

# The Importance Of Institutional Culture At A Technical College

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THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE AT A TECHNICAL  
COLLEGE

By

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ABSTRACT  
THE IMPORTANCE OF INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE AT A TECHNICAL  
COLLEGE

Sarah Y. Adams, B.S., M.S.

Marquette University, 2014

This is a qualitative study of the importance of institutional culture at a particular technical college in Wisconsin. It examines the administrators' understanding of their institution's culture, the importance they attach to the culture, and how they perceive they both manage and influence their institution's culture. Bergquist and Pawlak's (2008) work, *Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy*, is used as the analytic framework. Key factors that emerged were the importance and role of the college's mission, the importance of the college's responsiveness to the community, and the necessity of administrators being purposeful in their involvement in the culture of the college. This study found that both the role of the mission and the administrator's role in influencing the culture were significant. The implications of the findings are explored for those in administrative positions who should understand the importance of managing and influencing their culture at a technical college.

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## Chapter One

### Introduction

Educational institutions are facing a myriad of challenges that include increased enrollments, higher tuition cost, decreasing state support and increasing effectiveness and accountability requirements (Burke, 2005; Skolits and Graybeal, 2007). These institutions must be able to respond to their internal and external stakeholders as they face varying economic conditions, competition, and fluctuating public and governmental support (Burke, 2005; Smart, Kuh, and Tierney, 1997; WTCS, 2011). Educational administrators endeavor to meet these challenges through various processes and strategies (Burke, 2005) as meeting these challenges becomes necessary for the continued effective operation of their institutions. Therefore meeting these challenges becomes dependent upon a number of institutional variables. One key variable is the culture of the institution. This cultural variable, Lee (2004) argues, focuses on how well one understands culture and the role of the culture in the effectiveness of the institution.

Institutional culture, of course, exists in all types of academic organizations and has been defined by some as a commonly arrived at sense of reality (Vaughan, 1994). Culture is believed to be a socially constructed phenomenon created by the prevailing beliefs, ideology, language, rituals, myths, artifacts, values, and shared assumptions formed over decades, as institutions learn to respond to their challenges (Modaff, DeWine and Butler, 2008; Schein, 2004). The community of the institution contributes to shaping the culture, which in turn influences the effectiveness of the institution (Lee, 2004). Because of the importance of culture, it becomes incumbent upon the leaders of the institution to work on shaping this culture to maximize the effectiveness of the

institution (Lee, 2004). Institutional effectiveness, as defined by Heal in 2008 and included in his 2011 work, is the process and structure used by colleges to determine the quality of its academic programs, administrative functions, and support services (p.6). These areas: academic programs, administrative functions, and support services, incorporate all areas in which the college requires execution of decisions that shape the college's effectiveness.

As leaders implement their decisions, the culture of their institution can significantly determine if conflicts arise. Administrative leaders need sufficient comprehension of the critical role of culture when implementing decisions, because the culture can facilitate or impede change (Gayle, Bhoendradatl, and White 2003). As Tierney (2008) argued, administrators must have more than an "intuitive grasp" of their institution's culture. Tierney offers the suggestion that:

...administrators often have only an intuitive grasp of the cultural conditions and influences that enter into their decision-making. In this respect, they are not unlike most of us who have a dim, passive awareness of cultural codes, symbols, and conventions that are at work in society at large. Only when we break these codes and conventions are we forcibly reminded of their presence and considerable power. Likewise, administrators tend to recognize their organization's culture only when they have transgressed its bounds and severe conflicts or adverse relationships ensue (p.25).

Tierney, of course, is suggesting that an understanding or appreciation of the institutional culture is necessary for administrative leaders, which typically consists of the President, Vice-Presidents and/or Provost, to manage effectively.

As Vaughan (1994) explains, "the culture of an institution influences how members of both the college community and the community at large perceive it" (p. 65). While the internal culture of an institution will determine how the community responds to

changes implemented on their campuses, the external college community at large may rationally accept a change that has to occur because of necessity. Instead of rationally accepting the decision, they may internalize and emotionally react to the decisions, which will in turn affect the campus at large. Vaughan (1994) explains it this way in *Managing Community Colleges*:

While understanding is a rational process, appreciating an institution's culture can be an emotional process, one that demands sensitivity to what has gone before and to what may happen in the future—a sensitivity that often evokes chills and even tears when a certain song is sung or a certain place on campus is visited (p. 64-65).

Vaughan's work suggests that decisions to alter long-standing practices can cause emotional reactions. For example, a decision to recruit more enrollment of females because of declining male enrollment could evoke strong emotions if this institution has traditionally been male dominated. Such a decision could become a catalyst for a complete culture change within that institution.

Vaughan's research presents a picture of the complexity of culture at the community college. Since it is likely that his work may not extend to technical colleges, an important question to pose is "Would this complexity be comparable on the technical college level?" This study seeks to answer this question from the perspective of a technical college's administrative leadership team. As so little research has been done on technical college leadership, it is important to answer the question at the technical college level. The next section discusses the importance of culture at these institutions.

## Importance of Culture

Institutional culture has been described as the personality of an organization (Gayle, et al, 2003). Culture is a combination of the institution's history, traditions, values, interaction with the larger environment, ceremonies, how it renews and evaluates itself. Therefore, understanding the culture of an institution assists in understanding that type of institution, how it is influenced and how it influences. Gayle, et al. (2003) argues that:

within organizations, including universities, culture defines appropriate behavior, bonding and motivating individuals, while governing the way in which institutions process information, shaping their internal relations and even values. Organizational culture is key to the process and structure of authoritative decision making in universities" (p.41).

McCaffery (2010), in his work regarding the effective leadership and management in universities and colleges, suggests that examining culture in these higher education institutions has a number of significant benefits. In particular, he suggests that an examination of culture will "enhance self-realization, provide an insight into the hidden perception of others, and ultimately develop understanding of the social reality of the institutional context in which the institution operates" (p. 55). Specifically, McCaffery (2010) is arguing that understanding the institution's culture will allow one to know the framework from which the institution operates. Culture provides the social reality of context of the institution.

McCaffery (2010) further argues that when attempting to manage the culture of institutions more "successful have been those instances which recognize culture as a process which embraces all players within the organization" (p. 60). In other words, McCaffery is arguing that in order to have success while managing institutions, those in

the management positions need to understand that culture is a process that includes every person on the campus. In this way, it can be argued that each person enhances or adds to the culture of their institution. Importantly, he determined that how the administrative team of a college manages itself given its culture, speaks directly to the criteria the institution would use for various college processes. He sees culture in the administration's management of its recruitment and promotional processes. Culture is also seen in the way the institution's administration responds to critical incidents and institutional crises, as well as how they celebrate achievement. However, McCaffery (2010) does not include technical colleges in his study. Thus studying the technical college can determine if this same model applies as there is the possibility of the cultural influences being different because they have different missions and organizational structures.

Culture is seen as a powerful, subtle, largely invisible force in the lives of the university or college community (McGrath and Tobia, 2008). Consequently, in order for it to be managed correctly, it first must be acknowledged, its features surfaced, mapped, and understood. McGrath and Tobia (2008), following the work of Kuh and Whitt (1988) and Kezar (2002), suggest that organizational culture is the "invisible glue that holds an institution together by providing shared interpretations and understandings of events through socializing members into common patterns of perception, thought and feeling" (p. 43). In short, they are suggesting that culture is a crucial element for understanding institutions and if a thorough understanding ensues, this element can be managed. This is an important idea to contemplate.

Although the term culture is used, it is important to be aware of the fact that culture is composed of sub-cultures that exist on all university and college campuses. These subcultures like administrative subculture, faculty subculture, and student subculture; influence the overall culture of the institution. Kuh and Whitt (1988) believe the “influence of a subculture on the behavior of its members is mediated by the institutional context, including size, complexity, and mission, as well as the backgrounds and experiences of individual members” (p.7). It is the intent of this research paper to discover the administrators understand of their institution’s culture in its entirety where the entirety is composed of these subcultures and not the administrator’s particular culture.

In this section as noted earlier, the prior work on determining the importance of culture is based on studies of universities and community colleges. These studies support the importance of understanding culture to the administrative team in these institutions. It noted, however, that since these are different types of institutions, serve different students, provide different educational outcomes because of their specific degree programs and different missions, we must be cautious when attempting to generalize findings generated from these institutions to technical colleges.

In framing this study, therefore, it is important to realize how these institutions are different and how that difference determines their respective culture personality. Such differences support the necessity of studying each of these types of institutions individually as each has its own uniqueness. Therefore, the focus of this study is a specific technical college. The following section provides a discussion of the difference

between a university, community college and technical college within the state of Wisconsin as one of the technical colleges will be the focus of this research study.

### University, Community College, and Technical College

The Carnegie Foundation classifies all the universities within the University of Wisconsin system as “undergraduate instructional program” with a level of four year or above (Classifications.carnegiefoundation.org). The general definition of a university is an “institution of higher learning providing facilities for teaching and research authorized to grant academic degrees specifically ones made up of an undergraduate division which confers bachelor’s degrees and a graduate division which is composed of a graduate school and professional schools each of which may confer master degrees or doctorates” (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, n.d). Students that attend are prepared for professional careers or provided with a better appreciation of general fields like literature (World Book, 2002). Undergraduate degrees or Bachelor’s degrees are normally four years in length. The Board of Regents governs the universities in the University of Wisconsin System.

A community college, as defined by James Tschechtelin (1994) in *Managing Community Colleges*, is “a two-year degree granting institution headed by a president or chancellor; a single community college campus or multi-campus community college district” (p. 102). These degrees, associate degrees, can normally be obtained in two years with full-time attendance. Just like the University of Wisconsin system, the Board of Regents governs the community colleges of Wisconsin.

A technical college, by contrast, is “an adult educational institution providing courses focusing on agriculture, applied sciences, engineering, information technology”

and other career areas (Dictionary.com). Technical colleges provide two-year associate degrees, one and two-year technical diplomas, short term technical certificates of nine months or less, advanced technical certificates and customized training and technical assistance direct to business and industry primarily preparing students for employment (WTCS, 2011). The technical colleges of Wisconsin have a system of shared governance between two governing bodies. They are under the authority of the Wisconsin Technical College System Board and under the authority of a local district board (Snider, 1999).

Clearly, then, the types of degrees offered at these institutions determine the type of students, faculty, and administrators found at the institution. These community members along with the institutions' history, purpose, and program offerings can be viewed as determining the culture of the institution. Because of these various communities being composed of different types of individuals seeking different outcomes from the respective institutions, this will define each of the cultures in a unique manner that reflects their values and beliefs. This uniqueness is explored more in the literature review in the next chapter.

Several differences are immediately observable in the different institutional types. The Wisconsin Community Colleges focus on college transfer in contrast to the Wisconsin Technical Colleges, which focus on employment. The Board of Regents governs the universities and colleges whereas the Wisconsin Technical College System board governs the technical colleges. Among the three, only the university system can issue baccalaureate and graduate degrees. Different foci and governing bodies suggest there are differences in these educational institutions, thereby creating cultures unique to each.

Although only a brief overview has been provided here for each type of educational institution, more detail is needed to understand the uniqueness of the technical college and the system it operates within. Many are unaware of the special needs the technical colleges were created to meet and why they operate within the State as they do. Therefore, the history of the technical college system presented next highlights the uniqueness of these institutions and how they came into existence.

### History of the Technical College System

In 1907 laws were passed that permitted cities to operate trade schools for individuals age 16 or older as part of the public school system. This was in line with the national trend in education at this time. This allowed them to establish technical schools or colleges under the control of the school board or a special board. Wisconsin was the first state to establish a system of state support for vocational, technical and adult education. The law appropriated state aid for continuation, trade and evening schools; required every community with a population of 5,000 citizens or more to establish an industrial education board; authorized the local boards to levy a property tax; and created an assistant for industrial education in the office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. It also created the State Board of Industrial Education (WTCS, 2011).

In 1917 the Smith-Hughes Act was passed. This was the first federal law designed especially to support vocational education. The Smith-Hughes Act also provided financial aid to states to assist them in paying the teachers' and administrators' salaries and funds for teacher training (WTCS, 2011). In the same year 1917, the Wisconsin State Legislature changed the name of the State Board of Industrial Education to the State Board of Vocational Education. The Board was authorized to employ a state

director and became the only agency to work with the new federal board that was created for vocational education. Later as the demand for adult education increased, the board's name was changed in 1937 to the State Board of Vocational and Adult Education (WTCS, 2011)

During the 1960s, under the State Board of Vocational and Adult education, the technical colleges became a part of the current post-secondary system. The state board's name was changed, yet again, to the State Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education. Thus, the schools were required to work in coordination with the University of Wisconsin System (WTCS, 2011).

In 1993, the system changed once again. This time it changed to the Technical College System. The board became the Technical College System Board and the schools became technical colleges. These colleges have the directive of providing the State's various communities with critical, essential technical occupations through more than 300 programs (WTCS, 2011).

Not all of these programs of study, of course, are located at each technical college. Programs are situated in the communities that can benefit the most from their services. The various technical college communities access these occupations through two-year associate degrees, one and two year technical diplomas, short term technical certificates, advanced technical diplomas and customized training and technical assistance directly to business and industry (WTCS, 2011).

Table I contains a selection of some of the numerous programs offered at the technical colleges, grouped by career cluster. It should be noted, that the programs are structured to provide students with immediate access to employment upon completion of

their degree. These programs link directly to the mission of the Wisconsin Technical College System, which details the System's responsibility and purpose.

Table I

*Wisconsin Technical College System Occupations by Career Cluster*

<b>Career Cluster</b>	<b>Program Example</b>
Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources	Agricultural Power Equipment Dairy Herd Management
Apprenticeship	Construction-Drywall Finisher Service-Restaurant/Cook-Chef
Architecture and Construction	Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Architectural Woodworking/Cabinetmaking
Arts, Audiovisual Technology and Communities	Animation Package and Label Printing
Business, Management and Administration	Administrative Professional (Online) Broadcast Captioning
Education and Training	Barbering/Cosmetology Specialist Sign Language Interpreting
Finance	Computerized Accounting Assistant Credit Business Management
Government and Public Administration	Criminal Justice-Corrections Forensic Science
Health Sciences	Anesthesia Technology Diagnostic Medical Solography
Hospitality and Tourism	Baking and Pastry Arts Golf Course Management
Human Services	Child Care Services Funeral Service
Information Technology	Computer Simulation and Gaming Help Desk Support Specialist
Law, Public Safety and Security	Emergency Medical Technician Fire Protection Technician
Manufacturing	Appliance Technic Electronic Servicing
Marketing, Sales and Service	Real Estate Retail Management
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics	Nuclear Technology Wind Energy Technology
Transportation, Distribution and Logistics	Aircraft Electronics Automotive Technician-Imports Auto Collision Repair and Refinish

Source: Wisconsin Technical Colleges ([witechcolleges.org](http://witechcolleges.org), 2011)

According to its mission, the Wisconsin Technical College System Board is:

responsible for the initiation, development, maintenance, and supervision of programs with specific occupational orientation below the baccalaureate level, including associate degrees, training of apprentices and adult education below the postsecondary level. The principal purposes of the System are to provide occupational education, training, and retraining programs, and to provide customized training and technical assistance to business and industry in order to foster economic development and expansion of employment opportunities. Additional purposes are to cooperate and contract with secondary schools; provide collegiate transfer programs; basic skills education; community services and self-enrichment activities; and address barriers created by stereotyping and discrimination (WTCS, 2011).

Offering the types of programs shown in Table I clearly meets the mission of the system.

Again, the mission illustrates the unique difference between technical colleges, universities and community colleges. One significant difference is that technical colleges must offer associate degrees and technical diplomas, which are below the baccalaureate level.

The unique charge of the technical colleges is the responsibility colleges have for developing individuals to apply knowledge and skills that enhance the individuals' quality of life and increase the economic vitality in the state of Wisconsin. As outlined in the WTCS document, the technical colleges are designed to meet individuals' educational needs by:

1. Delivering responsive, flexible, and accessible instruction and service,
2. Linking talent and technology,
3. Requiring high standards and accountability,
4. Expanding student's learning opportunities through the creation of strategic alliances,
5. Embracing diversity, and
6. Providing opportunities for growth (WTCS online, 2011)

Meeting the educational needs, of course, speaks directly to the system's responsibility for economic growth within the technical colleges' communities, as stated in the mission.

Technical colleges have a governance structure composed of a State Board, a local board, a president, and generally an executive vice-president or a variety of vice-presidents. The president and vice-presidents are considered the top-level administrators at the technical college responsible for the overall operations. They, along with their appointed local board of directors, are responsible for the fulfillment of the mission and vision of the College, which includes enhancing the individuals' quality of life and increasing economic vitality through the technical colleges' academic programs and services (WTCS, 2011).

Thus, we can see how the creation of the technical college system, the type of students it was designed to serve, the instructors that teach at these colleges, the administrators, all contribute to the particular type of institutional culture. Lee (2004), among others, argues that the community has a vital role in determining the institutional culture at community colleges, which in part is determined by the student. Although Lee was not referring to the technical college, the technical college student is primarily a student seeking educational training for employment based on the systems mission so this would indicate that this is a different student than the student seeking a bachelor's degree through a university or as a student seeking transfer through the Wisconsin Community Colleges.

This brief history of the technical college included information on program offerings, while the next section provides statistical information on the number of students that enroll in the various program offerings. These enrollment numbers show

that the majority of students in Wisconsin's public higher education system attend a technical college. Since the largest part of an institution's primary community is its students, it can be argued that they have a tremendous role in establishing the institution's culture.

