them.

**When your educational duties are done, what do you do for fun?**

I love the outdoors and try to spend time with friends whenever possible. The snow in Iowa is a wonderful place to be in the winter, just like the lakes for fishing in the spring and fall, or the ponds for a little duck hunting. Of course, my true fun focus is my beautiful

Dr. Bill Lamb and student winner of the League for Innovation Award

wife and wonderful kids who help me see the beauty of the world we live in each and every day.

**Dr. Bill Lamb’s heirs to educational leadership will be doing—what—20 or 30 years from now?**

Many will be college presidents or vice presidents, especially the many I have worked with for the last 17 years through the Chair Academy for Leadership Development. I was a 1993 graduate of the program and have always stated that the experience changed my life as an educational leader. That training helped me to understand the tools of effective management, which in turn helped me to grow and develop as an organizational leader. I have had many role models as co-facilitators throughout the years, and they all—without a doubt—hold a share of this award for the wonderful things they have taught me about people, relationships, organizational change, and true leadership. 

*Paul A. Elsnor*

## **International Excellence in Leadership Award 2011**

# **Dr. Gordon Nixon**

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**Gordon Nixon's path to leadership within SAIT Polytechnic has been one of innovation, personal investment and commitment to student success.**

His journey with the prestigious polytechnic began in the mid-1970s when he enrolled as a telecommunications student. After graduation and five years of industry experience, Nixon returned to SAIT, this time as an Instructor. Since teaching his first class 30 years ago, Nixon progressed from Instructor to International Project Manager, to Dean, to Vice President Academic – and back to student again.

Working with President Irene Lewis and the other members of the executive team, Nixon has played a significant role in shaping SAIT's transformation from Calgary's "trade school on the hill" to a globally-recognized polytechnic.

"Gord is committed to continuous learning on a personal level, and he is absolutely dedicated to improving the learning environment for students and faculty," President Lewis said. "He is responsible for many of the initiatives that have helped make SAIT a truly exceptional place to work and learn."

### **FINDING THE RIGHT PATH**

Growing up in a small logging community in British Columbia, Nixon never imagined himself as a teacher.

"I struggled in the K-12 system. I just couldn't see the relevance," he explained. "Luckily, my parents supported



Nixon with Professional Cooking student, Portia Siu.

and motivated all their children to pursue higher education, even though very few people in our area went on to college.”

Nixon traveled with his family to Calgary many times as a child and each trip would bring them down the Trans-Canada Highway past the SAIT campus in the heart of the city. After meeting a SAIT Instructor who told him what the school had to offer, he picked up a calendar and selected the Telecommunications diploma program.

“For the first time in my life, I excelled academically because I could really see the relevance,” Nixon said. “It was a great time – I lived in residence and even met my wife Karen, who was studying journalism.”

When Nixon graduated, digital technology was starting to change the world. He landed a job in Application Engineering with Alberta’s largest telecommunications company, designing specifications for equipment installation and working in the field as an equipment installer. After five years, he saw a newspaper ad for a Telecom Instructor position at SAIT.

“Having succeeded as a SAIT student, I always thought I would like to try teaching,” Nixon said. “I got

the job thanks to my experience with digital technology and was somewhat surprised to find myself as a 26-year-old Instructor.”

For the next 12 years, Nixon developed and delivered telecommunications, electronics and computer courses to the full range of SAIT students, from apprentices to corporate clients.

“When it comes to having long-term impact on students’ lives, few careers can surpass being a college teacher. I loved interacting with students and helping them see the relevance of the curriculum,” said Nixon. “Polytechnics don’t just teach theory. We teach people how to translate theory into practical applications; that’s why our students hit the ground running in the workplace.”

In 1992, Nixon earned a SAIT Entrepreneurial Award for establishing a partnership with Nortel in which he delivered customized training to their employees and customers around the world. This led to a three-year role as SAIT’s International Project Manager, leading the planning and implementation of large-scale telecommunications projects in Thailand, Vietnam and Mexico.

“This opportunity had a huge impact on my career and my personal life. I learned to take a broader perspective, to be more patient and tolerant, and to be a better observer and listener. I also learned that an institution and its students must understand cultural diversity and foster international connections,” Nixon said. “SAIT has more than 150,000 alumni in 55 countries – our students must be prepared to work anywhere in the world.”

Nixon’s work received international recognition and SAIT became the first public-sector organization to win the Canadian Exporters’ Association International Development Award.

In 1996, Nixon was appointed Dean of SAIT’s newly formed Information Technologies department.

Within three years, he increased the number of full-time students by 63 per cent, increased corporate training gross revenue by 198 per cent and established partnerships with industry leaders such as Microsoft, Cisco and Oracle.

He also continued to teach one course each year. “The pulse of our organization is really in the classroom, and I like to stay connected to that,” said Nixon. He focused on making technology accessible, introducing a new program that provides laptop computers to students. In 1997, 50 SAIT students received laptops; this year, that number was more than 4,000.

### A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY

When Irene Lewis joined the team as President and CEO in 1998, change was in the air. She recognized that SAIT was a very good school – with the potential to be great. “I saw an enterprising and entrepreneurial culture, solid programs, deep ties to industry, and a very high graduate employment rate,” Lewis explained. “But there were many challenges, too.”

Although employee engagement was not yet measured, it was thought to be very low. And while SAIT offered applied degrees and industry-focused programming, it was still thought of as merely a “trade school.” Enrollment was steady, but there wasn’t a strong growth strategy. The campus facilities were also in need of repair.

“One of the greatest opportunities was a dedicated group of faculty and staff wholeheartedly committed to student success,” Lewis said. “Gord stood out. I could see that he was focused and results-oriented, but that he also really cared about students and faculty.”

Three years after becoming Dean, Nixon was tasked with leading a new school that integrated three departments and 14 academic programs into one. With more than 2,500 students and 200 faculty and staff, Information and Communications Technologies became SAIT’s largest school. Nixon guided the development of five fast-track programs which generated more than \$4.5 million in annual gross revenue. He also secured a \$19.8

million software donation.

“It was clear that Gord believed in SAIT’s core philosophy – transforming lives by integrating learning with technology – and that he embodied our vision,” Lewis said. After a national competition in 2001, Nixon was named Vice President Academic.

The transformational process initiated by President Lewis kicked into high gear. “It started with a comprehensive strategic plan that is incorporated into all that we do,” Lewis explained. Since then, tremendous progress has been made.

For instance, a new Campus Master Plan has virtually transformed SAIT’s physical space with five major construction projects – the boldest of which is currently underway. To be completed in 2012, the new Trades and Technology Complex will accommodate 8,100 new full and part-time learners each year. In addition to its physical transformation, SAIT has seen significant increases in revenue, enrolment and program offerings.

### GOOD TO GREAT

“As Vice President



Nixon at SAIT’s October 2010 Open House.



Rebecca Britton (wearing glasses) and Heather Jones, first-year Medical Radiologic Technology (MRT) students, with Nixon in SAIT's leading-edge MRT lab. Medical Radiologic Technology is the art and science of correctly positioning the patient and X-ray equipment to produce and record images for visualizing the extent of disease or injury to a patient.

