

PERCEPTIONS OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS ON  
THE ROLE OF RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

A Dissertation  
by  
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## ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS ON  
THE ROLE OF RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP  
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Recent research by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) has revealed that community colleges and their leaders are facing unique challenges (McNair, 2010). According to a 2001 AACC study, nearly 80% of current community college presidents cited plans to retire by 2011 (Shults, 2001). The role of tomorrow's community colleges in society will demand that leaders develop new skill sets. Of these new skill sets, community college leaders will need to nurture collaborative and consultative dispositions in order to bring their colleges and the community at large into a unified system.

Utilizing the theoretical model of Relational Leadership as the framework for this study, (Regan & Brooks, 1995), perceptions of leadership are explored through a qualitative study of current community college leaders. Through the use of exemplar case studies, specific skill sets are identified as being necessary to become an effective relational leader in a 21<sup>st</sup> century community college. In addition, personal construction of leadership and social/cultural conceptualization of relational leadership are presented.

From an in-depth analysis of the research findings, new critical elements are constructed to augment the Relational Leadership (Regan & Brooks, 1995) model for community college administrators. The nature of communication and trust in relation to the skills of caring, courage, collaboration, intuition, and vision are defined and described. The importance of reflecting on the personal construction of leadership as well as the process of blending or gendering the tenets of leadership is revealed. Implications for formal educational preparation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century community college leader are discussed, along with the recommendations by AACC for the successful community college leader. As a result of this study, a stronger framework for a new community college leadership style is presented that is most relevant in our emerging 21<sup>st</sup> century epoch of a global society.