Enrollment at Wisconsin's Public Universities, University of Wisconsin Colleges,  
and Technical College System

Technical colleges educate a large proportion, 51.11% in a ten year span (WTCS, 2011), of the state's students. In Table II the number of students enrolled in collegiate transfer, associate degree programs, technical diploma programs, vocational adult classes, community services classes and basic skills classes over the past ten years throughout the technical college system is illustrated. By way of comparison, Table III shows the total headcount enrollment of students in the University of Wisconsin System 4-year universities for the same years. Table IV shows the total headcount enrollment of students in the University of Wisconsin Colleges.

Table II

*Wisconsin Technical College  
System-Wide Headcount  
2001-2010*

<b>Fiscal Years</b>	<b>Collegiate Transfer</b>	<b>Associate Degree</b>	<b>Technical Diploma</b>	<b>Vocational Adult</b>	<b>Community Services/ Basic Skills</b>	<b>Unduplicated Totals</b>
2000-01	16,760	106,248	35,631	248,976	94,902	439,934
2001-02	17,953	108,921	38,631	255,888	97,668	451,271
2002-03	19,064	113,253	40,098	232,766	95,137	429,355
2003-04	19,282	115,675	41,125	221,283	91,421	416,857
2004-05	20,181	115,422	39,291	214,948	87,687	406,323
2005-06	20,242	117,408	38,305	219,584	85,187	409,380
2006-07	21,053	117,028	39,045	210,396	83,157	400,057
2007-08	22,142	117,722	38,583	203,493	79,698	390,272
2008-09	24,080	122,773	39,025	182,713	81,958	375,944
2009-10	27,139	133,602	39,011	178,257	86,407	382,006

Source: Wisconsin Technical College System, Fact Book 2011 (online)

Table III

*University of Wisconsin  
System-Wide Headcount  
2001-2010*

<b>Fiscal Years</b>	<b>Doctoral Universities</b>	<b>Comprehensive Universities</b>	<b>Totals</b>
2000-01	64,834	84,293	150,127
2001-02	65,807	85,434	151,241
2002-03	66,168	86,372	152,540
2003-04	66,995	86,572	153,567
2004-05	67,998	85,748	153,746
2005-06	69,084	86,823	155,907
2006-07	69,337	87,730	157,067
2007-08	70,901	89,463	160,364
2008-09	70,835	90,946	161,781
2009-10	72,072	93,048	165,120

Source: UW System Office of Policy Analysis & Research (online)

Table IV

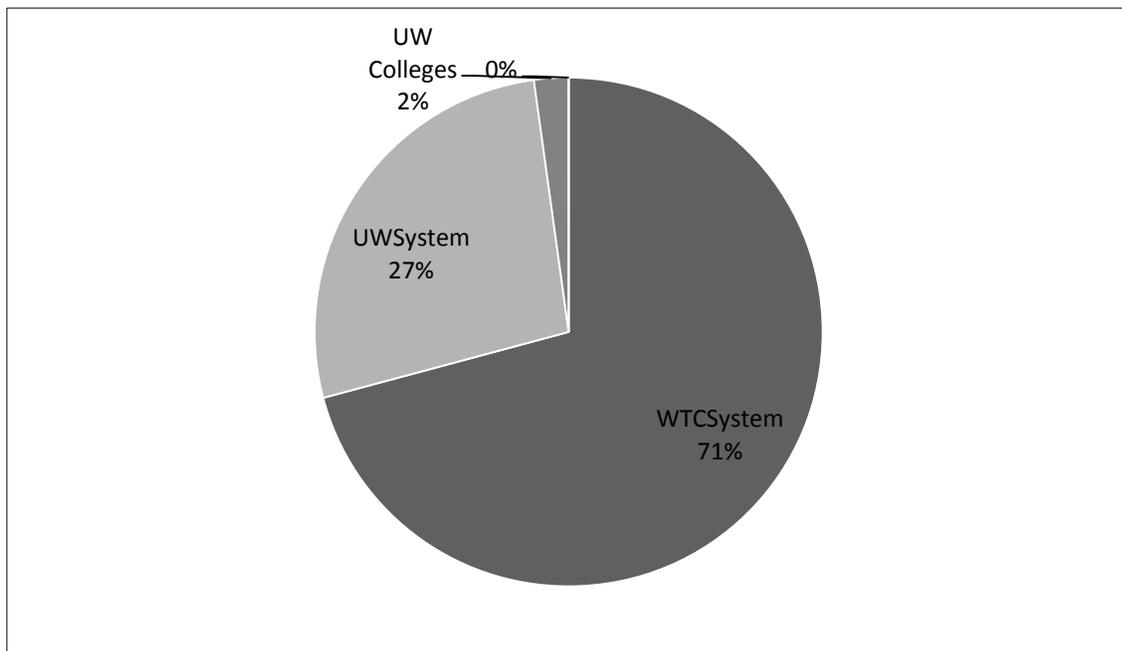
*University of Wisconsin Colleges (Two-Year)  
System-Wide Headcount  
2001-2010*

<b>Fiscal Years</b>	<b>Totals</b>
2000-01	11,440
2001-02	12,416
2002-03	12,515
2003-04	12,614
2004-05	12,499
2005-06	12,597
2006-07	12,639
2007-08	13,029
2008-09	13,275
2009-10	13,789

Source: UW System Office of Policy Analysis & Research (online)

These tables should be viewed together to compare the enrollments of each of the types of institutions, the university, the community colleges, the technical colleges. The difference in enrollment depicted in the following chart visually shows the substantive difference.

Chart 1

*Visual View of Wisconsin Enrollment*

Source: Based on Wisconsin Technical College System, Fact Book 2011 and UW System Office of Policy Analysis & Research

It is easily shows that out of the public institutions, the technical college system has the highest total enrollment. The enrollment total for the three types of institutions across the years presented is 3,452,966. This total includes the collegiate transfer enrollment, associate degree enrollment and the technical diploma enrollment of the technical colleges. These groups are highlighted because they are comparable to the enrollment groups in the university and community college system. The technical colleges in this ten-year span had a total enrollment in these three categories of 1,764,693, which is 51.11% of the total enrollment. The university system in this ten-year span had a total enrollment of 1,561,460, which is 45.22% of the total enrollment. The two-year community colleges (the University of Wisconsin Colleges) in this ten- year span by

contrast, had a total enrollment of 126,813, which is 3.67% of the total enrollment. The following chart provides a visual picture of the difference in enrollment as discussed.

Consequently, with technical colleges educating a majority of the students in the state, understanding the culture of these institutions and how that culture influences the governance of these institutions becomes an important issue because as Tierney (1988) stated “an organization’s culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it” (p.24). To date little to no research has been conducted on the culture of technical colleges. This study will focus on a Wisconsin technical college culture by studying the specific research questions detailed in the next section.

### The Research Questions

The specific research questions that will guide this qualitative study are:

Research Question 1: To what degree do the members of the administrative team make meaning of their institutional culture?

Research Question 2: What importance do the members of the administrative team attach to their institutional culture?

Research Question 3: In what ways do the members of the administrative team perceive that they both manage and influence their institutional culture?

These questions are the focus of the study to determine in what ways administrators make meaning of their institution’s culture, attribute importance to it, and know how they perceive they manage and influence it. This focus is seen as important because it can provide insight into their operations and their effectiveness.

The importance of understanding the institution’s culture can be seen in the following example. A new administrator comes on staff. This administrator is sent a

document to review that someone also new to a position at the college, wanted them to review. Without asking any questions or determining the author of the document or the history of the document, this administrator responded and stated that the document was written completely incorrectly and does not agree with the federal regulation or the intent of the regulation. The response to this administrator's comments by the committee who authored the document was one of complete dismissal. The comment in the next committee meeting was "she does not understand how we work here." This example presents a picture of how a lack of knowledge of the institutional culture can be problematic to policy making. If this administrator had studied the culture of the institution to know the power of this institutional committee, her response would have been provided in a different manner. Although this incident could occur at any university or college, it speaks to the importance of culture and how an understanding would have prompted a different response to how the decision was communicated.

### Summary

This chapter focused on the importance of culture and made a case for studying: the culture in the technical college setting; the overview of a university, community college, and technical college; history of the technical college system; enrollment at Wisconsin's universities, community colleges, and technical colleges; and the specific research questions that will guide this study. A detailed example of technical college programs was also provided to highlight programs that are not readily available at universities or community colleges within the state.

The literature review in chapter two is composed of several sections. The first section focused on the interchangeability of the terms community college and technical

college. The second section explored the conceptual framework of institutional culture. The third section explored the administrative team's role and their understanding of culture. The fourth section discussed technical college challenges and the last section provided a summary of the key points within the chapter.

## Chapter Two - Literature Review

### A Review of the Literature

Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley (2005) argue in their monograph that a strong institutional culture has concrete uses in universities and colleges. They state that “culture is not simply something that is but is something that can do. Institutional culture is not just something to have, which is where the discussion of the concept usually focuses, but is something to use” (p. 1). Culture can be used to influence decisions (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008, Tierney, 2008) and can be important to managers because of the connection it has to institutional effectiveness. According to Tierney (2008), “an administrator’s correct interpretation of the organization’s culture can provide critical insight about which of many possible avenues to choose” (pg 26-27) when making decisions. In other words, institutional culture can be used in strategic ways to benefit universities and colleges (Toma, Dubrow & Hartley, 2005).

Tierney (2008) suggests that administrators can use culture to improve their ability to address the challenges facing their institutions. Challenges facing these institutions might well be similar, but the best solutions will vary by institutional context because as Toma, Dubrow and Hartley (2005) argue, culture is generally different based on the type of institution. Thus, focusing on the area of leadership within the institution can lead to a better understanding of the culture as college leaders work with other members of the college to shape a positive culture (Lee, 2004).

It is the intent of this literature review to emphasize the value in researching the culture of academic institutions, the importance of administrators understanding their institution’s culture, the importance administrators attribute to the culture, and the

perception administrators have in their ability to manage and influence their institution's culture. Additionally, this review will show that the current literature does not include research on technical college culture, a different type of academic institution from either a university or a community college.

As there is no research on technical college culture, research studies on culture in universities and community colleges are used as the basis for this literature review. A possible reason for this lack of literature could be because of the interchangeability many associate with the terms community college and technical college. These terms are used at times interchangeably when discussing two-year colleges in general. It is important to note that technical colleges are not a part of the educational landscape in all states therefore the distinction of these types of institutions are not always made across the country. As this is the case, the interchangeability of these terms and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of their use together is further discussed later within this review.

This literature review is divided into five areas. The first area explores information regarding the interchangeability of the terms community college and technical college. This shows the difference between these two types of institutions, primarily by exploring the difference in their mission. The second area discusses general culture theory and introduces the conceptual framework of culture. This discussion of the conceptual framework includes research studies of culture from both the university and community college viewpoint. It seeks to show the importance of culture to these institutions. The third area discusses the role of the members of the administrative team, and the importance attached to their understanding of culture for decision-making. Here administrative team membership roles are discussed together with the president's role,

and the importance they attach to culture. The fourth area explores the current range of challenges facing academic institutions; these challenges are discussed primarily because they will require colleges to make significant changes to remain viable. These changes necessitate understanding the institution's culture in order for them to be successful. The final area provides a summary of the key points argued within this chapter.

### Community College or Technical College

As was outlined in chapter 1, even though there are some similarities between technical colleges and community colleges, there are a variety of differences with their mission that make these two types of institutions distinct. The mission statement of an organization or institution can serve as a measure to distinguish between types of institutions in great part because it provides an organization's core purpose. The mission statement is critical to the organization as it is used as a focal point to evaluate the difference between these types of institutions.

For example, the mission of the University of Wisconsin Colleges, the community college system of Wisconsin, states:

the University of Wisconsin Colleges is a multi-campus institution that prepares students for success at the baccalaureate level of education, provides the first two years of a liberal arts general education that is accessible and affordable, and advances the Wisconsin idea by bringing the resources of the University to the people of the state and the communities that provide and support its campuses (University of Wisconsin Colleges online).

The mission of the Wisconsin Technical College system, by contrast, is to provide citizens with comprehensive technical and adult education that:

enables individuals to acquire the occupational education necessary for full participation and advancement in the workforce; provides remedial and basic skills education to enable individuals to function as literate

members of society; fosters economic development through on-site training and technical assistance to business, industry, and labor (WTCS, online).

Significant differences in core purpose, course of study, and student goals can be seen in these mission statements. The differences displayed in Table V speak to the heart of these institutions where we can visually see the differences.

Table V

*Differences of University of Wisconsin Colleges and Wisconsin Technical Colleges*

	<b>University of Wisconsin Colleges</b>	<b>Wisconsin Technical Colleges</b>
<b>Core Purpose</b>	Preparation for University	Participation for Workforce
<b>Course of Study</b>	Liberal Arts General Education	Occupational Education
<b>Student Goals</b>	Bachelor's Degree	Employment

These differences are significant and serve to make each institution distinct. The differences suggest that the student population, faculty, and challenges will be specific to the individual University of Wisconsin College or Wisconsin Technical College. For example, based on the mission statement, it would be reasonable to expect students attending the University of Wisconsin Colleges to continue at a four-year university when they graduate with their Liberal Arts degree. It would be equally reasonable to expect students to enter the job market after completing at the technical college based on the technical system mission. Because of these distinctions, it can be argued that technical colleges and community college are terms that should not be used interchangeably, and

because of this technical colleges have a uniqueness that makes it reasonable to suggest that their culture will be different and therefore necessitates investigation.

The differences can be seen in the development of these institutions. In an article discussing the history and development of Wisconsin's community colleges and technical colleges, Snider (1999) concludes that these institutions are "two distinct components within Wisconsin's higher education structure" (p.107). She uses the legislative actions, individuals, and significant occurrences to support her research on the development of these two types of institutions.

In summary, it is important to note that in the state of Wisconsin, the university system and the Wisconsin two-year college system is governed by the Board of Regents. Regardless of culture classified as university culture, community college culture, or technical culture, all are based on a particular conceptual framework and thus are distinct entities with distinct cultures. The next section discusses the concept of culture in everyday society which leads to the discussion on the conceptual framework of culture within academic institutions.

### Conceptual Framework of Academic Culture

Culture or the concept of culture was introduced through the field of anthropology where groups of individuals were studied in an attempt to obtain a rich understanding of how and why they behave as they do. Although, the significance of studying culture was realized many years ago as early as the eighteenth century, it was not until "the 1970s and 1980s organizational theorists turned to culture to explain the behavior they were observing in organizations" (Modaff, DeWine, Butler, 2008, p. 88). Turning to culture as a method to understand behavior occurred as managers and researchers "interested in

organizational culture believe that organizations have the same characteristics as societies and therefore can be understood through a cultural lens” (Modaff, et.al 2008, p. 89). In other words, culture theory provides a method of understanding the interactions and ways people use cultural resources to make sense of their workplace community and of the members of the community or organization. Cultural theory becomes the lens into the organization or institution that provides an understanding of the organization. Modaff, et.al (2008) based their work, which focused on a variety of organizations including academic organizations, on over sixty interviews with organization leaders and workers from a variety of fields conducted for the first edition of their book and another forty interviews for this second addition of their book. They concluded that the interviews:

revealed a common theme that organizational life tends to be characterized by what we (broadly) term misunderstandings. The concept of misunderstandings....involves more than ineffective communication between members of an organization; it is an umbrella term used to connote the problematic nature of interaction in organizational settings (2008, p. xi).

The authors argued, “Organizational culture is intricately and inextricably tied to the communication process in organizations” (2008, p. 112). This further shows the importance of culture in organizations.

In another study that focused on community colleges, Levin and Montero-Hernandez (2009) argued that members within organizations are specifically studied to determine how they make sense of their organization’s world. The students, faculty, administrators, and state legislators were studied to determine how they “internalize and use institutional cultural traditions to make sense of their world and define their social roles and how this use of culture contributes to the development of specific organizational settings” (p.17).

Their empirical study was based on two projects. They used the information obtained from the Nontraditional Students and Community Colleges Study and relied on a project that involved the interviewing of students, faculty, administrators, and state legislators. The Nontraditional Students and Community Colleges Study included data from 180 people interviewed between 2002 and 2004. The second study used data obtained for thirteen community colleges in nine states obtained from 2006 and 2007. This group of thirteen colleges was a subset of a national study of adult learners. From this group of thirteen, Levin and Montero-Hernandez visited five sites and interviewed and videotaped approximately eighty people of the type listed above. The authors analyzed the data by paying particular attention to the “ways in which educational experiences were constructed: who the participants were, what kinds of beliefs and interpretations they held, and what organizational structures and practices were created” (2009, p.4).

Based on interviews of several students at the Community College of Denver, the authors classified the college as having a hybrid identity of caring and not caring. “Mixed orientations in college personnel’s organizational behaviors and the hybrid identity of CCD were a consequence of the differentiated ways in which individuals interpreted and activated their cultural resources (i.e. symbols, ideologies, codes, values, norms, and cultural traditions) to enact their occupational roles and expectations” (2009, p.50-51). This can be seen from one of the student interviews:

What I like about CCD are the people here. They want to help you, (for example, the people working in) the First Generation program. They let you know what’s going on, they really put their foot out there; they go the extra step to help you. Now they don’t do the work for you. And when I wanted to withdraw from that class, they told me “no.” They said ...”We’re going to make you make it through here. We’re going to make

sure you do it.” And I told them, “It’s just too much for me.” But they’re really good with me (2009, p.56).

Cultural resources of symbols, administrators doors actually being open to represent an open door policy; ideologies, staff going above and beyond their position responsibilities to assist students in passing their classes because they believe in what they do; codes, values, norms, and cultural traditions, are how the individual interpret their organization. This interpretation is based on their experiences.

Levin and Montero-Hernandez (2009) concluded that:

There was interconnectedness among variables. We note that the construction of college life is an act of co-authorship in which decisions and behaviors of participants in the different contexts that surround a community college have resonance in the way in which community college life is constructed (p. 194)

It appears that the authors are suggesting that these various behaviors together form the basis of identifying the culture or cultures of the community college.