Academic, Gord has developed many initiatives that, as a whole, have resulted in system-wide change for the better," Lewis explained. She pointed to many highlights, but said curriculum development has been a focal point.

### **Curriculum Development**

Under Nixon's leadership, a Curriculum Excellence Framework was created and the curriculum development processes were redesigned. SAIT's Centre for Instructional Technology and Development now works with schools across campus to design and develop curriculum.

Instructional Designers consult with subject-matter experts. Writer/Editors create course materials with the assistance of Copyright Officers. New Media Specialists produce a wide range of accompanying digital media, from computer animation to video and audio production.

"I believe that SAIT's emphasis on creating and maintaining a unique curriculum development process is a best practice among higher education institutions," Nixon said. "Curriculum is the cornerstone of a college. It's our product. SAIT's processes and our structured

project management approach have resulted in leading-edge curriculum and have also helped us with knowledge management by capturing our intellectual property in terms of baby-boomer retirement."

"The real winners are the students," said Lewis. "SAIT's learner satisfaction numbers have improved dramatically since Gord's new curriculum process was put in place."

### **Revenue Generation Transformation**

Over the past five years, SAIT has transformed its revenue generation capabilities by delivering corporate energy-related training to the global market, and by implementing the findings from Jim Collins' (2001) *Good to Great* research. "Gord led this five-year journey, which has resulted in considerable new revenues – a 144 per cent increase in net corporate revenue profits, a clearer direction, a closer link with industry and a higher profile for SAIT, both nationally and internationally," Lewis said.

Nixon said that once they looked at the "brutal facts," it was clear that revenue had hit a plateau. SAIT's

products were not aligned with changing customer needs and competition was increasing. After a comprehensive review, a new business model was created.

“One of the biggest wins has been SAIT’s new international work-force development training programs for oil and gas companies. In fact, a group of 92 Angolan students just completed a six-month study term at SAIT,” Nixon said.

### **Global Reach**

Beyond energy training, Nixon has worked to provide students and faculty with opportunities for international experiences. He led SAIT’s participation in the Global Education Network (GEN), a unique partnership of four colleges on three continents: SAIT; Box Hill Institute (Australia); Kirkwood Community College (Iowa); and the Institute of Technical Education (Singapore). The network provides learning opportunities for students and faculty through short-term and semester-long exchanges and the sharing of best practices.

“SAIT’s involvement in the Global Education Network is a great example of how he sees the big picture,” said Rob Sadowski, a SAIT Instructor who recently travelled to Vietnam for a GEN project. “Dr. Nixon not only sees it, he has the commitment, the knowledge and the drive to make the big picture a reality.”

That big-picture view has also led to new opportunities for women in Afghanistan.

In January 2007, a small Kandahar school known as the Afghan-Canadian Community Centre opened its doors to female students and was soon packed with women eager to learn. John Aldred, a former SAIT Board of Governors member, was involved through the Canadian International Learning Foundation. Aldred asked Nixon to consider a SAIT partnership.

Just four months later, SAIT began offering an online customized business management program to a group of 12 female students. Since then, those students have gone on to land new careers with government, business

and international organizations such as the United Nations. These women are now earning, on average, the equivalent of \$800 per month – a stark contrast to the average income of \$60 per month. Second and third cohorts are now enrolled in the program.

“Without Gord’s and SAIT’s contribution this wouldn’t be anywhere near where it is today,” Aldred said. “Their involvement has transformed it. Gord has the vision to see the long-range benefits of what’s being done in Afghanistan.”

### **Learning Outside the Box**

“Gord has done a tremendous job of integrating technology into the learning process, whether that’s in the classroom or through distance learning,” Lewis said. “SAIT was a founding member of eCampusAlberta, and Gord was a key player in that.” Established in 2002, eCampusAlberta is a consortium of 15 post-secondary institutions that enables students from across the province to access dozens of programs and hundreds of courses through distance learning.

Lewis also credits Nixon as an excellent relationship-builder within the polytechnic and with government partners. Working with the provincial government, Nixon recently spearheaded a pilot project that provides online training to apprentice welders, electricians and plumbers – a first for apprenticeship training in Canada. “This is great news for apprentices and their employers,” Nixon said. “They can take the theory portion of their programs online at a time and place convenient to them, greatly reducing the time they spend in school away from their families and jobs.”

### **Teaching Excellence**

“There are tremendous opportunities for leadership and professional development at SAIT,” said Instructor Rob Sadowski. “Dr. Nixon expects excellence, but he also provides the resources for people to achieve it.”

Under Nixon’s leadership, more than 200 instructors attended conferences last year. On the SAIT campus, there’s a popular faculty mentorship program, an annual



SAIT Polytechnic's historic Heritage Hall – the cranes above it are for construction of the new \$400 million Trades and Technology Complex.

SAIT Polytechnic is located in the heart of Calgary, Alberta – a city of more than one million. Established in 1916, SAIT is Canada's first technical school. For nearly 95 years, SAIT has met the needs of students and industry by offering a wide range of credentials through more than 100 programs. Today, 2,400 faculty and staff serve 70,000 full-time and part-time learners.

SAIT offers apprenticeship trades, applied degrees, certificate and diploma programs, as well as hundreds of distance education, continuing education and corporate training courses. In September 2011, SAIT will launch its first baccalaureate degree, a Bachelor of Business Administration, Accounting,

SAIT is focused on three directional priorities: building a world-class service culture; becoming a leader in learning; and having an entrepreneurial outlook. Graduates are in high demand, with an employment rate ranging from 91 to 99 per cent in the last decade.

faculty showcase of excellence and more than 200 development sessions each year. Nixon also helped the executive team create SAIT's Professional Credential Enhancement Program, which has covered tuition costs for hundreds of employees. Employees can receive up to \$10,000 per credential – from program certificates to PhDs. This year more than 140 employees are enrolled.

"I believe we all have to keep on learning," Nixon said. He earned three degrees in 11 years through part-time studies: a Bachelor of Administration in 1992, followed by a Master of Education in 1995 and a Doctor of Philosophy in Education Leadership in 2003. During this time, he and his wife raised three children and Nixon says he never missed a hockey game or dance recital.

### CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

"Many of Gord's initiatives have worked to raise the profile of trades and technology careers," Lewis said. "A great example is the Cadmus Chair."

The Cadmus Trades Teaching Chair is the first award of its kind in the world. It was established by John Aldred's Cadmus Foundation in 2005 and is presented to a SAIT trades instructor in recognition of excellence in teaching. It carries a value of \$25,000 and also includes a semester-long sabbatical for practical research, professional development and project work to enhance program quality and mentor other instructors. Named after the mythical figure Cadmus, Greek patron of the useful arts, its mandate is to raise the status of the trades and attract young people to trades careers.

"Gord brought the idea to me," Aldred said. "It took me all of 30 seconds to see it was a really good one."

Nixon has also upped the ante when it comes to SAIT's involvement in skills competitions. Results have steadily improved, culminating with the 40th International WorldSkills Competition, held in Calgary in 2009. Not only was SAIT a founding partner and its residence home to the 900 competitors, seven SAIT students – the most from any school in the country – qualified to compete for Team Canada. Symbolizing the pinnacle of excellence in

skills training, this event helped to ignite a passion for trades and technology careers in a new generation of young Albertans.

In looking to the future of post-secondary education, Nixon sees competition – for students and resources.

“Leaders need to be strategic in differentiating their institution and they must be able to demonstrate their value proposition to key stakeholders – government, industry, parents and future students,” Nixon explained. “This will require long-term big-picture thinking, going beyond day-to-day transactional leadership to position the institute for the future.”

### Q&A

#### **Thirty years at one institution is a remarkable achievement. What has kept you engaged at SAIT?**

There are many reasons why I’m passionate about working at SAIT. I love the diversity of our students, from high school graduates to energy-sector workers from around the world. I love the diversity of our programming – everything from nuclear medicine to welding, and from cooking to business. I love the many opportunities for employees. I earned three degrees while working full-time. I’ve had the opportunity to advance from Instructor to Vice President and travelled the world. SAIT transforms lives – being at SAIT has certainly transformed mine. To me, it is an unbelievable privilege to be part of this great institution.

#### **What is your educational philosophy?**

I believe that education is planned

change. This change is primarily at the individual level; however, in aggregate it is reflected in community and society. It is an instrument for both social and economic development. To me, education is about preparing individuals to lead a more meaningful life. Education should not be thought of as a destination. It is a journey that prepares one to travel with a different perspective.

#### **How do you define leadership?**

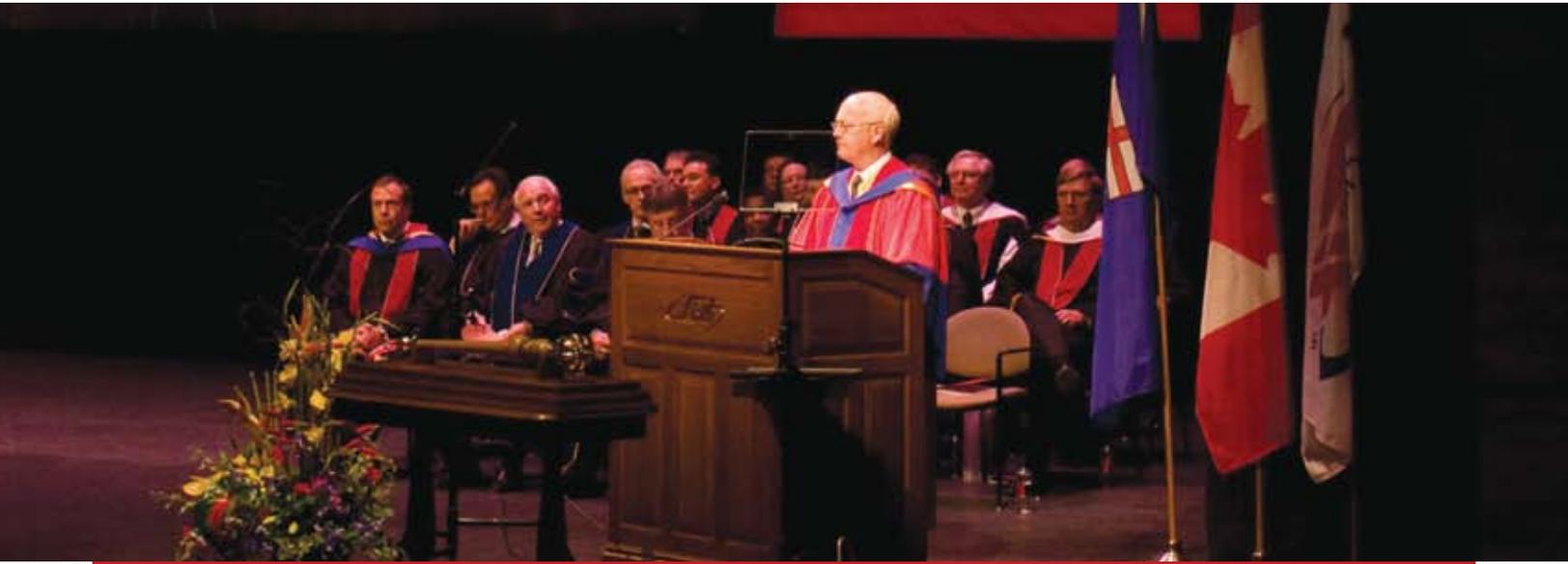
To me, leadership is best summed up by Warren G. Bennis: “Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality.” That’s the real magic of leadership. I also subscribe to the concept of servant leadership. It’s never about you – it’s always about others, and in our line of work, it’s primarily about the students. I have a sign in my office that reads “How will this enhance learning?” We can’t get bogged down in administrative detail. Our jobs are to serve students and the faculty and staff who support them.

#### **Are there challenges unique to post-secondary leadership?**

Colleges are complex organizations requiring multi-dimensional leaders. My Ph.D. research was in the area of college leadership: “Academic Capitalism Forces and Successful College Leaders.” In this study, I explored the environmental challenges facing colleges, researched the characteristics of successful leaders and examined the processes they used to lead their colleges. I found that the most successful leaders possessed relevant experience, entrepreneurial spirit, strong communication, stakeholder-engagement and team-building skills, passion and a learner-centered focus. But there’s also a special payback for



Nixon at SAIT’s October 2010 Open House.



Nixon at SAIT's 2010 convocation ceremony.

college leaders. Every year, I look forward to orientation and graduation; to see the excitement – and sometimes the fear – on students' faces that first day, and then celebrating with them at graduation, seeing their confidence and pride. It's extremely gratifying.

### **What are the key elements of leadership?**

If you get the right people on the bus, you can go places and make a difference – but it takes time to build a team that is highly motivated, enthusiastic and whose values are rooted in service to students. That's why supporting people is a key role for leaders. Professional development is a high priority for me. In addition, a leader must always act in the best interest of the organization. I encourage people to look past their own classroom, department or division.

### **What are the most valuable lessons you have learned?**

Keep on learning; never pass up an opportunity for professional or personal development. Remember that people are an organization's greatest strength. Be proud of your success but always be grateful for the opportunities. The students of the Afghan-Canadian Community Centre and their instructors have not been blessed with the same opportunities as we have in North America, yet they continue to make unbelievable personal sacrifices to

create better lives for their families. I've also learned that it's important to keep challenging yourself. To stretch myself, I spent six years as a board member with Theatre Calgary and also sat on the artistic committee which reads the plays and discusses ideas for the next year's playbill. There's much to learn from other organizations.

### **How does leadership progress from “good” to “transformational”?**

In my own experience, transformational change takes time, a lot of hard work and a constancy of purpose. People must also be emotionally committed to the cause. Leaders need to help people understand what that future will look like and constantly communicate the vision and the pathway.

Being part of SAIT's transformation is something I am very proud of. I am proud to be a member of SAIT's senior executive team led by President Lewis, and I am equally proud of the team of Deans and Directors that I work with. Together we accomplish extraordinary things. 