The work of Levin and Montero-Hernandez may be transferable to assist in understanding culture in the technical college. This can be used by paying particular attention to the kind of beliefs and interpretations held by the technical college administrators and the organizational structures and practices they have created.

Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) identify and describe six different cultures within academic institutions. Their work is used here because it incorporates various ideas about academic culture, which adds a level of complexity to the culture of the institution. Specifically, they argue that institutions are composed of multiple cultures, and leaders should be encouraged to develop the skills and abilities needed to work within these cultures. Each of the cultures is described in Table III. When reviewing these cultures, it becomes clear that the focus should be on the participants (students, faculty, staff, and

administrators), the core values, and the leader's role. The focus on these variables is important because they can assist us in determining the culture or cultures of the institution.

Table VI

*Six Cultures of the Academy*

Culture	Description
Collegial	Culture that finds meaning primarily in the disciplines represented by the faculty research and scholarship and the quasi-political governance processes of the faculty; that holds assumptions about the dominance of rationality in the institution. That conceives of the institution's enterprise as the generation, interpretation, and dissemination of knowledge and as the development of specific values and qualities of character among young men and women who are future leaders of our society (p. 15).
Managerial	Culture that finds meaning primarily in the organization, implementation, and evaluation of work that is directed toward specified goals and purposes. That values fiscal responsibility and effective supervisory skills; that holds assumptions about the capacity of the institution to define and measure its goals and objectives clearly; and that conceives of the institution's enterprise as the inculcation of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes in students so that they might become successful and responsible citizens (p.43).
Developmental	Culture that finds meaning primarily in the creation of programs and activities furthering the personal and professional growth of all. Members of the higher education community that values personal openness and service to others as well as systematic institutional research and curricular planning; that holds assumptions about the inherent desire of all men and women to attain their own personal maturation, while helping others in the institution becomes more mature. Conceives of the institution's enterprise as the encouragement of potential for cognitive, affective, and behavioral maturation among all students, faculty, administrators, and staff (p.73).
Advocacy	Culture that finds meaning primarily in the establishment of equitable and egalitarian policies and procedures for the distribution of resources and benefits in the institution. Values confrontation and fair bargaining among constituencies, primarily management and faculty or staff, who have vested interests that are inherently in opposition. Holds assumptions about the ultimate role of power and the frequent need for outside mediation in a viable academic institution; and that conceive of the institution's enterprise as either the undesirable promulgation of existing (and

	often repressive) social attitudes and structures or the establishment of new and more liberating social attitudes and structures (p.111).
Virtual	Culture that finds meaning by answering the knowledge generation and dissemination capacity of the postmodern world. Values the global perspective of open, shared, responsive educational systems; that holds assumptions about its ability to make sense of the fragmentation and ambiguity that exists in the postmodern world; and that conceives of the institution's enterprise as linking its educational resources to global and technological resources, thus broadening the global learning network (p.147).
Tangible	Culture that finds meaning in its roots, its community, and its spiritual grounding. Values the predictability of a value-based, face-to-face education in an owned physical location; that holds assumptions about the ability of old systems and technologies being able to instill the institution's values; and that conceives of the institution's enterprise as the honoring and reintegration of learning from a local perspective (p.185).

Source: Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008

This work explored the mixture of these academic cultures and the value of that mixture. Although, a particular academic institution may embrace one culture, the argument of Bergquist and Pawlak is that there are additional cultures present and they all interact with the prevalent culture. To show this interaction between the cultures and bridge the gap, the authors draw on the appreciative perspective and the ironic perspective. The appreciative perspective looks to developing the best within an organization by focusing on the systems (human resources, recruitment) within that organization that is performing at its optimal level. The ironic perspective is one that will recognize and embrace multiple perspective, truths, and narratives even if they contradict one another.

Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) believe these cultures with their connections and disconnections must be discussed for an institution to correct, change, grow, and appreciate each cultural dynamic within; “Each culture can contribute to the learning of educators rather than reinforce limiting and inflexible assumptions about the nature and direction of the higher education enterprise” (2008, p.14). With this in mind, these cultures are next explored in more detail beginning with the collegial culture.

The collegial culture supports diverse perspectives, based on scholarly research, and longevity of the faculty. The leadership within this culture derives from committees and group activities. Significant importance is placed on “scholarly work within the academic disciplines” where autonomy and academic freedom is valued (Dee, 2011, p.510). Characteristics of the collegial culture are a controlling environment, focus on quality and an emphasis on a liberal arts education. Faculty is considered effective when they have a strong publishing record (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008).

The managerial culture focuses on serving the underserved and unassimilated student so they can achieve social mobility. This culture places the learning of students as the most important value at the instructional level. Leadership is along formal line relationships. The successful leaders are realistic, efficient, and competent. Leaders within this culture tend to adapt and use corporate management theory to manage efficiently. Faculty led mostly through their classrooms. The faculty is seen as influential when they are able to manage people and budgets. Students within this culture work to become efficient learners and seek outside of the college to succeed. Efficiency, accountability, and rational planning is valued (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008).

The developmental culture has teaching and learning at the core of the institution, respect of collaboration and the use of experts in their respective areas. Leadership is indirect, working with people as individuals and valuing teamwork (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008).

Unionization, collective bargaining, academic freedom, tenure and service learning characterize the advocacy culture. Performance assessment models are used to access funds. The culture embraces an outcome measure of quality, concerned with institutional performance and the effect “that measurement might have on the actual work being done by an institution” (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008, p. 143).

The virtual culture developed as a result of economics, tight finances, higher levels of accountability and required measured outcomes. The virtual culture is characterized as an open system. This is a system that has no physical presence, boundaries, and “patterns of influences in a virtual organization that shift with the variables that influence it” (Bergquist and Pawlak, p. 149, 2008).

The tangible culture is based on institutions founding leaders and stories. This culture is grounded in the customs, traditions, “historical and philosophical evolution, formal and informal political structures” (Bergquist and Pawlak, p. 189, 2008). This culture is characterized by celebrations, symbols, having a physical structure, traditions, and gradual growth (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008).

The core values of these cultures by their very nature cause conflict to arise. Bergquist and Pawlak argue that leaders should be able to employ strategies and initiatives that would “bridge the space” between the cultures. Leaders should not be bound by only one culture and use it to make decisions. They believe that leaders must

determine “how to work with and use the strengths and resources of the existing organizational culture to accomplish our goals. We must, in other words, learn to appreciate rather than annihilate cultures” (2008, p. x).

Bergquist and Pawlak’s study and framework emphasize the need for leaders to understand completely their institutional culture if they are to lead effectively. Importance is attached to this understanding because each of these cultures “live together on each campus...Each one vies for students, resources, space, a place to govern, and a way of approaching learning and teaching” (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008 p. 248). They offer the six cultures and ways to bring them together as new ways to meet the challenges facing higher education institutions. This work can be used to determine the mixture of cultures that may exist in the technical college setting which can be identified by their leaders if this is the case. As they state, “we believe that differences in institutional type are important and that variations in cultural composition underlie them” (p.8).

The work of Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) centered on colleges and universities but no specific institutions were identified as being studied. To produce this work the authors used as a source the ideas from a cohort group in Canada at the Professional School of Psychology and used participants of a focus group held July 11, 2005. No specific information was provided as to the identity of the focus group members.

In contrast to the six cultures of the academy described by Bergquist and Pawlak (2008), an earlier study by Smart, et.al (1997) based their research study on four types of institutional cultures classified by Cameron and Ettington (1988), which have been used to describe cultures within community two-year colleges. The purpose of the Smart et al.

study was to investigate the relationships between institutional culture and decision approaches in promoting organizational effectiveness in community two-year colleges.

In this empirical study, the researchers assumed “that the missions, cultures, and external environmental conditions of two-year colleges differ. Mission priorities and environmental conditions interact with the institutional culture in unknown ways and shape institutional decision-making and management approaches. Taken together these variables are thought to influence the global organizational effectiveness of community two-year colleges (Smart, et.al, 1997, p 260).” The causal model allows for direct and indirect influences of predictor variables to be taken in to account, thereby creating a more vigorous estimate of the total influence of variables in the model (Smart, et.al, 1997).

The researchers randomly selected 30 public two-year colleges and invited all full-time administrators to participate and only a sample of full-time faculty to participate. Although the authors did not state the type of two-year institutions, it can be deduced they were community two-year institutions as transfer was emphasized in the student. They received a total response rate of 54% with 63% of the administrators responding and 47% of the faculty responding to the questionnaire (Smart, et.at, 1997). The authors do not list the response rate of the administrators or faculty as a limitation to the study.

They report that four sets of variables were ordered in a causal sequence to determine the influence of each. The first set of variables was comprised of seven “exogenous variables” or physical type variables that investigated the health and focus of the institutions, like college size, financial health, and transfer emphasis. The second set

of variables composed of the four types of institutional cultures. Smart et.al, (1997) used the institutional cultures developed by Cameron and Ettington. “The hypothesized link between organizational effectiveness and institutional cultures has been substantiated in several recent studies (1997, p. 262).” The four cultures are described in Table VII.

Table VII

*Four Institutional Cultures*

Culture	Description
Clan	Characterized by norms and values that foster affiliation, encourage member participation in decision making, and emphasize talent development as an institutional goal. Faculty and staff are motivated by trust, tradition, and their commitment to the institution. The clan’s strategic orientation is to use consensus to make decisions; interpretive strategy is utilized.
Adhocracy	Assume that change is inevitable; individuals are motivated by the importance and ideological appeal of the tasks to be addressed. A prospector-type strategic orientation is used to acquire resources to ensure institutional vitality and viability. Adaptive and interpretive strategies are called on to make decisions.
Bureaucratic	Seeks stability; its strategic orientation is to maintain the status quo. Formally described roles dictate the activities performed by various individuals and the nature of relations among people; individual compliance with organizational mandates is governed by rules and regulations, and linear strategy is the mode of operation.
Market	Achievement oriented and emphasizes planning, productivity, and efficiency in developing strategy; linear strategy is the mode of operation. Faculty and staff performance is assured through rewards for competence and contributions to organizational effectiveness.

Source Cameron and Ettington in the work of Smart, Kuh, Tirney (1997)

The culture factor scores were computed and a dominant culture was identified for each college. It was also found that all of these institutional culture factors have “significant direct and indirect influences on effectiveness” (Smart, et.al, 1997, p. 269). The most substantial influence on the effectiveness of two-year colleges is the adhocracy and bureaucratic cultures. The adhocracy culture is positively associated with effectiveness and the bureaucratic is negatively associated with effectiveness where the authors define the effectiveness of a college or university as “a function of how it responds to external forces and internal pressures in fulfilling its educational mission” (p. 256). Adhocracy had a significant positive effect on effectiveness of .39 and clan .21. Bureaucratic had a total negative effect of -.39 and market-.18 (Smart, et.al, 1997).

The culture types of institutions are important to recognize and understand because “leadership styles, bonding mechanisms, and strategic emphases vary by culture types” (Smart, et.al., 1997, 271). They suggest:

Administrators at two-year colleges with strong bureaucratic and market cultures should consider ways to “bend” their college’s culture in order to make the institution more responsive and adaptable to external forces and internal pressures, thereby insuring institutional survival. At some institutions this may require that administrators approach their work in Janusian fashion, centralizing some functions while at other times encouraging participative decision-making practices in ways that might become compatible with their institution’s culture (p. 272).

Stated directly, the authors are suggesting that administrators use the knowledge of understanding their culture to bring about change that will allow them to meet both their external and internal needs.

The classification of the cultures is based on the responses of the faculty as well as the administrators. It should be taken into account that the majority of the responses came from administrators, although more faculty were later invited to participate. It

should also be noted that administrators and faculty have different perspectives in regards to the importance of the factors regarding culture. Moreover, it should also be noted that his study was completed at a particular point in time, and consequently does not take into consideration the changes that occur over the life cycle of an institution.

Although this study was conducted before the Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) study, both identified some of the same characteristics within their identified cultures.

Teamwork can be identified within the clan culture of Smart, Kuh and Tierney as well as the developmental culture of Bergquist and Pawlak (2008). Formal rules, goals, and objectives can be seen in the bureaucratic culture and the managerial culture. The studies differ, however, in their definition of culture types particularly in the adhocracy culture, which indicates that people in that community are willing to take risks and the leader is seen as an entrepreneur.

The studies also differ in the question of mixture of cultures within academic institutions; nevertheless, they both provide detailed significant information that allows for analysis from all vantage points of culture by providing detailed views of the framework of various culture types. This research study focused on analyzing the administrators' interviews to determine if there was a mixture of cultures and the composition. Identifying the combination of cultures as well as the dominant culture should allow for an appreciation of each as Bergquist and Pawlak state, if there is an appreciation of each culture type then "each culture can become a force for improvement rather than destruction in our academic organizations and systems" (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008, p.14).

The research of Bergquist and Pawlak and Smart, Kuh, and Tierney thus invites research to be conducted into the culture of technical colleges. As has been argued, it cannot be simply assumed that the cultures found at other types of institutions accurately describe the technical college culture. The work of Smart, Kuh, and Tierney, for example, points to the importance of the mission of an institution in relationship to the culture of that institution. The mission as well as the participants of the technical college system, the university system, and the community college system is not the same, therefore it is essential that the technical college culture should be investigated. In particular, this investigation should explore the meaning making of the administrative team about their culture. The responses they provide may present the opportunity to determine where technical college culture fit within the existing cultural frameworks, if their culture is a mixture of various cultures, or if there is a newer emerging culture. This can only be determined by investigation.

There appears to be a direct relationship between the administrator and the culture; and, their appreciation of the culture is essential as evidenced in the next section. The next area explores the importance of the members of the administrative team's understanding of the culture and why it should be an important focus.

#### University and Community College Administrators and Culture

As stated previously, the administrative team's knowledge of their institution's culture is crucial. The section specifically focuses on the importance of the President's understanding of their institution's culture. Again, most universities and community two-year colleges are under the leadership of a President and Board of Directors as William Piland (1994) discusses in his work regarding the colleges governing board. The

President is expected to provide vision, executive administrative leadership and work with all college constituents. The individuals that make up the college community have different goals, different positions, different values, different expectations and different experiences in comparison to the presidents (Vaughan, 1994). All of these different individuals and their beliefs are a part of their institution's culture. The president's goals, positions, values, expectations, and experiences can determine the president's success or failure. Vaughan (1994) indicated this factor in his 1994 work, but this is vividly illustrated in The College of William and Mary account that follows. This particular illustration specific illuminates the consequences of a President in opposition to the university's culture and the results.

In 2005, Timothy J. Sullivan retired and the Board of Directors of The College of William and Mary appointed Gene R. Nichol as president. William and Mary's history was one of political conservatism and Nichol was considered a liberal democrat with certain political beliefs. Four of Nichol's initiatives were met with extreme controversy from the campus community, which would in the end lead to the non-renewal of his contract and his resignation as President.

Initiative One involved the college's logo. The NCAA outlawed the logo of The College of William and Mary along with other college and university logos depicting Native Americans. Nichol explained the College's reason for the logo and the NCAA indicated they understood their positioning, but in May 2006, they outlawed the logo. Nichol refused to file an official lawsuit although he defended the logo and appealed the NCAA's decision (Morin, 2010).

Initiative Two involved Nichol's belief that the College should be more racially and geographically diverse and to that end he instituted a program that would provide a debt-free education to low-income families. The program was called the Central William and Mary program. This was a program that was created under former President Sullivan but was never funded. Opposition from many in the campus community occurred because they disagreed on how to spend the College's limited funds (Morin, 2010).

Initiative Three involved Nichol's unilateral removal of a small, brass altar cross from the Wren Chapel when he heard it had offended non-Christian students. He did not immediately inform the campus of his decision. Although, he later sent emails explaining why he removed the cross, many were offended. One student was offended to the point of creating an online petition and eventually collecting over 9,000 signatures. One alumnus was offended to the point of withdrawing a twelve million dollar pledge. Nichol was criticized for his lack of understanding of William and Mary's culture and failing to obtain input from the campus community (Morin, 2010).

Initiative Four involved Nichol allowing the Sex Workers' Art Show to perform on campus as they had in the past. Opposition came primarily from outside the campus. Nichol refused to cancel the show. Many believed that as a result of the past initiatives and controversy that Nichol's personal politics did not match the culture of William and Mary (Morin, 2010).

The result of Nichol's failed initiatives was the nonrenewal of his contract by the Board of Directors. He served only two and a half years as President. Morin described these initiatives as being "small battles in a culture war. Nichol ultimately became a casualty of a complex organizational culture composed of multiple

stakeholders...Nichols's presidency illuminates the difficulties inherent in altering a campus culture and navigating multiple constituencies" (p. 100). Thus, it is clear that not understanding the culture and attributing importance to it appeared to be the downfall of Nichol as President. These events at The College of William and Mary portray the results of ignoring an important variable of culture at a four-year college.

Additional research shows the importance of the administrators understanding of culture at community colleges. In 1994, Vaughan, a former community college president, discussed the importance of the president understanding their institution's culture from the community college perspective. The President, of course, normally the senior administrator, has an important role in the management of the college. Vaughan (1994) suggests that in order to be an effective President, one must focus on culture. He believes that the President needs to be able to appreciate the culture in order to understand the institution, and that he should focus on selecting the staff personnel to work to shape the institution's culture.

Specifically, he argues that the President must be aware of all parts of the institution's culture. He argues that:

Myths, legends, stories of the college's founding and of early institutional leaders, are part of an institution's culture, contribute to a sense of history and community, and inspire loyalty to that institution. The culture of an institution influences how members of both the college community and the community at large perceive it. The effective president understands and is sensitive to an institution's culture, respecting and preserving the good things of the past but always shaping the present and planning for the future. The effective leader, and especially the effective president, understands when and where to change an institution's culture, when to let go. The effective president discusses the institution's culture in ways that can be understood by much of the public, often using metaphors with which the audience identifies. Indeed, the highly successful president becomes one with the culture, both as its interpreter and as the symbol of the institution, absorbing being absorbed by the institutional culture and

ultimately becoming an integral part of that culture, often after passing from the scene (p. 65).