# Leadership in the Two-Year College During Crisis:

## Applying Bill George's Lessons

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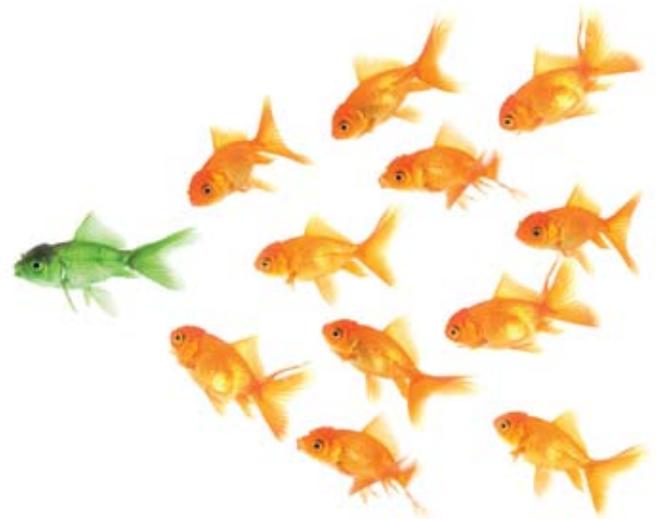
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*By Sharon Kennedy*

The 2010 Chair Academy Conference in Minnesota was privileged to have author and business leader Bill George give a keynote address. George has served in leadership roles in many companies and has sat on a number of corporate boards. He spoke of his most recent book, *7 Lessons for Leading During Crisis* (2009), and the seven lessons he has learned: (1) Face Reality; (2) Don't be Atlas; (3) Dig Deep for the Root Cause; (4) Get Ready for the Long Haul; (5) Never Waste a Good Crisis; (6) You're in the Spotlight; and (7) Focus on Winning Now. While George told many stories of crises in businesses, he also stated a crisis can occur in any type of organization, such as a two-year college.

### **Crisis in Two-Year Colleges**

Today, two-year colleges are trying to perform all of their missions with diminishing resources: basic skills instruction, transfer to university, education for employment, community education, and contract training for business and industry. The simple truth is we struggle to do all of these things well, and this was true even before massive increases in enrollment. Over the last two years, many two-year colleges have seen significant increases in dislocated workers as well as transfer enrollments. The increases range from 10 percent to 53 percent over two years in the case of Blackhawk Technical College in Wisconsin. These increases have taxed colleges to their very core.



But are we in crisis? Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2003) state a crisis must have four defining characteristics: (1) be specific; (2) be unexpected; (3) be a non-routine event, and (4) create a high level of uncertainty. Large enrollment increases described above seem to fit this definition. Business closures necessitating hundreds of workers needing re-training at the same time are very specific events, and they are not always predicted. In the case of the General Motors closure in Janesville, while rumors were rampant for some time, the college essentially had 90 days' notice before the students began arriving. Also, when hundreds come at once, these are not routine events, nor are these routine students. Dislocated

answers, but you are working with others to develop a plan. Get students in their seats first. Then work on everything else.

One of the most important tasks for a new leader at a college is to build relationships across campus to enhance the "true community." Two-year colleges are generally known for being collaborative in nature, and leaders are going to need the help of many people in order to address issues. Hopefully, new leaders have had an opportunity to learn about processes and people in other units of the college. Sometimes, new leaders feel they need to do things on their own to prove their



*The simple truth is we struggle  
to do all of these things well*



workers, particularly those leaving the production line, often have very different and significant needs and expectations. Many have not stepped foot in an educational institution since high school twenty-five to thirty years ago, and they did not like school then. With regard to the final criterion of uncertainty, it isn't clear how long these large enrollments are going to continue. Thus, many two-year colleges are in crisis.

### **Lessons #1 and 2: Face Reality, Starting with Yourself and Don't be Atlas**

George states that a leader must be solidly on the ground with his or her authentic self. Don't try to be someone you are not. Face the situation squarely. Facing a potentially explosive situation means facing reality. Experiencing quick exponential growth at a college means that not everything is going to go well. Leaders need to admit that mistakes will be made. This may be particularly difficult for people who are in new leadership roles. New leaders may believe admitting mistakes to their superior could translate to incompetence in their new position. But leading is humbling. It is important to learn to say, "I made a mistake." Facing reality means saying to students and the college community that you do not have all of the

worth. This is a mistake because they do not know the culture. It is important to work among units rather than in silos.

### **Lessons #3 and 4: Dig Deep for the Root of the Problem and Get Ready for the Long Haul**

Problems at two-year colleges, as in any organization, can be systems-based. One system may be related to admissions paperwork and another financial aid paperwork. Often the root of the back log problem is a process. Problems that exist just beneath the surface are handled on a case-by-case basis, or are swept under the rug, will surface quickly during a crisis. Long financial aid waits, lengthy admissions processes, outdated systems for distributing book vouchers, and inflexible course scheduling are examples of problems that surface within days of massive enrollment growth.

Dislocated workers don't know about college processes, so leaders must make them as transparent as possible. Students do not necessarily know the difference between admissions and registration. If they get a letter stating they are admitted, they assume they are registered. Further, workers have never had to read a schedule of courses and may not know the different codes for on-line



or classes held at other campuses, so initially, leaders and student services staff must assist them in understanding the jargon. In the case of serving workers at Blackhawk, we met with the students' Job Center case workers and explained the language so they could understand and explain the processes to the students on their caseload. We also had large group orientations with up to 200 students to explain processes. Documents needed to be explained slowly and carefully. In the long run, this new process became a good one for all students.

#### **Lesson #5: Never Waste a Good Crisis**

According to George, a crisis is a good time to transform an organization. This means looking for ways to better utilize underutilized staff. In every organization, there are people who are not working to their potential. It could be that they are in jobs that are not well-suited for them or they are not contributing 100 percent. Now is the time to make changes, at least temporarily, to determine if ideas about underutilization are correct. Further, if employees need to be asked to take on more tasks for the same pay, this is the time to do it. The reality is that many of the faculty and staff themselves have family members who have lost their jobs. They have felt the personal impact of the job losses. They are more than willing to go the extra mile. If good relationships have been cultivated between faculty, staff, and administrators, the requests to give 150 percent are received with less distress. However, leaders need to

be sure to thank employees for their hard work every chance they get.

#### **Lesson #6: You're in the Spotlight**

George states that the key to being in the public eye is "to be open, straightforward, and transparent." Every two-year college in a community where industry has left town or significantly downsized has been in the public eye over the last two years. Story after story about students, enrollments, services, and jobs have been published in the local and national news. Relying on George's Lessons, colleges should use this visibility to their advantage. However, integrity and honesty must prevail.

For instance, during this economic downturn where jobs are not plentiful, college leaders need to be honest in their assessment of job placement possibilities. While often the media see the issue as students are either getting jobs or not, the truth is somewhere between yes and no, depending on the district. In most cases, students are getting jobs in their field, but they may be part time jobs and 35 miles out of the community college district. Leaders need to clearly state these facts.

The other media issue that is a hot-button for two-year colleges today with enrollment increases is "waiting lists." Here, leaders need to educate the media and the community. Yes, there is a petitioning process for certain fields, and students have to get in line, complete their

prerequisites, and wait for their admission into certain programs. Nursing and other allied health programs are usually cited as having long waiting lists, much to the angst of the community. But a solution to this problem is not as easy as it seems, and the community needs to understand the complexities of this process.