Thus, according to Vaughn (1994), no other area in the college provides the president with more chances for mistakes than does the failure to understand the institutional culture. The institution's governance structure can be an example of an extreme error on the part of a president. Because the governance structure is a part of the culture, not understanding how decisions have been traditionally made and accepted can cause the president to operate in a manner that could prove to be suicidal to their career. For example, if the college is accustomed to a team environment of decision-making and a new president is accustomed to a more individual type of decision-making environment, it could be the end of their career depending on how they can change or are willing to change. The president can avoid this type of situation if they have an understanding the college's culture suggests Vaughan (1994).

A concern with the work of Vaughan (1994) is that his twelve areas of focus were subjective. The areas of focus were: understanding the institution, appreciating the culture, mediating disputes, understanding the necessity of good management, selecting personnel, utilizing information, acting as educational leader, functioning in the professional field, establishing political leadership, providing avenues for renewal, serving as an institutional symbol, and using power. The areas are in no particular order of priority and he states they should be viewed as separate arenas and they are presented here because they are the ones:

in which the president exercises presidential leadership skills. It is an attempt to interpret what I have learned as a president and as a scholar in ways that will help others to look at leadership in terms of areas of focus rather than as tasks to be performed or skills to be applied. Defining presidential leadership in terms of broad areas in no way lessens the need for those skills and abilities normally

associated with leadership, nor is the need to accomplish tasks diminished...The result of broadening one's perspective on leadership, will result in a more effective application of those skills, abilities, and personal attributes that are so necessary for the effective community college president. (1994, p. 61-62).

Since these areas are subjective based on his experience as a former community college president, are they the only ones, should there be more areas of focus that involve culture? Would another college president present similar areas? This work does not answer this concern. Although he states they should be viewed as separated areas, several of these focus areas appear to be related and perhaps should be viewed in conjunction with one another in order for a full understanding to be developed.

Based on a year-long investigation of organizational culture in American higher education institutions, William Tierney (2008) argued that organizational culture is a "useful concept for understanding management and performance in education" (p.24). Tierney goes on to argue that administrators do not grasp the cultural influences that have a role in the decision they are required to make. He believes they begin to understand the cultural codes only when they are broken:

Administrators often have only an intuitive grasp of the cultural conditions and influences that enter into their daily decision-making. In this respect, they are not unlike most of us who have a dim, passive awareness of cultural codes, symbols, and conventions that are at work in society at large. Only when we break these codes and conventions are we forcibly reminded of their presence and considerable power. Likewise, administrators tend to recognize their organization's culture only when they have transgressed its bounds and severe conflicts or adverse relationships ensue. As a result, we frequently find ourselves dealing with organizational culture in an atmosphere of crisis management, instead of reasoned reflection and consensual change (p. 25)

Effective administrators are well aware that they can take a given action in some institutions but not in others. They are less aware of why this is true. Bringing the dimensions and dynamics of culture to consciousness will help leaders assess the reasons for such differences in institutional

responsiveness and performance. This will allow them to evaluate likely consequences before, not after, they act (p. 26).

Thus, understanding culture becomes important component for administrators to use to manage their college campuses at all times. According to Tierney (2008), in order for the culture knowledge of administrators to be effective, they must have more than a passive knowledge of culture.

Although Tierney's (2008) work provides a basis for recognizing the importance of studying culture, missing from this work is information about the specific types of institutions included in this yearlong study. Thus the reader does not know which administrative team is being referenced, and in what context they are working.

Leaders must not only be aware of culture, what it is, but they must also determine how they view the culture. Culture at times viewed as a catalyst for and a constraint on decision-making. As Gayle et al. (2003) argued:

Efforts at organizational change fail on many occasions. Such failure can often be attributed to insufficient understanding of the critical role of culture within organizations, including real and perceived rewards and disincentives, formal as well as informal role distributions, and the philosophy and style of senior managers (p.47).

Thus far, the importance of culture for the President and administrative leaders, in their various roles has been discussed. As administrative leaders, they have the responsibility for making decisions that affect their institutions. With all of the challenges facing academic institutions, correctly understanding their institutions' culture becomes critical. Tierney (2008) argues that the understanding of culture assists administrators in managing the challenges their institutions face.

The next section explores some of the key challenges facing technical colleges where administrators will need to be able to effectively manage and implement changes.

Some of the key challenges identified are fiscal, internal culture, and external community relationships (Mahm, 2008). It is argued that to implement necessary changes that alter established ways of operating can be difficult, depending on the culture of the institution.

### Technical College Challenges

As discussed previously, the institution's culture is vital to understand if administrators are going to lead their institutions through sustained change. This becomes particularly important, as institutional change is now a part of the academic community landscape, a landscape that includes technical colleges. Environmental changes that have occurred and are occurring are forcing universities and colleges to adapt. Some of the current challenges facing higher education are decreasing state support, increase in technology, changing student body demographics, increased competition, and a much more demanding public requiring accountability. Alfred (2008) states this in reference to changes on the community college level:

These challenges are global in scope, but local in impact through their influence on the goods and services people acquire, the prices they pay, and the issues in life and work they encounter each day. Thinking globally and acting locally have never been more important for service organizations. On the one hand, it is a mantra that community colleges will need to embrace as they try to maintain or increase market share in a world of new players, new rules, and ever-more demanding stakeholders—a world of disequilibrium and hyper competition (p. 83).

Alfred (2008) stresses that in addition to the global and local challenges, community college leaders must also be aware of the “unpredictable but profound impacts” (p. 83) that the changes in staff and technology will make on their institutions. It is expected that the traditional forms of governing their institutions will be challenged from internal and external forces. Administrators will be forced to confront these complexities or risk

losing control Alfred (2008). If, as Alfred states, these changes are inevitable, successfully meeting them becomes necessary. The administrators must understand their institutional culture as leading organizational change is one of the most essential and demanding parts of leadership but is crucial for successful organizational change to occur (Malm, 2008). The change must occur in the context of the institution's culture. Again, since Alfred is stating this from the community college viewpoint the question becomes "Are technical colleges facing the same or similar challenges?"

The former President of the technical college system, Daniel Clancy (WTCS online, 2011) said the proposed cuts to the technical college system for seventy one point six million dollars will probably decrease services to all across the state including employers and students alike. He believes that these cuts come a time when the needs of the community are great for these services. Because of the past relationship of the technical colleges with the state, he believes the effects will be devastating:

Wisconsin's Technical Colleges have always relied on a balanced, stable partnership between the state, local taxpayers and students. This relationship provides employers with skilled workers and creates real economic opportunity for individuals, ultimately bolstering the state economy. The Governor's Biennial Budget proposal would put state funding for technical education at a dollar level not seen since the late 1980s, despite WTCS enrollments growth of 40 percent in the last decade (WTCS online, 2011).

Clearly, these significant challenges outlined by Clancy are similar to those facing other academic systems, and meeting these challenges will be the responsibility of technical college administration. These administrators will be responsible for making the decisions that will require the implementation of change on their college campuses. Tierney (1992)

believes that a cultural view of an organization allows one to learn about and be comfortable with change:

Culture, then, is interpreted, negotiated, and constantly reconfigured by the ever-changing circumstances in which we find ourselves. In this context interpretation is the concrete exemplification of the abstract statements that occur on a daily basis as well as the larger rituals and actions of organizational life. The external environment creates changes that impact an organization's culture, and its members must make sense of these changes...Culture is dynamic rather than static. Viewing a campus through its culture encourages the belief that individual action can make a difference in organizational processes and outcomes (p. 16).

Thus, it would appear to be important for administrators to realize, as Tierney (2008) states, that individuals within the organization must be able to make sense of the changes especially in relationship to their culture. This understanding can assist them in making sense of the changes that occur on their campuses.

#### Summary of the Literature Review

Culture was discussed from the viewpoint of general culture and culture from a conceptual framework based on universities and community colleges. These areas were discussed to provide a framework for moving to an examination of technical college culture as it was emphasized that there is no research that speaks directly to the technical college culture.

Exploration of the literature suggests that administrative leaders and presidents must focus on various areas of college life if their institutions are to remain effective. One key area of this focus should be appreciating the changing culture, as this will provide an understanding of the institution. This section examined the importance of culture in relationship to the administrative roles, and emphasized the significance of the culture knowledge of the President.

This literature review also focused on some of the challenges facing higher education and the technical college system. These challenges will require administrators to manage and influence their institution's culture to implement the change necessary to answer the emerging challenges.

Chapter three, the methodology for this study is composed of several sections. These include the research method, institutional selection, interview process, research questions, data analysis, and a chapter summary.

## Chapter 3 – Methodology

### The Plan of Inquiry

Gay and Airasian (2000) explained, “Qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting in order to obtain understandings about the way things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them.” There are various qualitative methods employed by researchers. Among them is the case study method, which is the method used in this research study. A qualitative case study is a research method that allows the researcher to focus on a particular social context. In this case study the context is a single technical college’s administrative team. The intent of this case study was not to generalize but to produce a clear picture of the role of culture at one technical college. The case study of course is powerful because it allows for both uniqueness and a rich picture to develop (Thomas, 2011).

A case study allows for a variety of methods for data collection and data analysis. By design, the focus is on the development of the meaning of the chosen participants’ narratives. The case study analysis is created to surface critical themes throughout the project. Data for this case study are obtained through individual interviews, observation and the interrogation of key documents.

### The Context

Sixteen technical colleges make up the Wisconsin Technical College System. Each institution received careful consideration to determine the one to use in this case study. The specific factors considered in determining the college to focus on were

location, size, and ethnicity of members of the executive committee, enrollment, and outside reviews of the institution.

Certain programs are only allowed at specific technical colleges based on the needs in particular communities. Thus, location was an important selection criterion: the location of the institution selected needed to be such that it offered a majority of the programs the system allows. Additionally, the institution selected provided a rich setting for the investigation of culture because of the various changes involving staff with the necessary of moving from contracts to an institutional handbook. Because of this tradition was about to change where a successful change would necessitate the administrative team understanding the culture of the institution.

Another consideration was the size of the technical college as the institution selected was neither the smallest nor largest in the group. Of the sixteen technical colleges, this institution is seventh in student enrollment. It also has a good representation of diversity in both student enrollment and members of the administrative team.

Finally, the institution chosen achieved public acknowledgement as one of the top one hundred (100) workplaces in Southeastern Wisconsin. The institution received this achievement based on the recommendations of their employees. Employees made the recommendations based on general categories they determined were important.

Throughout this research study, the names of all administrators, all persons named, this college, the campuses, and other colleges are changed. All names have been changed to protect the identity of the individuals and the college.

*The Institution*

Central State Technical College, which is composed of three campuses and six centers, is over one hundred years old and was the first compulsory, publicly funded technical school in America. As discussed in Chapter One, technical colleges focus on providing vocational education for a trained workforce. Central State Technical College reflects this focus in that it provides education and training to the community to obtain necessary skilled workers to make available to them opportunities for solid careers. As informed by one student at the college:

I enrolled in Central's WEDD Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Certification course to enhance my job skills and improve my marketability. I received this and more. As a result of this course and encouragement from the instructor, I now have the tools to approach process evaluation and improvement projects. In addition to these tools, I am confident in problem solving through a systematic approach. In short, because of this class I am competent to dissect and document a process, identify waste, and design improvements. As a consequence, I now have a certification that employers find attractive and the talent to give it meaning" (Student Success Story, Central Website).

This is just one instance of a student indicating how the college provides the opportunities needed to obtain solid careers. The college takes pride in providing their services to over 25,000 students annually (Central website).

As Tierney (2008) explains, it is impossible to discuss the culture of an institution and not discuss the mission of that institution. In short, it is important to know how those connected with the institution explains their mission in the everyday working of the institution. The mission of Central State focuses on the economic growth and viability of their communities. The mission states, "We collaborate to ensure economic growth and

viability by providing education, training, leadership, and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers, and communities” (Central website).

The College’s mission provides the direction for both the vision and values. Because of this direction from the mission, the stated vision seeks to have the college be “the community technical college of choice for academic achievement, occupational advancement, and personal development.” This in turn leads to specific values of diversity of individuals and perspectives, positive climate for working and learning, honest and ethical behavior, and quality and excellence in education (Central website).

The Strategic Plan is yet another document that seeks to support the mission, vision, and values of the college. Central has a strategic plan that seeks:

1. Students experiencing educational excellence and academic success
2. Empowering students to attain credentials and find employment in their career field
3. Employees working together in a college culture of innovation and opportunity
4. Strategically aligning programs and services with changing industry needs
5. Working to have the college valued as the community’s college and a place of opportunity for all, works to support their mission (Central Budget Book online)

Central State has as a goal to assist students into transitioning into the workforce and therefore has a variety of community partnerships, partnerships for economic growth, service learning, community learning and green initiatives to assist in meeting this goal. Additionally, the College collaborates with high schools, other technical colleges, and universities as well as using its own staff for numerous initiatives that also supports this goal.

Central has a strategic direction that encourages employees to work together in a college culture of innovation and opportunity. Culture in this context refers to being used which is one point that Toma, Dubrow and Hartley (2005) believed was necessary. These are the current suggested strategic goals of Central State.

### *The Informants*

This case study focused on the story of the top three administrators of Central State Technical College and their meaning-making and understanding of the institution's culture. Interviewed were the President, Provost and Executive Vice-President, and the Assistant Provost and Vice-President. These three individuals represented the administrative team's three leading positions responsible for the academics, student services, and research of the College.

### *The President*

The President of Central State Technical College, Dr. Daniel Smith, (name changed) began his career in education as a high school classroom teacher. While as a high school teacher, President Smith was responsible for a number of in-service programs for other high school teachers. This position led him to another position at the Department of Public Instruction where he spent sixteen years as a state consultant for technology education. Later President Smith became a state director for career and technical education. In this position, President Smith had the opportunity to become the liaison to the Wisconsin Technical Colleges. While serving in this capacity, in 2004 President Smith accepted a position at Central State Technical College in a position

designed to assist business partnerships and support the advanced technology centers of the college.

President Smith was at the college a little more than a year when the then current president announced his retirement and encouraged President Smith to apply for the position. During this same period President Smith was appointed the chief operating officer before the president retired. This provided him with the unique opportunity to work in a type of shared role with the sitting president. In this way, he was able to learn the “flow” of the college, the operations, as well as the finances. By being in this unique position of chief operating officer President Smith was encouraged to apply for the presidency, “from there I got real excited about it and I applied for the presidency position” and in 2006, he became the President of Central State Technical College.

#### *The Provost and Executive Vice-President*

Unlike President Smith, the Executive Vice-President and Provost of Central State Technical College began her career in postsecondary education in a university setting. Ms. Kimberly Jones began her career as a work-study student at the University of Michigan in the financial aid department. Upon graduation, she continued to work at the university for eight years before leaving to obtain her master’s degree at Oakland University.

After completing her master’s degree, Ms. Jones had an unsuccessful attempt to obtain a position at the university. When she failed to obtain the position, she decided to look elsewhere and applied for three different directors of financial aid positions. Of the three, she decided to accept the position at Central State Technical College because she was impressed with her reception and “feel I got from the interview team.” Ms. Jones

viewed accepting the position at Central as a challenge because of their vision and the fact that this was the first time in her professional career she worked at a two-year college.

She began her career at Central State Technical College in 1993 but left for a brief fourteen months to work at another technical college, before returning. When she returned it was to the position of Vice-President of Student Services. In April 2003, Ms. Jones became the Vice-President of one of the college's campuses. After three years, in 2006, Ms. Jones became the Provost and Executive Vice-President of the College.

*The Assistant Provost and Vice-President of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success*

The Assistant Provost and Vice-President, Dr. Steven Frame, have been at Central State Technical College longer than both President Smith and Ms. Jones. Dr. Frame began his career on one of Central's smaller campuses as a communications instructor, not as an administrator. While working as an instructor, Dr. Frame had the opportunity to participate in numerous committees, worked on many projects, and ultimately became a division chair. Because of actively participating on these committees, Dr. Frame was provided the opportunity to see the inter-workings of administration. It was at this point that he decided that this was the next step for him.

In 2000 Dr. Frame became a Vice-President, a senior level administrative position, after moving up through the ranks. Because of Dr. Frame's advancements throughout the years, his level of responsibility changed several times. He went from supervising a small campus to supervising a small department to his current position of supervising a group of over one hundred.

### *The Researcher*

Judith Meloy (2002) suggested that “qualitative research requires personal rather than detached engagement in content, it requires multiple, simultaneous actions and reactions from the human being who is the research instrument.” Qualitative researchers, according to Gay and Airasian (2000), must “rely on themselves as the main instrument of data collection and are judged in terms of the believability, trustworthiness, coherence, and logic of their interpretations”. As the human instrument in this research study, as the researcher, my context must be acknowledged. As a full-time technical college administrator at another technical college and from my knowledge of the entire technical college system it was important that an open and comfortable atmosphere be created that would foster honest communication.

In order to provide for the sharpest comparisons of the informants narratives, the informants were interviewed independently. Thus, they were unaware of what the others were sharing in response to the questions asked.

It is also important to understand that as the researcher, a certain amount of concern for the working environment and the students, which influenced the type of questions, asked was present. As an individual there is advocacy for a particular culture on campus where students are first but it was also necessary to maintain an open mind when analyzing the narratives. Throughout the interviews, cautiousness was exercised to keep any bias in check.

I used several techniques to surface any possible bias and issues of trustworthiness. Informants had the opportunity to review their interviews and analysis

of their narratives, copies of the interviews were retained, and there was continual reading of my work by a non-involved colleague.

### *The Educational Landscape*

Two significant changes occurred that were important because they had the possibility of causing tremendous change at Central State Technical College thereby influencing the college's culture. The first, an internal change, was a change in the President of the College. In 2006, President Smith became President where he instituted his own brand of leadership, which was different from the style of the former president. In their narrative, each informant discussed this presidential change and the effect of the change on the college's culture.

The second, an external change, was a state legislative change. In 2011, the state legislature passed the 2011 Wisconsin Act 10, also called the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill (currently under appeal). Act 10 had language that effected public employees in educational unions. Act 10 required mandatory retirement contributions by the employee into their retirement programs, mandated health insurance cost reductions and co-payments by employees up to a certain percentage, and required specific collective bargaining modifications. Specifically, Act 10 prohibited unions from bargaining for more than base wages. They could not bargain for overtime, premium pay, merit pay, performance pay, pay schedules, and automatic pay progression. Employers were mandated not to deduct union dues from the employees' earnings. Employees were informed they could not strike and if they did strike, their labor organization would not receive dues for one year. Finally, Act 10 required the term of union contracts to be for no longer than one year.

These changes influenced this research study because they had a strong potential of affecting the culture of Central from both the staff and the administrative perspective. The presidential change was responsible for bringing in the top administrator that was considered extremely different from the previous president in approach, vision, and mission for the college. Act 10 changed how unions were viewed and decreased the amount of power they had. Because these changes affected every person in the internal and external community, it affected the culture of the college which was seen disclosed in the interviews.

### Data Collection

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the following research questions:

Research Question 1: To what degree do the members of the administrative team make meaning of their institutional culture?

Research Question 2: What importance do the members of the administrative team attach to their institutional culture?

Research Question 3: In what ways do the members of the administrative team perceive that they both manage and influence their institutional culture?

Data obtained were through interviews, observation, document analysis, and web site analysis, which included scrutinizing board meeting minutes. Good research questions of course, must be the guide to obtain in-depth information. Thus, informants provided a detailed narrative to a series of questions designed to acquire in-depth information in relationship to the research questions.

### *Interview Process*

For the institution discussed in this study, the members of the administrative team are the President, Provost and Executive Vice-President, Assistant Provost and Vice-President Institutional Research and Student Success. Contact was made in the form of an email. An introduction of the researcher, the research study, and their consent to participate in the study was included in the email. Participants were informed that the interviews would be confidential and informants anonymous as all names are changed. When the email consent from all parties and the institutional consent forms were received, hardcopy consent forms were sent to each participant. Once all necessary approvals were obtained, members of the team were contacted for the initial tape-recorded interview. Initially, the interviews covered a one-hour block of time and were located on the participants' campus in their office or another campus location of the participants' choice. Other interviews were scheduled as needed in accordance with the participant's schedule.

After each interview, the recording was transcribed verbatim. Using an ongoing process each was evaluated and coded. Key phrases and words were used to identify the cultural type of the organization. For example, if the participant used any words or phrases that would allow the institution to be coded as having characteristics of a virtual culture it was be coded as such. The coding was based on information from the literature review.

Additionally, the data were evaluated and coded to determine if the technical college has characteristics of having one of the cultures discussed by Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) or a mixture of the cultures as the authors argue. Or would the technical

college show characteristics more closely aligned to the clan, adhocracy, bureaucratic, or market cultures of Smart, et al. (1997) as discussed in the literature review.

Coding allowed key terms and phrases that accompany the discussion on institutional culture to be identified. When discussing culture, there are certain related terms and phrases that were expected to be used by the informants. Some of those terms and phrases are the institutions' environment, mission, and how the institution shares information as discussed by Tierney (2008). Overall, the information obtained was noted and coded into areas discussed in the literature review which included cultural theory, effects of culture on decisions and leader's effect on an institution's culture.

As stated, identification of key terms allowed for the identification of allowed for coding to be completed based on existing culture information. Identification of key terms or observances also allowed for the possibility of identifying new cultural elements that are present at this particular technical college.

### *Observation*

Another method used to obtain information was observation. "Observation as a tool for the leader/manager can be powerful, flexible and real" (Moyles, 2007, p. 237). It can be used to enrich and supplement data that will be gathered by other means. Moyles continues by discussing the importance of observation:

Our everyday observation skills function very much alongside our purposes for observation and are often determined by what we think or hope we are going to see. Whatever it is we observe and want to understand undergoes significant interpretation. However, in the interpretation, we cannot divorce our underpinning values and beliefs from the ways we ourselves perceive a situation or what we expect to occur. Herein lies a significant challenge for educational researchers...Interpreting what is observed, from the potential wealth of data that may be gathered, especially in field work, is a key feature of

observational research...What we can try to do is to acknowledge and overcome our personal interpretations by a variety of means, not least of which is using our professional knowledge as researchers to ensure clarity of concepts, purpose and method both before and after observational data-collection (2007, p. 238).

It is important to know what to observe and to know the purpose of the observation. With that in mind, I intentionally arrived early for the interviews with each administrator. I had the opportunity to speak with each of the administrative assistants of each administrator. Observation allowed for the opportunity of questioning the administrator regarding some of the things I observed. The administrative leaders were observed on their campus in their own offices among their staff, which was their natural work setting.

### *Interrogating Documents*

Interrogating documents offers several advantages as they:

1. Allows the researcher to gather data from the words of the participant with the realization that the document can be subjective.
2. They can obtain facts that may not be readily available with the realization that they may be difficult to locate, stored in several places geographically distant, and may be difficult to access.

Interrogated documents were the student handbook, board agendas and minutes, the employee orientation, and newspaper articles about the College. The college's official web site was also reviewed for additional information. These items were reviewed because the informants as being a key focus of the College discussed students, community, and employers.

## Data Analysis

The constant comparative method was used to analyze the data. This is a method used to identify the themes present in the data. Themes can be viewed as “the essential building blocks of your analysis” (Thomas, 2011, p. 172). It was the intent that by using this process the meanings constructed by the participants is revealed.

There were three informants for this case study. The information received from each informant was analyzed for similarities and differences. These similarities and differences were used to develop a cultural picture of the institution where each informant presented their view of the institution’s culture. Chapter four presents the views of the administrative team in their voice whereas the analysis and comparison is presented in Chapter five.

## Chapter Four

### The Administrative Team and Their Perception of the College's Culture

The purpose of this study was to investigate the importance of culture at a particular technical college through the eyes of its administrative team. The investigation was based on how the administrative team makes meaning of their institution's culture, the importance the team attaches to the culture, and how the team perceives they both manage and influence their culture. As stated earlier in the literature review, the work of Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) indicated that the culture of universities and colleges was a combination of subcultures and that the understanding of the culture at the institutions was critical for the administrative team to possess. This understanding is what was investigated in this study. The top three administrators responsible for academics, student success, and institutional research and student services at Central State College were interviewed face to face and as a follow-up through email. Each participant participated in two extended interviews over a period of five months where each was observed in their day to day setting. The participants also provided documentation of their college-wide employee training program. The College's web site was also reviewed. These multiple sources of data were used to construct the narratives which follow, and as such are intended to present an accurate portrayal of the thoughts and beliefs of this team's cultural reality.

This chapter is designed to allow the administrators to tell their story prompted by a series of interview questions. My intent was to interrogate their thoughts and opinions using their own words as much as possible. These informant stories are compared for similarities and differences in chapter five. This chapter focuses on the informants telling

their stories in their own words and via documentation. It is organized around the three research questions.

Research Question 1: How do members of the administrative team make meaning of their institution's culture?

These key informants, the President, Executive Vice-President and Provost, and the Assistant Provost and Vice-President, were asked a series of questions to determine how the administrative team make meaning of their institution's culture. These informants were asked their views as to why the institution exists, their institution's mission, the internal and external community, and the environment, the heart of the institution, the groups that influence the culture and to describe the culture of their institution.

#### *The President - President Smith*

On a beautiful sunny day in late October, I traveled to meet President Smith. This meeting takes place after a previous cancellation and numerous suggestions for meeting times as President Smith's calendar was heavily booked. We finally settled on an early eight o'clock meeting in President Smith's office on campus. Arriving early, I had the opportunity to observe the campus coming alive, with the arrival of students, faculty, and staff. As this was a rescheduled interview, I had prior opportunity to interview both the Provost and Vice-President in their offices in the administrative building. At this time, I realized that President Smith's office was not located in the same building. In fact, the President's suite of offices was located within one of the academic buildings. This was a very different arrangement from the organization of most college's administrative staff.

When I arrived I was graciously welcomed into President Smith's office by his administrative staff and just five minutes later, I was meeting President Smith. President Smith, a white male, presented a very welcoming and enveloping presence. Throughout the interview President Smith spoke openly. To gain needed background perspective, I began the conversation by asking President Smith to describe his road to becoming the President of Central State Technical College. President Smith responded by telling me he had an "interesting journey" to the Presidency:

I started out as a high school classroom teacher. Then taught for three years up in the [Grant area] near [Town County] and then found myself doing quite a few in-service programs for teachers and wound up at the Department of Public Instruction as a state consultant for technology education and over sixteen years at DPI and actually became a state director for career and technical education of which one of my assignments was to be liaison to Wisconsin technical colleges. I started to learn an awful lot about the technical colleges in that role and when the opportunity came available to come to [Central] it was such a unique position because it was designed to help business partnerships support the advanced technology centers around. It was a real strong interest area that I had from all of my years at DPI. So I took the opportunity never thought or planned that I would become the president of Central. It was a nice transition into postsecondary education.

Central has a very strong reputation around business partnerships and I felt like it would be a good fit. After about sixteen months or so on the job the president at the time announced his retirement and encouraged me to go and apply for the position so I did and was appointed chief operating officer. And so it was kind of a shared responsibility with the existing president as chief operating officer and so I had kind of the chance to learn the ins and outs of the college how it operates, the finances and the kind of programs you would not usually have access to as the vice-president of advanced technology. From there I got real excited about it and I applied for the presidency position and was appointed president in 2004. Actually, no 2004 was when I came to Central but 2006 was when I was appointed president. It was almost two years before I became president. It's been a great journey ever since and I really like it a lot.

President Smith related his story with a certain amount of excitement and awe realizing his journey to the Presidency was different than most. Although different, he

believed it provided him with an important perspective of the College and of the College's responsibility to the community, therefore when asked to complete several statements based on the work of Bergquist and Pawlak, about why most people think Central exists, President Smith had much to say. He believed that to most people the institution exists to develop specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the students of the college because that goal is closely aligned with Central's mission and "that's what differentiates us from maybe the university system. Yes, I think it's that workforce skill set." He also believed however, that the institution exists to generate, interpret and disseminate knowledge. He determined that the college disseminates knowledge through the general education courses they offer:

We have students that are taking a lot of general education courses; they are not specifically taking occupational programs, so it's becoming more evident that we have to find ways to create more services in those areas, whether it's a foreign language, whether it's psychology so that just education for the good of society. Much more of a community college maybe type of approach even though our mission is workforce, we understand that that is the core of our population, but we are getting a lot of more interest from students and using Central as one of their own educational portals, if you will.

The institution also exists; President Smith believed that most of the college community would say, to prepare students for successful careers, responsible citizenship and to contribute to the inter-institutional and global learning network. He suggested that the college is consistently sending messages regarding job placement. He noted that:

there is so much concentration on dislocated workers, our job and training and really created a message to a lot of folks concerning the very strong role the college can play to helping people get back on their feet and get a job, so I think that's one that would probably resonate well with a lot of folk.

Therefore, when he provided his opinion, he stated that he believed the college exists to create meaning and personal identification through the campus and institutional traditions. He suggested that the college has always taken on the role of assisting the community to grow academically:

I think there is a lot of expectations that Central is one of those key institutions that can help build a bridge to greater opportunities. It's a societal impact, the idea there are many that just do not find success in education, traditional education, and they rely on Central as that alternative path, whether it's a GED, an HSED program, you know, the fact that they didn't ever think they would ever be successful in college. Their employer is making them go back to school, and you know, there is a lot of anxiety. The average age for a student at Central is 31 years old, so they have life experiences already and many of those life experiences did not lead them to formal education after high school because it was not positive for them. There is that uniqueness that we employ to help people feel comfortable with their lifelong learning ambitions. They didn't know they had them.

Soon after taking the position of president, President Smith noted that he had the opportunity to work on creating Central's current mission and vision. It is clear that being in the unique position of chief operating officer before becoming president provided unparalleled access to information at the Central. Thus, he noted that the College had a strategic plan with a mission that had not been fully implemented. It is important to note that President Smith linked the mission and vision together with both being a part of the strategic plan. He linked them together because he does not separate who the College is (vision) from what the College does (mission). It appears that he viewed them as being and extension of each other.

[It] was when I first started as president, we had a strategic plan which outlined a vision for the college but it wasn't fully implemented. So one of the strategies to address the mission and purpose and really create greater transparency was to develop processes for the college. We started with a vision which we called Vision 2012. Remember I came in 2006 so

six years later what would we look like in 2012. Ironically it is now 2012. It's great to go back and see did we reach our goals.

President Smith focused on what was occurring at the College with various areas and determined that as a result of not having a fully implemented strategic plan, a fully focused mission and vision was missing. This limitation led to the creation of Vision 2012. In this process of creating the vision, he focused the College on areas of stronger buy-in between administration and faculty through communication, increasing enrollment, direct program support, and showing that the College was mindful of the community through its program offerings. He focused on these areas because he believed that the College had lost progress with the community as a result of not having an implemented mission and vision. He suggested that this was the result of taking the community for granted and not providing the coordinated services it deserved.

We had lost a little bit of that focus because we had taken things for granted at the college. Vision 2012 was pretty simple in its concept in that water is hot at 211 degrees and at 212 degrees water boils, water creates steam and steam creates energy and energy creates change, so it's all centered around one degree of difference. The one degree message to all of our employees to them as an individual is what's the one thing that they can do differently or better to improve our relationship with each other, with faculty, with the community, our relationship with our students, the appearance of our buildings, the way we maintain our classrooms and our facilities, all of the things that we know need to be happening to create a strong culture but sometimes taken for granted and lost in the other duties that we have. So the one degree of difference was critical for us and I emphasized to our staff at that time that if we concentrate on the one degree of difference that we can meet any goal that we set.

The goals set were to increase full time equivalency from 4,000 to 6,000, which was a number they had never before obtained. As they reached this goal President Smith explained how he used this as an example that demonstrated to staff, faculty, and administration that they could accomplish objectives they may not have thought about or

thought were unreachable and to show what they could accomplish together. He also used this as an example to employees that each person that worked at the College was directly responsible for the College's mission and vision. Working together and accepting responsibility was new to the College as this required employees to trust administration which he insisted was the beginning of a different type of culture around the College.

President Smith indicated that Central had a difficult type of culture because of a lack of trust. He believed the past culture cultivated or encouraged competition instead of a team approach:

It probably goes in cycles, so when I first started it was a difficult culture, a lack of trust and I think that was just because of the way the college was structured. It was site based leadership so each campus competed against each other. It was never enough financial resources to go around to make everyone happy. Distrust with administration because it was not transparent how decisions were made and that was a little bit of a challenge. And probably because of the way the state funds colleges enrollment was declining so state revenue was declining so the pressure or the competition for those resources was even heightened more.

He described how the culture has changed over time, a shift he attributed to the vision process with its various objectives and the working together of administration and staff to develop the new vision and mission. The process allowed the College to examine the management style, the completion element, community relationships and views as well as other factors and as a result of that examination, changed.

Once we turned it around through the vision process and started to address enrollment, enrollment started to increase and more resources became available, we put on a real strong effort to create a district-wide vision, got rid of site based management and had district-wide programs and that reduced the amount of competition between campuses and allowed us to be more strategic in our investments. We created business partnerships and we're going to be much more visible and stronger in the way that we support those programs.

Here's an example prior to 2006. We had two automotive programs one in Flower and one in Key City. Because of site-based management, they would compete with each other and we didn't have enough money to do either one of them to the level we should. We closed them both and we opened the Blue Center. The Blue Center was a brand new automotive program, one for the district. We had a partnership with Ink Company so we had great financial support from a local industry. We created a new vision for how that program was going to be operated and we created a whole new generation of young people taking automotive. So we got rid of competition, re-pooled the resources, built a new center state of the art, business partner came and it was a win, win all the way around for everyone. So that effort helped quite a bit.

President Smith acknowledged that the employees' support was a crucial part of creating and implementing the mission and vision. He also stated that for each employee to accept their responsibility within this the new mission and vision became a real challenge:

It was a challenge at first because remember we had four or five years under another presidency where we had mistrust and disconnect with the administration, staff, and faculty. So people were hesitant, ok here's the new person coming in, well new ideas, we've heard this before, the school is way too far out there we will never be able to reach it and of course being brand new to the college and the community what do you know about "Central"?

Central has a history that dates back over one hundred years in the community with many faculty that have been at the institution for over twenty-five years. President Smith believed that as a result of this longevity, faculty and staff had previously experienced change that was not always as positive as one would have hoped. He talked about how obtaining buy-in from faculty and staff would take a significant amount of time and effort:

It took a lot of work, we held eighteen different listening sessions. We tried to communicate the vision, this was in 2006 and we demonstrated it each and every day. We sent a weekly message to students. Every Monday, I sent a note out to all the staff and within that message we give some key indicators of progress, where are we today as compared to a year

ago. We started to really brand that idea. Around the way that I communicated and the meeting we had we started meeting with Vision 2012 updates, a poster series, we created visional packages, web site; as much as we could to create transparency to let people know where we were in our progress towards that vision.