### **Lesson #7: Focus on Winning**

What does winning mean for the two-year college? Look at the crisis as a gift! It shows what a successful, not perfect, college, with help from the community, can accomplish. Older workers will continue to come back to school until the job market improves, and traditional-age students will come in larger numbers for economic reasons. For two-year colleges, the “win” comes when students, particularly workers who lost their jobs, walk across the stage at graduation on their way to a higher skilled job.

This “win” for students can also be a “win” for the college because it can change it in another important way. Through continuously acknowledging the good work of faculty and staff during difficult times, college leadership can change the culture of the institution. Thanking employees publicly for their contribution to the college and the community may be something new. Frankly, for administrators to say “thank you” goes a long way. With humility, integrity, and a willingness to have “teachable moments,” we can in the long run transform the institution. This may be the most important lesson of all and the one that Bill George would surely want us to learn! 

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# You Know How it Works, It is a Dance, an Art, Not a Science:

## Decision Making by Public Two-Year College Presidents

**Two-year college presidents are at the helm of market responsive organizations. “Indeed, of all segments of public higher education, community colleges have been characterized as the most responsive to external pressures” (Gumport, 2003, p. 39). To successfully lead an organization, and to navigate the myriad of roles, duties, and responsibilities necessary for leading a market responsive two-year college, Pierce and Pederson (1997) have found three important qualities that should be prerequisites to the job of community college president. They state that personal adaptability, role flexibility, and sound judgment will allow two-year college presidents to interact with different groups of constituencies and stakeholders in an efficient manner.**

*By Chad Coquette*

To successfully interact with these groups, presidents need past experiences and the ability to weigh options and strategize how proposed projects may connect to the mission of their college, and then be able to make effective decisions about proper use of resources to create necessary actions. All of these qualities will be put to the test in the near future as two-year college presidents are forced to make difficult decisions regarding how they will respond to an ever increasing number of business and industry requests for new or improved programming/services from their college.

The world in which we live in changes quickly. To remain competitive in the current global marketplace,

business and industry will need access to a well-educated workforce that is able to keep up with a rapid rate of change as it occurs. Every day, there are new technologies, new innovations, and new competitors emerging from around the world that can have a significant impact on the survival of an entire company (Friedman, 2005). As a result of new global pressures, business and industry personnel are expecting more responsiveness and accountability from higher education than ever before to provide access to learning in new ways for their incumbent and future workforce.

As the knowledge-based economy expands and leaders are faced with a skills shortage looming on the horizon,



two-year college presidents will feel increased pressure from business and industry partners to respond to “their” workforce development needs. The key issue related to market responsiveness is that colleges simply do not have enough resources to respond to every request that business and industry partners present. College leaders will be forced to make difficult decisions regarding how they respond to requests by external stakeholders for new or improved programming/services from the colleges.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The qualitative research study from which this article is written, examined how two-year college presidents make market responsive decisions. The study was conducted to develop a deeper understanding of decision making, and ultimately, to assist leaders of two-year colleges in making more effective decisions so higher education can best serve the needs of their multiple stakeholders. To accomplish this, I purposefully selected and interviewed presidents of 12 different organizations from the same large Midwestern higher education system that serve dual missions of community college and technical college. The presidents of these organizations must pay close attention to the complexity of their missions of serving both technical and liberal arts needs of their communities and regions. Understanding that presidents make many different types of decisions, this study was designed to identify factors that impact a president’s response to external stakeholders that

request new or improved programming/services from the college. I used the following overarching research questions to guide this study:

1. What are the internal environment, external environment, organizational environment, and personal processing factors that influence a college president’s decision making processes?
2. How do these factors relate to a president’s decision to respond to or not respond to external stakeholders that request new or improved programming/services from the college?
3. What are the costs, risks, and benefits associated with a college responding, or not responding, to the marketplace?

### **Findings**

Based on findings from the study, I identified that presidents use previous experiences to navigate the complexities of a higher education environment (multiple stakeholders and internal/external politics) when responding to requests from external stakeholders. While interviewing, it became apparent that presidents believed their institution’s credibility, reputation, and future positioning was heavily connected to their perceived responsiveness to business and industry. As

a result, I identified that when presidents responded to external stakeholder requests, they appeared to use their experience, knowledge, and beliefs to choose and implement decision strategies that would position their college for the future with key stakeholders. Presidents recognized that a response to certain initiatives may lead to an increasing level of support for their higher education organization and may result in additional funding, legislative favoritism, and broad ranging public support. Conversely, the presidents also recognized that they may burn bridges and face internal and external political repercussions if they didn't respond appropriately. Developing or maintaining a good reputation for responsiveness seems to be an important aspect of a president's decision making process.

***Researcher Developed Definition of Presidential Decision Making as it Relates to External Stakeholder Requests***

Making decisions about how to respond to external stakeholder requests is more than simply making a choice. Presidential decision making positions an organization for the future. College presidents' make decisions by assessing available data and reviewing possible options within the context of their current educational environment. They do this by viewing their educational environment through a lens or filter composed of past experiences and personal beliefs. This

presidents' past experiences inform how they see current events at their institutions and what they see as options or alternatives in the decision making process. In fact, during research interviews several presidents either directly stated or inferred that their previous experiences led them to develop an ability to make intuitive or "gut" decisions. In other words, presidents used naturalistic decision making techniques when making decisions.

Naturalistic decision making recognizes that decision makers are not machines, experience counts, and decision makers constantly search through their own stories and the stories of others to identify causal factors that will influence their decision making process (Klein, 1998). Due to the complexity of presidential decisions, I identified that presidents must leverage past experiences and frame decisions within their own personal beliefs. As such, the research findings indicate that presidents use naturalistic decision making concepts when they make decisions about how they should respond to external stakeholder requests.

**Discussion**

Beyond identifying that presidents use naturalistic decision making concepts to assess educational environments and make decisions that position their colleges for the future, I was also able to identify several smaller, significant lessons. As an example, I identified

*... colleges simply do not have enough resources to respond to every request ...*

lens influences how presidents choose what to do and how they implement decision strategies that will position their colleges for a positive future with key stakeholders.

The study identified that a presidents' previous experience does seem to influence how presidents see the educational environment, and how presidents frame their responses in context of those experiences and their personal beliefs. According to Eddy (2005), college

that most presidents did not think much or at all about their actual decision making processes. In fact, several presidents suggested that for their day-to-day operations, decision making was pretty "fluid," and they did not need to think much about how they made their decisions. The presidents appeared to be able to use their past experiences and their developed expertise to make informed decisions. Though unstructured decision making appeared to be used during basic day-to-day

operations, I did find that most presidents appeared to use some forms of decision making tools and collected various types of rational data (such as projected costs or employment data) when working with larger or more formal projects. A few of the most commonly discussed tools included strategic planning, environmental scanning, benchmarking, SWOT analysis, decision matrix structures used to illustrate and conceptualize choices, and listening to “lots” of voices to help inform their decisions. Though several presidents talked about using some form of decision making tool, most were unable to articulate how all of the variables interacted with the tools, and a few presidents even mentioned that

with responding or not responding to certain initiatives, while others were more focused on potential recognition and future opportunities that may have been gained by responding to requests. As a result of the study, I identified that previous experience and beliefs of each individual president truly impacted and framed how they responded to external stakeholder requests and how they carried out the functions of their job.