Clearly, President Smith had a lot of concentrated effort focused on this process with the development of the web site and material that was produced. He noted that in order for the Vision to be accomplished externally there had to be a strong internal message that was accepted by the College's employees. In short, he argued that internal acceptance of this new mission and vision was necessary before the external community would be receptive to these changes. To facilitate this external acceptance, President Smith became the responsible point person to the community. In his own words, he accepted the responsibility of becoming the "face of Central":

But at the same time I will share that I accepted the responsibility to be our point person to the community so I'm currently on 55 local, state and national boards. I am very vested in our community, I attend a lot of community events. I do that on purpose because I want people to know that Central cares. Part of my rationale was that when a community has an issue a concern, a question they think of Central as a resource that was strategic.

Even as President Smith agreed to be the point person for Central, he worked extensively with his Cabinet of which Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame were a part. He stated that the changes they made were possible because of the administration, faculty and staff of Central. He firmly believed that the people of Central are at the heart of the institution.

He articulated his belief that among the employees at the College there are some that influence others in positive ways. He talked about instructors who have devoted time to students to assist them in becoming successful, traveled all over the country

making presentations about the College's HVAC program, assists other faculty in becoming innovative in technology use, as well as developed relationships with other colleges around the country with Central's national coalition of certification centers. President Smith was convinced that a significant donation of one million dollars the college received occurred because of the work a particular faculty member did as a result of the College's boot camp that led to a significant amount of national attention.

It is important to note that in the middle of the creation and implementation of this new vision for Central, Act 10 was passed. This led to the subsequent retirement of many at Central. The Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill also called Act 10, impacted collective bargaining, compensation, retirement, health insurance, and sick leave of public sector employees (State of Wisconsin, Wisconsin.gov). President Smith did not believe this governmental change affected the culture of Central but that certain employees decided to retire in order to "leverage their benefits" but he did believe Act 10 affected the culture of education. He explained that the retirements occurred as a result of the changes to state law that Central was required to enact:

Act 10 while it did not affect Central's culture, it really affected the culture of education. So we still maintain a very strong positive culture at Central and we did not see anything as a result of Act 10. We made some changes, had people do contributions to some retirement and health care and that was a part of the state law and we had to do that. What happened was because of those changes there was a population of about eighty employees that made the decision to retire so they could keep their benefits so you saw what would be if you just looked at numbers, a mass exodus. Something must have happened, well nothing really happened at Central, as a result of implementing state policy they decided to leverage their benefits in certain ways.

President Smith noted how the retirement of these individuals provided the College the opportunity to employ new persons thereby providing different employee

expectations. As a result of these different perspectives, President Smith believed there was even more enthusiasm and involvement in the most recent creation of their vision:

We are bringing in eighty new people. New people coming in have a wide open view of what this is all about. They are brand new here; they have not had to go through that reduction of benefits or lack of transparency so they are excited to begin. So now we've got another whole effort moving forward on developing an even more positive culture as a result of the new people coming in.

Our new vision 3.2.1 has committees and I think ninety people have volunteered to serve on committees more than we had on Vision 2012. We are seeing more involvement by our employees, more effort, more ideas, more synergy, greater cooperation that will be our springboard to hopefully continue this improvement.

President Smith admitted that while the culture was affected by the necessary reengineering of student services in the face of the retirements, he also stated that one other particular change made an instrumental shift in culture. After taking office, he moved the college away from a site-based management model to a centralized model. He felt this model caused competition between the campuses of Central:

We were under a site-based management model that they said each campus created their own culture and in many ways competed with each other; so they competed for resources, they competed for faculty, they competed for community involvement and it made it a very---there was tension in the leadership of the college because no one wanted to share because they thought they would have to give something up if they shared ideas and thoughts. So that was one of the first things that I noticed when I came to Central. Everybody had their own little island and they are competing to keep their identity with their island and I actually got caught in that as well because I was responsible for Advanced Technology Centers which while it wasn't campus, it was three different facilities and it was a struggle to engage the campuses in the work that I was doing because they didn't feel it was part of their responsibility to watch over that, it was my responsibility. So for me to be successful, I needed them. When I was fortunate enough to become president, that was the first thing we eliminated, no site-based management. This is Central Technical College District.

President Smith elaborated that in making the change to a district-wide philosophy, he had to contend with the mind-set of individuals who had been at the college for numerous years. They were in a set pattern of site-based management that had generated a lot of mistrust:

Here's the new person [faculty and/or staff] coming in, yeah he is all excited for the first week, the first month, but don't worry, that will all go away. He will lose interest, he won't come to our classroom, and so it took a lot of effort on my part to try to never let anyone down, which means when you make a commitment, you have to follow through. So it was a lot of early mornings, late nights and throughout the day, which extended my own day, personally but that's what it took for this particular organization to build confidence and trust. So now, you know, seven years later, we're to the point where I think people believe that if "President Smith" says we are going to do something, we are going to do it! We want everyone to be involved in making it happen. It's just a matter of building trust, and building trust by spending time with people and making sure that when you say you're going to do something, you follow through and do it.

In addition to making the change from a site-based management model to a district-wide philosophy, he emphasized how his leadership or management style was different from that of the most recent president. He argued that the past president was not a "real people person" as he spent little time on Central's campuses, and had very little involvement in staff development. Again drawing on his experiences at Central before becoming president, President Smith stated that, "it felt like I don't know if he really cares or if he's interested in what I am doing, and sometimes I'm not even sure if I am doing the right thing, going in the right direction." He emphasized how he is a different type of person, one that enjoys being with people, spending time with faculty and students:

I think that spending time with our employees probably made the biggest difference....I meet with every new employee right before they start their job and we visit a little bit about their personal goals and why they chose

Central. Then we talk about our philosophy and our mission and how we want them to be a part of the success of the college. I spend an awful lot of time in the community sharing our story because it is hard to get the story out in an institution this large because people assume that they know what is going on and you have to constantly retell the story and people are always surprised at all the remarkable things that are taking place. Think it's just, you know my leadership style of being more of a people person.

President Smith understands that not all of the changes put in place have been huge successes but they remained with the overall goals set. He informed the college of the progress in weekly messages and has developed a task force to assist in the sharing of information. He remains convinced that an important part of each goal being accomplished was the celebration that it entails. "We're big on celebrating. Every new event or project has recognition that follows it."

Based on the interviews and provided documentation, it appears that President Smith made meaning of Central's culture to a large extent based on the mission and vision of the College. He used the vision and mission to define the purpose of Central and show how these statements were crucial in developing a new philosophy for the College. President Smith also used the knowledge of his position before becoming President to understand the current culture and what needed to be accomplished to change it, thereby creating this new philosophy. Next Provost Jones expressed her thoughts and opinions on how she makes meaning of the College's culture.

*Executive Vice-President and Provost - Ms. Jones*

After a gracious greeting by the administrative assistant of Provost Jones, I was invited in to begin our conversation. Provost Jones is a very pleasant African American female with the second highest position in administration at Central. We began the conversation by discussing how she arrived at her current position. Provost Jones

informed me that except for about fourteen months, she had been working at Central in several positions since 1993:

That's a good story, I came from Michigan and I got my undergrad at the University of Michigan and I was a work study student in the financial aid office and so when I graduated with a Bachelor in psychology and they were knocking down my door for jobs [laughter]. I worked in the financial aid office for three years and they had actually trained me on need analysis. My junior year I was a part of a pilot program where they actually held financial aid office hours as students in the dorm to help students with financial aid in student services. I worked there for eight years and then went to Oakland University for four years and got my master's degree at Oakland in public administration.

I was looking for advancement at that point and I was, I forgot what my title was but I was the manager for the student loan and scholarship programs. At that time, there was an associate degree position that was open and I applied for that job and I did not get it so, at that point, I said maybe that is not the place for me. And that's when I started to look for other positions. So I applied for three director of financial aid positions and got all three of them then I had to decide which one to take. I choose Central because one it was in the Midwest well two were in the Midwest, one was in Indiana, and Dartmouth was the third one. Choose Central because it was in the Midwest and still near family and just really the reception and the feel I got from the interview team and even though I had spent twelve years at four year institutions going to a two year college, it was the only two year college I had applied too. Saw that as a challenge as well and looked at their vision, read what they were about, and that's how I ended up here and has been here ever since.

In May of 2000 I came back to Central as VP of Student Services and then in April of 2003 I was asked to be the Vice President for the Design campus. And then in January 2006 I became the Executive Vice-President and Provost. So if you don't count SCTC [another technical college] and include that at Central it will be twenty years in August of 2013.

Provost Jones expressed that the time spent thus far at Central has gone fast because of her various positions. She noted that her tenure at Central has provided her with the knowledge base to understand the college's faculty and staff. Therefore, when asked to determine from a series of set suggestions what she believed most people at Central would say as to why the institution exists, she answered without hesitation. She

indicated that most would say the institution exists to provide specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes in students and to encourage the potential of all of its employees and students:

I think encouraging the potential of staff and students --that is really, what makes us unique. Different colleges have professional development for staff and things like that, but it's really a part of everything we do. All the big changes made, we always do program stuff, but as a part of Central Journey within the last few years, we've added mandatory customer service. Even when we started International Programs, the mission of the program is for staff and students to understand Central's connection to the global world. Staff is always a part of anything we do as well as students. It talks about the potential of staff and students. And then the specific skills, that's really who are, that's our purpose, it's why we exist.

Provost Jones believed that developing staff was important because it provided staff the opportunity to deliver the same experience to all of Central's community. In fact, according to Provost Jones they coined this philosophy the "Central Experience." Additionally, Provost Jones indicated that the majority of the population would also say the institution exists to prepare students for successful careers and responsible citizenship and to contribute to the inner-institutional and global learning network because:

The other one, to "contribute to the inner-institutional and global learning network." We really do feel that we are part of the network, even in our district, we have Central, which is a two-year institution, we have [West] University, which is private four-year, we have UW-East, which is a public four-year, and we really do think we are part of those opportunities for those in our district. We contribute to that. The provost from East just left, we used to get together on a quarterly basis as provosts just to discuss what's happening in our institutions and how we can collaborate. We started working on a project; our strength of course, is remediation, where they don't really get into that. So how can we partner where we can take care of the remediation part of what you do so, we think we are a part of the culture of the community, the educational part.

It is evident that an important part of any institution's culture is the mission. As with President Smith, Provost Jones tied the mission and vision of Central together.

When discussing the mission and the articulation of it throughout the campus, Provost Jones suggested that staff was aware of and had an understanding of the mission:

I think people really understand how the mission ties to the system mission as well as for students to get the skills they need for employment. If you want to break it down into one sentence that's kind of overall the broad mission and I think everyone buys into that. We do the PACE survey every other year which is a nationally normed survey. It is a climate survey for staff and every year the questions related to their job being purposeful as to how it relates to the mission we always get really high scores. So I think people really know what their mission is and how their jobs tie to the mission.

Provost Jones argued that this understanding of the mission continues into the community to a certain extent. However, she also argued that the understanding of the mission could be “sometimes good and sometimes bad.” She reasoned that it could be bad because they (the community) do not see the college as an academic college “as much as we really are.” She thought that at times the community sees them as the “old vocational school.” Thus, she further argued for the importance of keeping the mission before the community which constantly assists them in viewing Central as their first choice. This, she noted, was sometimes challenging.

Provost Jones suggested that a result of the mission followed throughout the College by the College's employees is that others not a part of the Central community can see that it is applied. She insisted that applying the mission is at the heart of the institution because it speaks directly to serving their students:

I think that everyone feels that because I have data that shows they believe that, our mission. We always get real high rating for climate surveys from staff about what our mission is and that we apply our mission. In fact, outsiders, we had a group from China that visited the first week of November and one of the first things they said when we had a debriefing with the President and me was that they could tell from being here just one week, that everything we do is part of our mission and that mission drives everything we do. It's even clear to people from the outside when you

come in and see what we do and talk to faculty and staff that we really do believe that that's what we're here for, to prepare students.

Provost Jones was clear in articulating her belief that the heart of the institution is the current president where "that has not always been the case," she stated. She sees him as having transformed the college and the community's feelings about the college:

He is the face of Central and everybody wants him to be the face of Central. He has done so much with business and industry partners where we are getting even the financial respect of companies giving us money; we just got a \$1,000,000 from a company because of his work with them. Bringing in money, the recognition, the national recognition, international recognition we have a real big international education program that he allowed me to start back in 2006 when he first became president. It's all about growth and improvement.

He started what we call the Central Experience which is not only about the way we treat people, a college wide customer service initiative that is mandatory, twelve hour training that everybody has to go through in the college and staff are a part of it. We have a one-year orientation program called the Central journey that every staff person has to go through just a whole field of....open door policy where you can ask him anything. A goal that he had when he first started was that if you sent him an email he would answer it even if it's I have to get back to you next week or that Jean knows that better and he has kept that for six years. And people are always impressed that he really did write me back. He does a weekly message to everyone in the college and highlights whatever is happening at the college.

We have just completed our first five-year strategic plan under his direction where it really was a strategic plan that everyone knew about. Everybody contributed too but you know traditionally in the past and I have been in higher ed a long time you create a strategic plan and it sits on the shelf somewhere and then at the end of it you pull it out and say ok what did we do. This was a living breathing document and now we have started our next one and agreed that everybody's a part of it. He's a participatory type of leader where he has in his mind, he always have ideas but he always like to hear what everybody else has to say.

When you go to anyone at the college, they can tell you who the president is and even the students. He meets with students a lot and even goes into the classrooms. He will just walk into a classroom and say who he is. He is just phenomenon and that's why I say I don't want to go anywhere else.

He's just genuine even outside of Central. He's a nice guy and he really has the school at heart.

According to Provost Jones, President Smith has been able to accomplish much of this because of his personality. She argued that he was instrumental in the changes at Central. She believed that he was able to lead these changes because of his personality, tenacity, and sincerity. Provost Jones noted that, President Smith took the opportunity to see what the college needed, "what the environment was like, the president's relationship to the staff and how to make that better." She attributed the special knowledge he had because of being at the college before becoming president in combination with his personality. She expressed that the two "together I think has made it so powerful." This will be discussed more in Chapter five.

In addition to President Smith, she noted a particular faculty member as influencing the culture of Central. She saw him as being open and working with other faculty and students. She noted that he has created a community within his department. He influences others, Provost Jones stated, because he is part of different faculty groups on campus, the chair of the engineering department and a part of the academic strategic planning committee, which is responsible for deciding the direction of Central. According to Provost Jones, he promoted his programs by going to high schools and speaking to students and retained the student by having events like an annual chicken dinner. She views this particular instructor as vested in the College and doing things "that other faculty would never think of doing something like that." The behavior of this particular instructor, she argued, speaks directly to the leadership and innovation aspects of the mission of Central.

Another influential person Provost Jones discussed was the dean of enrollment services. One reason she sees this dean as influential is her lead in reengineering their student services area:

Coming up with the mission even though a lot of that the assistant provost did a lot of that she was instrumental in doing a lot of that and I see her as a rising star at the college. In fact, when she came in she was the executive director of enrollment services and we have promoted her to dean already. So I can see her as being one of the real leaders of the college.

I asked Provost Jones to describe the culture of Central and she had much to say.

She began by describing the culture as being open with a family atmosphere:

The culture is open and I would say a family atmosphere. I say that because I've heard many people say that they are really surprised that we have a kind of family attitude where it is friendly and everybody knows each other. Even though we are at different campuses, we have our annual employee-learning day, where we close down the college and get together. So we do those types of things. There is a lot of communication with each other and even if you did not know the face when people introduce themselves and oh yea I've had an email with you or I worked with you on some project had physical meetings, or something like that. And so I think that is how we support each other and really know what each group is doing. And I think that is kind of top down.

As noted earlier, another significant event that recently occurred was the governmental change commonly referred to as Act 10. The passage of Act 10 caused union members, argued Provost Jones, to be fearful and created an environment of mistrust because power was removed from the unions as much of their negotiating rights were removed. This can be seen when Provost Jones discussed that the passing of Act 10 necessitated the college to move from union contracts as the primary agreement that included negotiated working rules to the use of a College handbook that would provide that function:

When it was first announced and we started to work on our handbook because our contract ended June 30, 2012. So we are just in our first full semester because our summer semester starts in May. So this is really our first full semester under the handbook. When those changes were first made there was a lot of, how do I say this, people were afraid of the unknown because they did not know what was going to happen. Because we had three bargaining units, pretty strong bargaining units that had really binding contracts that kind of kept us from doing a lot of things I would like to do, so without that people were fearful. They were fearful for their jobs, changes that administration would make but I don't know if they thought about it as individuals or if there was any propaganda going on about what was going to happen you know the union but found out a lot of that was going on after the fact. So there was a lot of fear and a lot of mistrust and asking what was going to happen. But I think the district did a good job in bringing in people to input on what we wanted to see happen after Act 10 was implemented and we had a handbook.

It appears that because of Act 10, the reengineering of student services and a recent president, Central was ripe for the perfect storm, which was a major culture shift, and according to Provost Jones, that occurred. Provost Jones was able to determine the differences that occurred in Central's culture because she had worked at the College throughout all of these changes.

The cultural shift, according to Provost Jones, played a significant role in how Central currently operates in relationship to the past. She argued that, before President Smith, changes that occurred were in a vacuum and not communicated throughout the college. It seemed that each campus vice-president was responsible for their campus and made decisions as such. In fact, according to Provost Jones, they were in competition with one another. She also noted how the previous president had no concern regarding what occurred on a daily basis, preferring to leave the administrators alone to perform their jobs. To emphasize this point, Provost Jones commented that while at another campus for several years as the top administrator, the past president had visited her office only once:

In the prior administration there was a bit of competition within the college. Also, since the president gave that much power to his staff to actually run everything, people didn't know who he was. They knew we had a president named James Michael but he never went around the campuses, he never visited classes. In fact, my office in Racine was there in that position three years and he went to my office once in three years. Depending on your personality, frankly it worked for me because I didn't have to worry about-- as long as the walls weren't crashing and the students' weren't complaining, it really wasn't his concern in what was really happening on a day to day basis. That is kind of how the previous culture, and even when he would speak, we would still have one day of all staff in-services or we would have monthly meetings with administration he would do it by ITV and so he would be at the Kenosha Campus, where his office was, administration did not come together, we stayed at our campus and talked, and it wasn't a dialogue or sharing, he just got up once a month for thirty minutes or an hour would talk about whatever he wanted to talk about. That was pretty much his communication.

According to Provost Jones, President Smith's leadership style was different in that he utilized a President's cabinet to make leadership plans, where both Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame participated. He involved the faculty and staff in the College planning process by not only closing the College but also paying the faculty and staff to participate in professional development days. He used some of these days and specifically discussed the creation of the College's strategic plan, which included the mission and vision. Provost Jones argues that President Smith leadership style is completely opposite of that of Central's former president, Dr. James Vick. This she insists greatly changed the culture of Central. Therefore, Provost Jones makes meaning of Central's culture through the College's mission, vision, and by comparing the current culture to the past culture which she based on her longevity and experience at Central. In the next section, Vice-President Frame shares his thoughts about how he makes meaning of Central's culture also based on his tenure at the College.

*Assistant Provost/Vice-President Institutional Research and Student Success – Vice-President Frame*

Vice-President Frame, a white male, smiled and invited me into his office. After settling comfortably in Vice-President Frame's office, he shared with me that he began his career at Central Technical College as a communications instructor on the small Midtown campus over twenty-three years ago. In fact, he noted that he was the only communications instructor on that campus. As the campus was extremely small, he recounted that he had the opportunity to serve on various college committees. Dr Frame indicated that serving on these committees allowed him the opportunity to see things occurring at the entire college, things outside of the classroom. He credits sitting on these committees as his impetuous for becoming a divisional chair. In turn, he credited the position of divisional chair as providing him with the opportunity to see administration up close, which in turn, "caused me to go into administration."

At Central, Vice-President Frame participated in and led various projects including accreditation committees. This allowed him, again, to see the "really big picture of what was going on in the college." Success in these projects, he argued, allowed his gradual rise in administrative roles within the College. Dr. Frame became Vice-President of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success at Central in 2000 and has continued in senior administrative positions for the last twelve years.

As with both President Smith and Provost Jones, Vice-President Frame shared his belief on how members of the college community think about the existence of Central. When provided with the same possible responses as President Smith and Provost Jones,

Vice-President Frame agreed completely with Provost Jones. He detailed that most in the institution believed Central exists to provide specific knowledge, skills and attitudes in students, and to encourage the potential of all its employees and students. He talked about this in the following way:

I think in our areas there is a strong element in our culture of the fact that we are a technical college—we are not a community college, we are not a university, and so there is a very specific set of skills we are trying to get people ready for jobs. I think that it's not bad narrowness, but there is a focus, there is a sense of focus on what we do. A specific set of skills and attitudes. And there is still a reluctance to talk about we are here to build knowledge, even though we talk about general studies make you a more rounded person. There is value in that but people see that as secondary; we have to give them the skills to get the job and get the career and really have to make sure we are focusing on that.

I think there is a very strong message in all the technical colleges because we have open admission that we are here for everybody. I think it also comes from us talking about the strengths that everyone has. There is potential in everybody and it is our job to bring it out. I think because we get every kind of student you can get, there is something we can give them to give a sense of maximizing people's potential is part of what we do. For employees, we've had a great focus on employee development that I think people have a sense that we are trying to build them up. That's fairly recent; we've had Professional Development but I guess it was not as overt as it is now. I think employees know that we are here for their potential too.

Additionally, Vice-President Frame argued that he believed that most people at Central think the college exists to prepare students for successful careers and responsible citizenship and to contribute to the inter-institutional and global learning network. In particular, he noted a greater recent emphasis placed on transfer as a method to increase the inter-institutional network for Central's students:

I think the greater emphasis of transfer; there is a greater sense of needing to connect with other institutions because of our recent international program has become more of a sense of there are other institutions to connect to. We are more networks we are part of, National Coalition of Certification Centers. We hear a lot about other institutions at the college.

President Smith is always talking to staff about partnerships. We have tourist here from other institutions here all the time to see what is going on and so I think people are more aware we are connected to something bigger and something global. I think they accept that because business is so global that they can tie it back to that technical identity.

When discussing the mission of Central and its articulation throughout the campuses and community, Vice-President Frame argued that both the mission is visible and that the community has an understanding of what it is. Specifically, he noted that it is well articulated and there is buy-in from both the internal community and the external community:

I think we've done a really good job in recent years making the mission clear to everybody. I think we have seen a big change with our current president. President Smith has been here since 2006 in his president role I think 2007 no 2006 in his president role and he has been very good about getting the mission in front of everybody and talking about it in the community. I think that has made a great difference.

I think the general idea of preparing people for careers and recognizing that the changing nature of students and communities and being responsive to that, I think people believe in that. I was involved in pretty much all of the rewrites of our mission over the years and the last time we actually rewrote the statement was 2004 and there are a few things a few phrases in it that I might tweak if we ever decided to go back to it but I think that concept is really strong at the college.

Vice-President Frame indicated that the mission was important to those at Central and in recent years, special attention was given to the creation of the mission. He insisted this was seen when President Smith spent many months with staff in development of the mission.

Moving from the discussion on the mission, I asked Vice-President Frame to share his opinion on what he believed was the heart Central. He articulated that the relationship of the faculty and the students is at the center of the College:

I think it has to be the relationship between the faculty and the students. I mean that's why we are here. We are an educational institution despite all the other things we do and if the faculty wasn't making a strong connection to our students I don't think we would be the same institution we are.

Building on the belief that Vice-President Frame has that the faculty and student relationship is important, I then asked him about the influential groups or persons at the College that has the ability to influence the culture. He began by noting his belief that those in a formal leadership position are most instrumental in affecting the culture and/or the direction of the college:

Well, I do think you have to recognize the formal leadership. I think people like President Smith and Provost Jones make a big difference in the direction we are going. If you asked me before last year, I probably would have said that the faculty bargaining unit had a lot of influence over our direction but I think that has changed dramatically since Act 10. I think they are looking for a role now. I don't think they are in the leadership position they were in. I think that also there are some of our faculty that are leaders. I wouldn't say all the faculty but there are some faculty who are really eager to promote a new idea and they know who in the college to connect to get things done.

Interestingly, just as with President Smith and Provost Jones, Vice-President Frame indicated the same instructor as being one of the most influential persons on campus. He attributed it to his personality and his ability to connect with those in administration that can assist him in getting things accomplished on the campus. He also argues he is influential with other faculty because he has their respect:

There's a gentleman in our manufacturing division for example, he's one and he has built a really impressive learning community in his program and a lot of it is because and he has developed articulation agreements and he has done all kind of things to position his program to be successful. And a lot of it is because of his personality, the way other teachers respect what he does and also because he knows who in administration to connect with to get his ideas across.

In addition to President Smith, Provost Jones and this particular instructional chair, Vice-President Frame elaborated on the type of individuals that were influential at Central:

There are others. These are the people who are at the front of the line when we try and think of what is the next classroom to be remodeled and what is the next technology to try. I think those are the kind of people who are the innovators who are willing to do new things. I think they have a lot of influence here because the college likes to innovate. We are always looking for the next thing. And so I think people who are open to that kind of rise into a leadership position. Sometimes even more than the long timers, I don't find that there are as many, as you know on some colleges it's the people that have been there forever that determines what everybody's opinion is going to be. I don't know if that's so true here, I don't know if we necessarily look to who has been here the longest as much as to the people who are doing interesting things. I think that is true, I think it's true in a lot of our faculty.

Vice-President Frame classified the unions at one point, especially the faculty union at Central, as one of the influential groups. He felt that in the past the college focused through the "labor management lens." Vice-President Frame stressed that at a particular point in Central's history it was very much about the union, what they were doing, what they were saying, what union where they in, it was all about the union. He believed that the union had a significant amount of influence on what the employees of Central thought and that the leadership style of the former president encouraged employees to drift towards their union:

I mean I saw that the most doing [past president] regime, the presidency before President Smith. I think that was, a lot of it was because there was a lot of concern about he's over here doing some things and we really don't understand what they are and he's not really focused on what going on over here. People were looking for something to gravitate too and it was their bargaining unit. [The former president] was very antagonistic with the unions so it really affected the culture so I think people instead of being more...I'm just going to go back and focus on my campus and hunker down there. It was more like I'm going to get behind my

bargaining unit because they are going to take care of me and put all of my thoughts into that. But I think now we are shifting away from that.

As indicated, the former administration played a role in employees seeking out their unions because of the attention, respect, and protection they received. Vice-President Frame indicated that the employees needed to feel like there were those in the leadership positions that paid attention to what they were doing, was excited about it, and not just have their own agenda. When, according to Vice-President Frame, employees did not receive this attention; they would focus more intently on their unions and their union rights:

I guess I would say that when people feel like they are being paid attention too and I say that at the college level. If people feel like there is someone in a leadership role that is excited about what they are doing and talking about what they are doing, interested in what they are doing, then they kind of come out of their shell and be a little more relaxed, a little more cooperative. We kind of forget about some of those old grievances although there are some people who never do. But people are willing to step out and try some new things. And then when we swing back into something that is going on at the college we have an administration that's got its own agenda, that's not really listening or paying attention to the staff. Then I think they tend to hunker down. Then I think they tend to withdraw a little more and they have to find some other group to be part of. And I think sometimes if you see them sometimes it was the campus or sometimes it was the union whatever it was but people tried to find some other structure for themselves. In a way I'm real mindful of that now as we are trying to influence the culture post Act 10.

Vice-President Frame attributed all this to the former culture of Central. In fact, he stated that for him "culture it's about some of the unwritten rules about how we do things, you know how do people interact and I think we have also over the years had varying levels of tension or cooperation between administration and staff."

Focusing on Vice-President Frame comments, it became apparent that he felt a culture shift had occurred because of Act 10. He believed there were several catalysts

that were factors in the culture shift occurring. He described a change in president as well as Act 10 as having ushered in the shift. He began by sharing some history of the College:

When I started in 89 one of the things that would really characterize Central's culture is we were very much three campuses, we were very parochial, there was no email, but we saw each other. There really wasn't that instant connection with the campuses, you could pick up a phone but each campus really had its own identity and people really identified, we identified much stronger with the Midway campus than we did with Central Technical College. And so we were really focused on, we were a small campus, we were like a little family, we have to make the most of what we have because our resources were a little more limited, our population a little more different out here in this rural area and so we were kind of a little can do campus. And I think we were even though we were teaching the same thing and we did get together with the other campuses I think we sort of went our own way and I think the other campuses did at that time.

We really sort of developed their own character independently. That's still here I think particularly about some of the very long time staff. I still sense that well Design Campus is going to be different or that Midtown Campus is not going to do what everybody else is. So I think that there is still some... We kind of swung the pendulum like all colleges between lets centralize everything and lets site base everything. And we've gone back and forth to the extremes and I think that being a multi-campus college is one thing that has kind of effected our culture over the years. I think having more technology has affected us, I think it has played a big part. We have become more one college. I really do think that we have become one college more focused on all trying to have more of the same priorities.

Although the College has experienced site based management, where each site was concerned only about their particular site, and experienced periods of low trust, he noted that now, "I think [the college] has advanced to where we are now where I think trust is a lot stronger at the college." Vice-President Frame attributed these changes to the current leadership style that involved the employees which increased their trust, supported innovation, and kept them focused on the College's mission:

We have to remember that being supportive of the employees and keeping the focus on the employees and their importance and what they do is what's going to keep them engaged and keep them focusing on the mission and on innovation and things like that. Because we could very easily, and I can see this happening, I don't see this happening here at this point on a large scale, but some of the employees post Act 10 were feeling very unprotected like they did not know what we were going to do now that we have a lot more influence. Now that we can set the rules and things like that. I think that was a very pivotal moment culturally about what was going to happen to the college and we could very easily, and still could I suppose, drive them back into their little foxholes.

Vice-President Frame reasoned that President Smith was at the heart of the culture shift the College has experienced over recent years. He speaks very highly of Central's current President and insisted that he has made great strides in changing the somewhat distrustful culture of Central into a trustful collaboration:

I think it changed when President Smith got here. The President before President Smith got here was very different. He had a lot of his own ideas. He had a very strong economic development agenda, wasn't real academically focused and I think people had a hard time connecting with him. And he had a lot of energy but I don't think not necessarily energy for the academic programs it was more energy surrounding the other projects he wanted the college to get into.

But President Smith has a lot of energy for the academic areas. He feels really strongly about our teaching mission and programs so I think that when he came on board and started to really focus his attention on what was going on in the classroom and his desire to improve facilities and programming and connections to the community that benefited us academically, I think that sort of re-energized the faculty. I mean I think your president always has a huge impact on what's going on in the culture and how people are feeling. And I think that President Smith is a big driver because he just has so much energy and enthusiasm and really shows a great appreciation for what is going on academically at the college. And since that's what most people's jobs are tied to. The bulk of the people at the college are supporting learning in some way, I think that makes people feel a lot more included in what's going on.

Vice-President Frame made meaning of Central's culture through the former culture, past management styles, and current management styles. He believed that

President Smith has an excellent handle on what the college needed to make it move forward and remain vibrant; therefore, he believes that President Smith is a definitive part of how he makes meaning of the current culture.

Overall, President Smith, Provost Jones, and Vice-President Frame made meaning of Central's culture through their reasons of why they believe Central exist, the mission and vision, the heart of the institution, the influential individuals, and the culture shift that occurred. Each told a story that included one or more of these elements to determine and understand the culture. Together they painted a similar picture of the institution. Next the administrative team expands on how they make meaning of the culture to the importance they attach to the culture.

Research Question 2: What importance do the members of the administrative team attach to their institutional culture?

In order to explore this second research question with the administrative team, I discussed with each of them the importance they attached to the culture, the elements of that culture, their perception of staff's feelings and attitudes, and what they believe most employees value. The administrative team used these variables to support their view that culture is important which they were all in agreement. The following details the administrative team's responses to questions regarding the importance of Central's culture. As in the previous section, I will begin with President Smith.

#### *The President – President Smith*

President Smith, comfortably seated on the couch in his office, began by telling me that the culture is very important:

I think it is very important. In fact, we were just talking about it yesterday with our leadership team. At Central, we created a vision, a vision we called 2012. Our new vision 3.2.1 that we spoke about last time takes us now from 2012 all the way to 2016 to create a more positive working culture and we have carried that over in to our vision 3.2.1 philosophy. Because I truly believe that, the success of any organization and here at Central is evident, that our success is based on the responsiveness of our own staff. That's the culture that we create, it's how they treat their students, how we treat our community, the types of services we provide for our students, the way that we treat each other and all of that creates an environment in which people want to succeed. People want to be a part of an organization that wants to do good work. So the more we can create that positive from culture and experience within an organization, the more it will reflect on our outcomes. Students will be more successful. More students will attend the college. The community will value us more. So, I maintain that the culture is critical to our long term success.

It is clear that President Smith believes that culture is critical to the realization of Central's long-term success and that staff is at the foundation of the culture. He spent time elaborating on what he considered the primary elements that currently form the culture of the College. He argued that the two most important elements are communication and accessibility. Communication, he sees as necessary, for both the faculty and staff of Central to feel informed and involved in the workings of the organization. This appears of particular importance now because of the change that was occurring within the organization. He noted that the faculty and staff wanted to be a part of what was occurring on the various campuses where their involvement in this change is seen as determining the long-term future of the organization. President Smith based this assessment on both his belief and staff feedback:

We do a survey of all our staff on how we believe we are doing. So it's a survey instrument, we do it every year; and so we get feedback on quality of services and type of outreach and for several years it always came back that communication was our weakest area that we had. Now, we have to take that with a grain of salt because it probably shows up that way in most surveys, but we took it seriously, and we dug down a little deeper

and we tried to figure out what we could do to improve our communication.

There is a variety of different methodologies that we use but it's that consistency in communications that I think is one of the most important elements in creating a culture of inclusiveness, so people feel they have a voice and they can participate in the organization.

The second element, accessibility, is also seen as key to maintaining open communication by providing faculty and staff access to administrators. In his view, this affects Central's culture because it contributes to shaping the attitude, opinions, and feelings of the employees:

We just held an employee learning day last week and it was our largest event ever with close to five hundred people participating. We had very positive responses. Like I mentioned, for two years in a row we had the top employer reward for the region so I fully expect our employees to feel like they have at least access to their supervisors and can share their ideas. I always tell them we can't implement everything but we want to hear what you have to say because what we are doing today is not necessarily what we will be doing tomorrow or next week.

One key way in which he makes himself and other administrators available to faculty and staff on a regular basis is to visit classrooms. He also has the team rotate their leadership meetings and the Board of Trustees meetings to the various campuses. By rotating the administrative groups, he is making himself and the administrative team "more available for the faculty and staff that work there."

He stated that it is necessary to "communicate, communicate, communicate" and whenever possible to involve the employees in making decisions. He reasoned that when the employees are involved in helping to make the decisions they will be better able to see why change needs to occur and what Central has control over and what Central does not have control over.

Believing that the administrative team is communicating and making themselves accessible, President Smith continued and elaborated specifically on what staff needs to be aware of culturally in order to be successful at Central. He used his relationship to the new hires at the College to illustrate this:

So when I meet with all new employees, I first backup when I give them a little bit of history so that they appreciate the culture, where we came from; Central is 100 years old, it's the first publicly funded two year technical college in America. It was an investment by community leadership in 1911 to say we want to improve our workforce training opportunities. That's the same investment that people are making today, 100 years later. So we have to keep that in mind, and our responsiveness must be dependent upon the changes in our community.