As a third lesson for me, the study illustrated that at the time of this research, college presidents worked in a higher education environment that was truly facing turbulent times. In the state higher education system

“ . . . college presidents must pay careful attention to their current educational environment . . . ”

they had not really thought much about their decision making processes. In other words, presidents seem to use naturalistic decision making concepts to leverage their previous experiences and assess their educational environment when making all types of decisions at their organizations.

As another lesson, I found that differing experiences and beliefs among study participants influenced how each of them perceived costs, risks, and benefits associated with responding to external stakeholder requests. Neumann and Bensimon (1990) stated, “As a result of their differing beliefs about the organizational world and the leadership role, presidents are likely to differ in their agendas and in how they carry out the presidential job” (p. 678). I learned that based on their previous experiences and beliefs, each president had their own approach for responding to external stakeholder requests. Some presidents focused more on the financial and potential negative opportunity costs of responding to stakeholder requests (possibly as a result of their current financial situations), while others were more focused on future possibilities and benefits associated with responding. Other presidents were extremely conscientious about political ramifications associated

where the study was conducted, the state was facing a significant budget crisis. The budget shortfall had created an environment that was filled with unprecedented impacts on higher education and had resulted in reduced financial allocations, un-allotments of current budgets, and overall reduced financial support from the state. When a budget shortfall is coupled with a limited ability to increase tuition to offset financial losses, the crisis has an impact on a president’s decision making. The financial shortfall had a significant impact on both human and financial resources that were available for the presidents to leverage if and when they received external stakeholder requests. As such, the educational environment at the time of this study had many new complexities to navigate. Presidents had fewer resources to allocate for new programs needed to meet ever-increasing demands of multiple stakeholders. In an ever changing more globally orientated workplace, presidents were still expected to meet demands of their multiple stakeholders concerned with remaining competitive in an increasingly complex world.

### Recommendations

The findings of this study offer key recommendations for current presidents, aspiring presidents, other

higher education administrators, students, and researchers. Most significantly, the findings suggest that administrators must use previous experiences and personal beliefs to determine the level of risk that an organization is willing to take when making decisions. Administrators should base this determination of risk on an assessment of their educational environment (external, internal, and organizational influences). To prepare for this type of decision making, I suggest that aspiring presidents participate in a wide range of experiences with both internal and external stakeholders. By purposefully pursuing multiple roles to gain familiarity with various internal and external experiences found within higher education, aspiring presidents will have the chance to navigate the complexities of communicating and working with stakeholder groups that may have widely differing expectations. By spending time in a variety of roles to gain broad experiences, an aspiring president will be better prepared to frame and assess the educational environment when making future presidential decisions.

To successfully respond to external stakeholder requests, college presidents must pay careful attention to their current educational environment including the organizational culture. For aspiring presidents, paying attention to organizational culture in higher education is particularly important because it can be very difficult to navigate and manage. I have found

that organizational culture in higher education may be different than the organizational culture found in private corporations simply because there are so many different types of stakeholders. Understanding this complexity is important because according to McLaughlin (2004), "...their institution's culture and circumstances make some choices more viable than others..." (p. 12). Couple an organizational culture with the fact that there are multiple stakeholders operating within a shared governance model where a president does not have full power to make decisions, and there is a potential recipe for bureaucracy and indecisiveness. To successfully respond to external stakeholder requests that meet the needs of a community and region, presidents must focus time and energy to develop and foster an organizational culture that is aware of opportunities and prepared to respond to the world outside of higher education.

Aspiring presidents and academic administrators must also be aware that decision making in a higher education environment is not rocket science.... It is more complex! As administrators determine the level of risk that an organization is willing to take based on an assessment of the educational environment, they must recognize that both internal and external politics may heavily influence the decision making processes at higher education institutions. As a result, an administrator should not expect all decisions to be driven by money or tied to some other form of return on investment. Legislative

involvement, internal politics, and the timing of decisions can truly "muddy" decision making waters. In fact, aspiring presidents and other higher education administrators must understand that due to forces outside of their control, some decisions will simply not be rational, and the explanation of their decisions will not align well with data presented. Aspiring presidents and





academic administrators must be prepared to navigate the complexities of a higher education system and politics connected with external stakeholder requests in order to successfully make and implement their decisions.

Presidents, aspiring presidents, and other academic administrators, must always remember that it is an elusive (if not impossible) goal to have the personal expertise or organizational resources to meet the needs of every stakeholder request. Gumpert (2000) commented on this exact point, “Not only have public and political demands proliferated, but satisfying them all is ultimately elusive – due either to the prohibitive cost or to the irreconcilability of conflicting mandates,” (p. 69). To successfully respond to external stakeholder requests, presidents must utilize their previous experiences and recognize/leverage the expertise of those that know more than they do to provide an appropriate response. The response must be framed in context of an organization’s capabilities and niche markets, the ability to reallocate resources and make future strategic investments, the ability to manage perceived opportunity costs, and the ability to leverage outside support and resources. Simply put, presidents must be able to maximize their human and financial resources to select strategies that help their organization stay focused on the college mission. Presidents must demonstrate personal adaptability, role

flexibility, and sound judgment as described by Pierce and Pederson (1997) to know what they will and won’t do and be able to guide their college into the future.

### **Concluding Observations**

As a final set of recommendations for both current and aspiring presidents, I would like to share some concluding observations regarding good presidential practices gleaned from the study. I learned that first and foremost, it is good presidential practice to recognize what you know and what you don’t know when responding to external stakeholder requests. Building a strong team and recognizing and leveraging the strengths of others on the team is an important aspect of how presidents in this study successfully responded to needs of external stakeholders. As such, presidents must be able to trust their previous experiences (gut feelings) and the experiences of those around them to serve the needs of the community, region, and state. No single person has the ability to go it alone.

A second observation is that presidents should be actively engaged within their community/region, and they must promote and support an organizational culture that does the same. Active community/regional involvement by a president and college appears to make an organization more approachable and allows external stakeholders to present new opportunities. As they become more actively engaged in a community/region, presidents must have the ability to navigate the politics associated with working with a broad range of external stakeholders. If these efforts are navigated successfully, the resulting external connections may allow a president and college an opportunity to gain both political and social capital that will benefit the organization into the foreseeable future.

As a third and final observation of good presidential practice, I learned that colleges must try to avoid saying

“

... presidents should be actively engaged  
within their community/region ...

”

“no” to external stakeholder requests if at all possible. Rather than simply saying “no,” a president and an organization must manage unrealistic expectations by developing strong relationships, creating open communication, and partnering with others to meet stakeholder needs. Simply put, presidents must be able to “dance the dance” with all of their stakeholders when making decisions and recognize that successfully responding to stakeholder needs today may position the college for a better future tomorrow. 

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# STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

## The Chair Academy's 20th Annual International Leadership Conference

March 22-25, 2011 in Dallas, Texas  
Hosted by the Dallas County Community College District  
and Tarrant County College

### CONFERENCE GOAL

Powerful keynote speakers, active learning workshops, and exemplary programs! Join us as we maximize conference participants' opportunities to network, learn, grow, and develop knowledge and skills in post-secondary leadership.

### WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Deans, Chairs, Faculty, Directors, and other Administrators focused on developing and honing their leadership and management capabilities.

### CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

Cutting edge Keynote Speakers, Pre-Conference Workshops, Gallup Strengths Cafe, Advanced Leadership Academy, and interactive Concurrent and Roundtable Sessions.

### PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

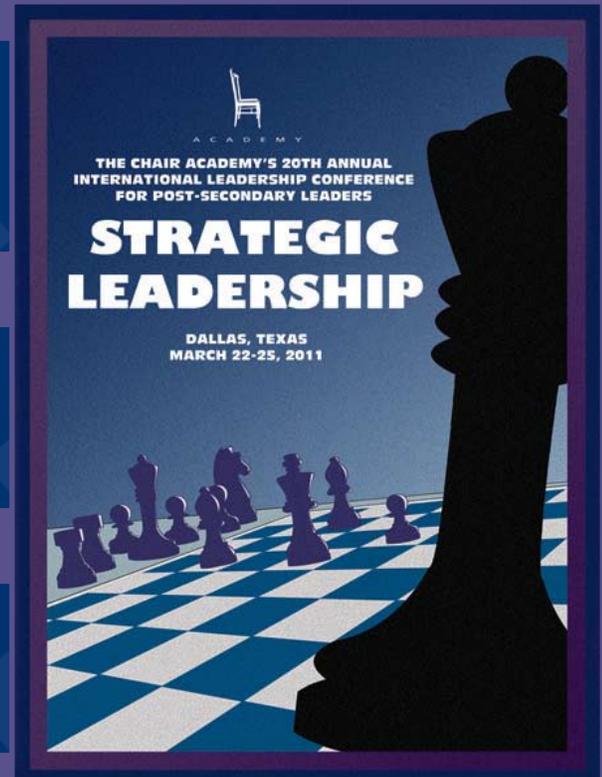
This year's Conference offers participants five thought-provoking day-long workshops that will engage leaders in developing knowledge, skills, and best practices that they can apply daily.

### GALLUP STRENGTHS CAFE

Throughout the Conference you will have the opportunity to engage in a Strengths Dialogue with a Gallup Strengths Ambassador at our Strengths Cafe.

### CONFERENCE SITE

The 2011 Conference will be held at the Sheraton Dallas Hotel.  
400 North Olive Street,  
Dallas, Texas 75201  
Phone: 214.922.8000  
Academy Conference Rate of \$159/night  
Registration available at [www.chairacademy.com](http://www.chairacademy.com)



# CONFERENCE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



**JOHN ZOGBY**  
Author, Chairman,  
Zogby International

*The Way We'll Be:  
Leadership Implications  
from the Zogby Report*



**RODD WAGNER**  
Author, Principal,  
Gallup Organization

*Power of 2:  
Making the Most of  
Your Partnerships  
at Work and in Life*



**SHARON BLACKMAN**  
President,  
Dallas County  
Community College District

*Becoming a Strategic  
Leader is a Journey*



**CARL HAYNES**  
President,  
Tompkins Cortland  
Community College

*Leadership and the Mirror*

## CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Register Online at: [www.chairacademy.com/conference/2011/tabs\\_conference\\_2011.html](http://www.chairacademy.com/conference/2011/tabs_conference_2011.html)

**Tuesday March 22, 2011**

Pre-Conference Sessions take place from  
9:00am - 3:30pm.

**You may only attend ONE.**

\$125.00 (This fee includes a continental breakfast, am refreshment  
break, and workshop materials)

- Composing the Winning Proposal
- The Trick To Being A Chair/Organizational Leader
- Leading Teams: Shaping an Environment For Success
- Working to Create and Manage Change Successfully
- So Many Needs, So Little Money

**Wednesday - Friday, March 23-25, 2011**

**Conference rates include the following:**

- Continental Breakfast Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday
- Welcome Reception on Tuesday Evening
- AM/PM Breaks Wednesday, Thursday, and AM Break Friday
- *Chair Academy's 20th Anniversary Gala* Banquet and Concert starring A Hard Night's Day
- StrengthsQuest™ Online Assessment Code
- Strengths Cafe - Strengths Consultation with a Gallup Strengths Ambassador

### Conference Registration Fees

#### Conference Registration Pricing

Registration received by February 22, 2011:

- \$460** Early-Bird Registration Fee - Includes admission to *20th Anniversary Gala* banquet & concert featuring A Hard Night's Day
- \$435** Early Bird Registration Fee for Chair Academy Member (Individual/Institutional)
- \$420** Conference Sponsor or Dallas/Atlanta Advanced Academy participant

Registration received after February 22, 2011:

- \$495** Registration Fee - Includes admission to *20th Anniversary Gala* banquet & concert featuring A Hard Night's Day
- \$465** Registration Fee for Chair Academy Member (Individual/Institutional)
- \$420** Conference Sponsor or Dallas/Atlanta Advanced Academy participant

#### Single Day Registration Rates

- \$325** Wednesday, March 23, 2011 - Includes admission to *20th Anniversary Gala* banquet & concert featuring A Hard Night's Day
- \$285** Thursday, March 24, 2011
- \$180** Friday, March 25, 2011

# PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

These engaging, day long workshops will provide you with essential skills and concepts that you can take back to your institutions. These sessions take place on Tuesday, March 22nd, 2011.

To learn more about the Pre-Conference Skill Building Sessions and to read the presenters' biographies please visit us online at: [http://www.chairacademy.com/conference/2011/tabs\\_conference\\_2011.html](http://www.chairacademy.com/conference/2011/tabs_conference_2011.html)  
Click on the "Pre-Conference Workshops" tab at the top of the page.

## The Trick to Being a Chair or Organizational Leader

Presented by Bill Lamb, Vice President, Kirkwood Community College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

The workshop will present a variety of strategies for new front line administrators, including chairs, directors, deans, and other organizational leaders. Activities throughout the day will help participants to define their role as leaders and to develop cohesive teams.

Topics will include:

- Understanding leadership versus management in organizations
- Understanding yourself and how you work with others
- Managing time
- Dealing with conflict
- Adapting to constantly changing organizations

The activities will be directed to small group interaction with time for sharing strategies as well as applying new methods to real world examples. The afternoon session will encourage the sharing of "best practices" learned from the group. Participants will receive a variety of written materials to use as guides and references, and additional opportunities to learn more about the Academy for Leadership and Development.

## Leading Teams: Shaping an Environment for Success

Presented by Lane Glenn, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Northern Essex Community College, Haverhill, Massachusetts and Dave Gatewood, Dean, Career Education, Workforce Development, Irvine, California

Teamwork? At my college? In this environment? You're better off herding cats on roller skates!

It's true: Teams don't thrive in an environment hostile to good teamwork. That's why leaders must be prepared to be shapers of a new kind of environment—one that understands and values individual styles and contributions, and supports the development of successful teams through the right blend of vision, structure, purpose, creativity, and accountability. And don't forget the bottom line: Results.

This highly interactive workshop will explore some key environmental factors for successful teamwork in a college setting including:

- Six "Team Basics"
- Team Intelligence
- Shared Vision and Goals
- Team Dysfunctions
- Complementary Skills
- Decision Making Ability
- Communication
- Charters and Goal Setting
- Visibility
- Organizational Alignment
- Celebration
- Results

Come prepared to share your own victories, frustrations, and questions about teams—and leave your roller skates behind.

## So Many Needs, So Little Money

Presented by Therese Lask, Director, Student Support Services, Aims Community College, Greeley, Colorado

How do institutions explore and prioritize the diverse needs of student populations in today's economic times? This session will return to the basics by using concepts within the student development theory, including a generational perspective, to determine student needs. Together we will explore creative strategies and processes for accomplishing these goals within the constraints of our dwindling resources.

Specific topics covered during the session will include:

- Examining and the application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as it applies to student development.
- Conceptualizing and the application of generational models, specifically looking at the different generations of students on our campuses, as well as their unique needs and perspectives.
- Blending both perspectives of student development, by combining Maslow and a generational perspective to determine the needs of our students.
- Exploring applications, programs, and services in the classroom that address the broad-based needs of our students.
- Implementing creative strategies to address the limited resources on our campuses.

This session will be highly interactive, with participants divided into various work groups for a majority of the workshop.

## Composing the Winning Proposal

Presented by Lyvrie Conss, Executive Director, Community College National Center for Community Engagement, Mesa, Arizona and Mary Frazier, Executive Director, Collin College Foundation, McKinney, Texas

Everyone writes differently, everyone perceives differently, everyone interprets differently, everyone expects something different . . . So, how do we write the compelling proposal that attracts the attention of different funders? How do we ensure that our proposal will get the attention it deserves? There is a fundamental process and method that provides the outline—however, it takes the creative spirit of the writer to ensure the proposal includes the concise information to make it compelling! Each private and public funder (foundations, corporations, government) has specific guidelines that are different, yet the same. Learn how to ensure your proposal captures the desired interest of many funders. In this interactive session, you will learn and practice the basics—who, what, when, why and results to be achieved, along with how the information in each area is captivating. You need funding for various programs and projects, what makes them different from the norm? Enjoy learning and practicing how to unleash your creativeness and write it down!

Topics to be covered:

- Researching private and public funders and what information should be analyzed.
- Matching and determining the interest of the private and public funder with the program or project needing to be funded.
- Learning how to determine the amount to be requested without insulting the funder.
- Developing an introduction, case statement, project summary, budget, measurements, and results.
- What is the most effective approach?
- Who should be involved in the process?
- Cultivation prior to proposal submission and stewardship after receiving the funding.

## Working to Create and Manage Change Successfully

Presented by Michael Rivera, Dean, School of Business, Ivy Tech Community College, South Bend, Indiana and Jason Dewling, Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences, Business and Academic Services, Lakeland College, Vermillion, Alberta, Canada

It has been said that the only person liking change is a wet baby. While most of us in post-secondary leadership positions are given the mandate to make changes, it is not always welcomed by many who work for us. Creating successful change is not easy. There are many factors such as people, resources, policies, history, etc. that all impact whether or not changes are initiated and also whether or not it actually "sticks". Creating and managing change is an essential dynamic for any evolving organization. We are often required to do more with less, think about how to work differently, and also do a better job at reaching organization goals. This session examines the role of change from the organization to the individual and works to help organizational leaders know how to create change at many different levels within the organization and be successful at those change processes.

Through the use of tools and small group discussions, we will help to put into motion the change you hope to bring to your organization, department, or people. We look briefly at what the literature states, but focus mostly on application. We will also rely on the expertise in the room to help develop strategies for implementation of the change topics you bring to the table.

Topics explored in this session include:

- Preparing for change: the role of preplanning and creating a sense of urgency.
- Developing allies in creating change and communication strategies that recognize the individual.
- Implementing successful changing using an action research model.
- Sustaining change and creating an environment of reflective practice.

Come join this interactive session that will help to empower you to enact the necessary change you or your organization needs. Diverse backgrounds and roles are welcome!

## ADVANCED LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The Chair Academy is offering an Advanced Leadership Academy in conjunction with the 2011 Conference in Dallas.

This comprehensive program provides competency-based leadership training and professional development for post-secondary organizational leaders. Participants have the opportunity to expand their professional development and create an environment that encourages their team to grow through leadership, communication, and coaching.

The first session of instructional seminars for the Advanced Academy will take place at the Sheraton Dallas March 19-22, 2011 with the second and final session being held in Atlanta, Georgia March 23-26, 2012.

This Academy, along with attending the Conference, is a great opportunity for institutions who have limited travel budgets to maximize their opportunities for professional leadership development.

All Advanced Academy participants will also receive a reduced Conference registration rate.

For further details about this unique opportunity and to register visit us at: [www.chairacademy.com/academyadv/adv11-12/tabs\\_da\\_at\\_2wk.html](http://www.chairacademy.com/academyadv/adv11-12/tabs_da_at_2wk.html)

### Dallas/Atlanta Advanced Academy

**Session 1: March 19-22, 2011 in Dallas, Texas**

**Session 2: March 23-26, 2012 in Atlanta, Georgia**

**Facilitators for this program are  
Richard Strand and Ann Marie Krause.**

#### **Academy Registration Fees:**

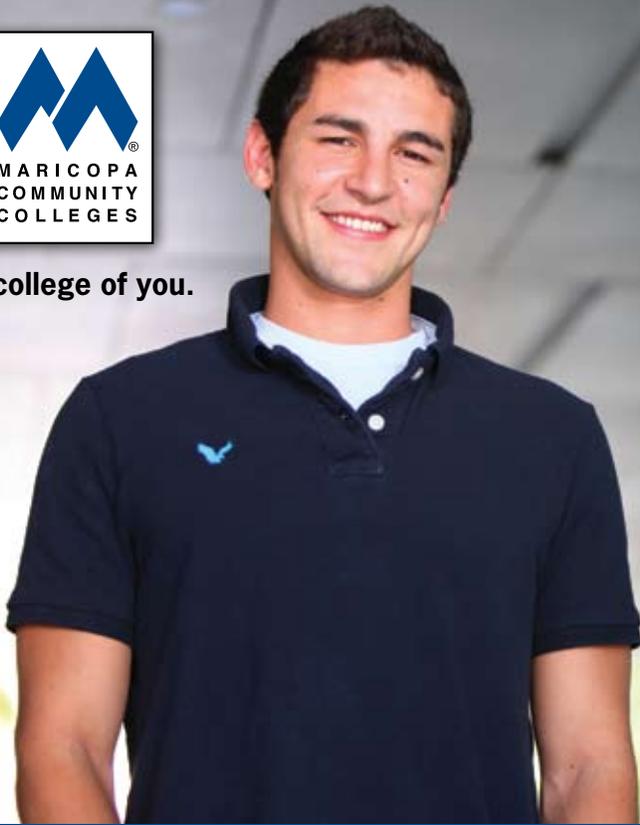
**\$1,795 - this includes registration for both sessions 1 and 2, session 1 facilities fee, and a session 1 food package that will include 3 breakfasts, 3am and 3pm refreshment breaks.**

**Session 2 will have a separate food package and facilities fees.**

**Hotel accommodations at the Sheraton Dallas are the same as the Conference rate of \$159 per night.**



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