It became very clear that he is wedded to his belief that new employees as well as current employees have a certain responsibility to the students and the community that directly speaks to the importance of culture. He continuously stressed the importance of sharing with employees their responsibility towards the community. He did this by emphasizing the college's vision:

We talk about our relationship with the community. We also talked then about what their responsibility is. Under Vision 2012, was real easy because the number one and two was the one degree difference, the individual. 3-2-1 is the same way, we concentrate on one. Yes, its three counties, we serve a lot more than the three counties, and it's two centuries old, but it's one mission, and he mission is dependent on each one of us. We have to understand what our value proposition is, why we were hired here, and what we can do to improve on the job responsibilities that we have.

President Smith further noted how important it is for new employees to understand and connect with the culture of Central. Consequently, he detailed his established role in the mandatory orientation required of all new employees where he sees his involvement as sending the message of the importance the college attaches to the program:

So we take everyone through the orientation process called “Central Journey” and they have a book that they use, and it’s about six months’ worth of orientation, and they visit classrooms, and they visit facilities, and they visit the community, they come to a Board meeting, they meet the Board members, they meet with me, and that orientation process gives them the benchmark of what Central is in a larger picture. Even though you might be hired as a registration clerk, you’re going to be taking the students as they come in, that role is absolutely essential to everything else that you’ve learned about. They wouldn’t be taking Surgical Technology if you didn’t help them get registered appropriately; financial aid to help fund that or counseling services to make sure it’s the right career path. All of those pieces fit in a big puzzle and everyone’s success is based on everyone making sure that their piece fits as tightly as it can and we try to build that picture of for our employees.

The Central Journey, the orientation program, discussed by President Smith, Provost Jones, and Vice-President Frame will be detailed in Chapter Five.

President Smith emphasized that there are certain values that the college must share when he described the importance of culture. In particular, when provided with a set of statements from the work of Bergquist and Pawlak and asked to choose the two he determines as the values employees see as important, he noted that the faculty and staff of the College primarily value systematic institutional research, student-oriented curriculum planning, and fair bargaining between management and employees. He talked at length about the ways in which these values tie directly to the culture. He argued that because the majority of the staff of Central are “geared towards the success of their students,” he believed these were the cultural values they shared. Consequently, he reasoned, they seek to implement curriculum that meet their student’s needs. To do this, President Smith argued, they receive support and guidance from their advisory committees:

All of our programs have industry advisory committees to help guide that so they rely on that structure of curriculum, making sure that is aligned with the needs of the community. And then they’re really the bridge between what the community is asking for and what students receive so I think that student focus is probably very critical.

President Smith attached tremendous importance to the culture of the College. He attached this importance because he sees that understanding the culture, working within it to change it was necessary for the college to have continued success. He also determined that employees are key players to the success and that is why he takes the time to be an active participant of the orientation program. President Smith stated simply, believed the culture determines the success of the college. In the next section, Provost Jones shares her views regarding the importance of the culture.

*Executive Vice-President and Provost – Provost Jones*

After greeting each other warmly, Provost Jones and I began to discuss the importance she attached to knowing the culture at Central State Technical College. On a scale of one to ten, Provost Jones indicated she rated the importance of knowing the culture as an eight. According to Provost Jones, the culture is what makes the College “who we are.” She explained that Central’s culture is unique and positive. When referring to the culture as hardworking, Provost Jones is describing the staff of Central. She sees the people as being an intricate part of the culture.

Provost Jones stated, “You can see the people that really thrive here or the people that don’t make it. Those are really the two things; the culture as a whole is probably one of the things that they either get it, or they don’t.” To drive this point home, Provost Jones shared the following story with me:

For example, one dean that was released [terminated] about a year ago February, was all about her, she did not get the culture. This is a very administrative, ah, we don’t have a lot of administration but the administration we do have are working administration we are not the thirty-five view, we have the thirty-five foot view of the college and our department and what needs to happen but we also participate and we know

down and dirty what goes on and needs to happen but this person had the opposite attitude and she would say out loud I don't need to understand how load was calculated because I have my assistants that do that or how the program is scheduled because the faculty chairs do that.

So she could not tell you how those kind of things are happening. So those kind of things are cultural things that really make or break somebody at this college. Usually what happens is that anybody can tell you that people don't leave the college they retire from the college you either get the culture or you don't. Those who don't usually leave right away or don't stay for other reasons or are asked to leave cause I would say that's the major thing that will make or break you here good or bad.

Provost Jones believes that there are specific elements that she attributed to the importance of the culture. She believes that Central has a spirit of innovation that she attributes to the culture that people get right away:

Either it comes from you when you start learning your position through your first year; you'll notice some things have already changed and have gotten better because somebody is not afraid to say what does not work, or do this a little bit this way I will work and people listen. Administration listens and we make changes based on what our staff tells us. Innovation, doing things new; continuous improvement is a part of that as well. When we think of innovation, we are always in a mode of doing better.

Provost Jones suggested that there are certain cultural elements, or ground rules, that staff needs to be aware of to be successful at Central. She suggested that in particular staff needed to have a complete understanding of the inner workings of the college, their specific departments, their specific role, and the role of their supervisor. She reasoned that this provided the employees with a knowledge base of information to work from when assisting students. She stated it as follows:

They need to understand their role and the role of their supervisor and how their department fits into the big picture, the mission, and the direction of the college. They have to understand how Central is perceived in the community, and the internal culture: how we operate, like we celebrate things. When something happens, you need to share that with your supervisor, that kind of stuff, and get to know your staff, getting to know your co-workers is really important as well. I think that will probably be

the things that they really need to know. It's a hard-working culture. In most places, you may think that your supervisor doesn't really know what you do or participate in what you do, and it's not the case here. They know what you do, and a lot of times, have come from that position to where they are now. We do have a culture of "promote within," to grow our own.

She used the term "Central Experience" to explain "our overall college philosophy to tie into how it relates to students." In particular, she believes it lays out the customer service expectations that relate to the culture of the college:

The Central Experience is what our culture is: it's our facilities; it's our customer service. The Central Experience is the overall package of when you come to Central what is expected. You're expected to give great customer service, everyone is expected to have clean, up to date modern facilities, your expected to have excellence in instruction. All these things are part of the Central Experience. It's a virtual term for the culture, I think.

Provost Jones further elaborated that the Central Experience really is a philosophy that they encourage throughout the college:

The Central Experience is just a philosophy, it's not a program. For example, if we are going to renovate, say the welding lab, we want this to be a Central Experience so we look at how we remodeled another lab. People get the same feel whether they are in Downtown Campus or a regional campus. That's how it relates facility-wise. The culture-wise, or customer service-wise, everyone has to go through customer service training, so they can deliver the same Central Experience no matter where they are or what department they are in.

It is important here to understand that the Central Experience and the Central Journey are two different events. The Experience deals with the philosophy of Central while the Journey is the orientation program of Central where both of these provide an avenue for the Central community to be made aware of the culture and become engrossed in the culture of the institution. These two and their differences will be discussed in more detail in Chapter five.

We moved from discussing the experience of the employees and the expectations for them to what Provost Jones believed the employees of the college value when provided with the same statements to choose from as with President Smith from the work of Bergquist and Pawlak. She believed the college's employees value fair bargaining between management and employees. She believed this, for example, because of the recent Act 10 regulation that for a while (now on hold due to a legal suit) eliminated a great deal of the bargaining power of unions. She stated that:

I think even though everyone believes we bargain fairly when we had to sit down and negotiate, but even in this new paradigm where we don't have the formal contracts like we used to have, I truly believe that everyone believes everything was done fairly and openly and transparently.

Provost Jones also noted that the development of and dissimulation of knowledge in their specific discipline is of particular value to employees:

They understand coming in that it's part of our process, it's part of our verification, that they are experts in their department and that is really valued and everyone understands, even if you're not in the academic side, people understand the value of that and it's going to make our student succeed, and grow our college if our students succeed. That's how you get more students and keep going. Even if it's a non-academic department, I mean, we always ask with questions in our interviews about any area to the content knowledge as well as cultural fit, but the content knowledge is always first in what we do here.

In answer to this second question, Provost Jones rated the knowledge of the culture as extremely important. Having knowledge of the culture, she believed, can make a person successful or not successful at the College. While discussing the importance of the culture she made it very plain that this is knowledge all employees, including administration, should possess. Vice-President Frame provided his opinion on the importance of the culture in the next section.

*Assistant Provost/Vice-President Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success – Vice-President Frame*

Vice-President Frame was very thoughtful regarding the importance of knowing the college's culture. He believed that culture was a pervasive phenomenon. He talked about its importance in the following way:

It's the one thing that controls what we do; it is hard to change and how pervasive it is. As administrators, we do a lot with policies, we have a lot of ideas, and we can change a lot of procedural things, but the culture is just always there; you have to work within that, it's sort of the environment. I think it's really important to take into consideration what the culture is and you can work on changing culture. I mean, we try to do that, but it's the slowest thing to change because it's so ingrained in people, and in processes and things like that.

Vice-President Frame suggested that the culture of Central is important because it is always present. When attempting to make changes, he believed one must be aware of the role culture has because that role is particularly significant:

It's a huge part of when you're trying to make changes-- when you're trying to improve service, or even just maintain what we are doing-- you have to be so mindful of the culture: what's likely to work, what's likely to meet resistance, and that sort of thing.

When you consider the culture, Vice-President Frame argued, there are certain elements that are of central importance. One of the main elements he singled out was the way people relate to each other. Relationships, he explained, are the key to what occurs at the college. He discussed the fact that at times there was an "us versus them" tradition. He reasoned that this could keep employees from "communicating with administration and sharing ideas. That's going to have a huge impact on how we are able to work together and how we are able to collaborate."

Earlier, Vice-President Frame discussed how he believed culture was a deep-seated belief in a person or in this case an institution. One deep-seated belief of Vice-President Frame was his belief that the Central community, as well as the higher education community, believed faculty has a higher status than other employees. Because of this belief or this cultural assumption, treatment is different. Therefore, a second key element Vice-President Frame viewed as important is the relationship staff has towards faculty and faculty has towards staff. Vice-President Frame did not elaborate on the different treatment but he said the following:

Or if there is an unspoken understanding that...the fact that we always say faculty and staff in higher education-the faculty are staff, but we can't just say "staff," we have to say "faculty" so they have a little extra status so there is that cultural assumption. I don't think that's just at Central, I think it's all of higher education that faculty are different and special and somehow higher on the pecking order than everyone else. That impacts the way we treat each other, the way staff treat faculty, etc. I think those types of relationship assumptions are part of the culture, are really important and you have to be mindful of them and I don't know if we'll ever change that. That's something that comes to mind.

Vice-President Frame continued to focus on relationships of people by sharing his belief of what new staff needed to be aware of culturally in order to be successful at Central. Specifically, he believed staff needed to be able to connect with other people and connect with the college: "we are trying to exercise in our culture that it's all about relationships and collaboration." In elaborating on this theme, Vice-President Frame discussed the college's orientation program as a way to provide this information to employees. Again, this program will be discussed further in Chapter five.

Based on Bergquist and Pawlak statements, Vice-President Frame provided his opinion on what he believed the staff of Central valued. He believed that most

employees at the institution valued fair bargaining between management and employees.

Vice-President Frame explained:

Even though it has change so much, I think fair bargaining is still-- the bargaining piece, I think the fair treatment. The fair treatment and interaction between former authorities that is still very much a value. People want to be treated fairly, that's important.

He stated this from the new framework that Central is operating under in the wake of Act 10. Before Act 10, faculty unions and clerical unions were able to negotiate with administration to determine the benefits, work rules, and specifics of their working environment. These types of negotiations were made illegal with Act 10, and unions lost much of their power. Because union members were so entrenched with their union rights, bargaining, and grievances to obtain what they considered fair treatment, the members believed they were now going to be unfairly treated. They had a certain amount of mistrust for administration. This new framework, as titled by Vice-President Frame, was all about the bargaining or lack thereof. Moving forward union members and former union members would be working with administration within this new framework based on a College-wide handbook and not a union contract. They would need to take each other at face value and trust would need to grow and develop which is something that, according to Vice-President Frame, was lacking.

Another value Vice-President Frame believed employees' value is the identification and appreciation of its distinct traditions and sounding principles. He listed this as being of value because Central has just celebrated a hundred years of education:

I think maybe the traditions and principles since we just came through the centennial we spent a lot of time talking about our history and where we've come from, that has set some importance to people. I think people would tell you they value the history of the college and where we came from.

In summary, Vice-President Frame attaches a significant amount of importance to knowing the culture. In particular, he views the relationship of the employees to each other, administration, and community as having a great impact on the culture. Dr. Frame also noted how history has a role in the development of culture because it is important to many at the College. History, for example, comes into play when union members remember how it was then and how it is now.

In responding to this question, the administrative team expressed individually that they considered culture important. The reasons they used to support their beliefs were centered around the employees and their knowledge of the institution. Each also stressed that the culture was so important that measures were developed and put in place to share it with all employees. These measures speak directly to how they believe they influenced and managed the culture they had worked to develop. The next section outlines the thoughts and opinions of the administrative team and how they view these measures and other measures in managing and influencing the culture.

Research Question 3: In what ways do the members of the administrative team perceive that they both manage and influence the institutions culture?

To explore this research question, of how the administrative team members believe they manage and influence the culture, several concepts were discussed. The informants discussed how the culture of the college affects the decisions they make, how they see their role in managing the culture, and the strategies they use to manage and influence the culture. Once again, I begin with President Smith in his office on Central's main campus.

*The President – President Smith*

President Smith explained that he is purposeful in managing and influencing the culture of Central through various initiatives. He noted the Central Experience as one such initiative. As noted previously, the Central Experience is the customer service initiative developed to influence how people think about Central. President Smith explained how this experience, designed to provide what the College wants the community to think about them, was developed. President Smith admitted they were attempting to change the mindset of the Central community away from the old culture:

I think there was a mindset of status quo under the old administration that being whether we succeeded or not didn't make a big difference in the community; they were going to see us the same whether we were the same old Central or whether we were a new and improved Central. I was frustrated with that because I knew there was a better approach to it. Because we are a publicly funded institution, we are community based, for me it was real important to have the community have that level of respect and value for the organization. So, we had to change our own expectations of how people viewed us and that led in to our whole customer service initiative, our orientation program for our faculty and staff and it just helped us make a small bridge back to the community.

Implementing the Central Experience, President Smith argued, has assisted in changing the attitudes of both the faculty and staff. He talked about this as making a commitment to serving their students, but also a commitment to the community in which they educate their students. As explained, the Central Experience was the purposeful plan developed and designed based on information received from the community:

By listening to the community, just as we listen to our own employees, we learned very quickly what they thought Central was, and it was probably in reality, probably was the same for most people so we created a whole new effort called "The Central Experience." What do we want them to think it's like? What's our image of our facilities, our buildings, and programs, and how do we market and what messages do we send out in newspaper articles and who's writing those pieces and what are we saying

about our community. So we took all of those elements about the perception of the college and turned into a positive by saying let's just change the perception and invite people in to experience it. The Central Experience became very important for us as far as people that maybe have attended Central 10 years ago, are coming back for an open house and all of sudden going "wow, this isn't my Central anymore. It is different."

President Smith emphasized that they were very purposeful in the message they wanted the employees and community to hear. He noted how his administrative team talked at length, and how they were systematic in their planning for change:

We did our own self-reflection because you have to remember under the old leadership the only person that left was the president, so I had the same group of vice presidents and they experienced the same thing I did. This isn't as comfortable as I'd like it to be because we don't share, we're competing, it can be very frustrating when the community doesn't value you, and so we were all in the same mind set. We got together and said here's the deal, now it's our turn. What specific areas are stressful for you in a leadership role? Is it the community? Is it the way we treat our faculty? Is it the type of response we are getting from our constituency business partners and how can we change that? So let's design a system.

We did a self-analysis. We went out and took pictures of other colleges, came back and did a comparison just in photography, and said this is what people drive by and see, this is [UWZ] here's Central. Here's [Eastside], here's Central. Here's [Blue Technical], here's Central. Which would you rather go to? Where would you send your children? So we did a lot of those visualizations activities. We gave examples, we had administrators go through as students and try to register. How frustrating was it for you? Would you take your son or daughter through that process? We sent administrators to other colleges. And said go to their student orientation day and sit and listen to the message that they tell parents. What did you learn from that?

We came back, we shared all of those experiences, and we said we need to be more like [Private University] because they really have campus security as a focus for their students and we think that is important for our students as well. We learned a whole lot from [UWZ's] imaging and marketing. Where they create, presence is the same market group we are in, maybe a little different but same basic demographic so what can we learn from all of that. We never took the time to do that before because everyone was busy just competing with each other for the same thing, I think, recognition. I think our strategy worked where we were very purposeful on our Central Experience, purposeful on our strategic plan, purposeful on

the goals that we said about creating culture and communications and all of those, and then finding ways to measure that.

After planning for change, the team purposefully set out to make that change known. This can be seen as President Smith eagerly pointed out that Central has twenty-nine points of contact within the community, which has served to change the perception of the community as well as Central's staff. These twenty-nine points of contact was viewed as essential to the strategy to change the culture of Central because they were used to systematically share the Central Experience:

So we took all of those elements about the perception of the college and turned into a positive by saying let's just change the perception and invite people in to experience it. The Central Experience became very important for us as far as people that maybe have attended Central 10 years ago, are coming back for an open house and all of sudden going "wow, this isn't my Central anymore. It is different."

In addition to using, the Central Experience, President Smith explained how it became important for those at the college to determine how to market the college through messages in newspaper articles. Their major intent was to portray the College positively.

President Smith accentuated how important it is for staff to understand that the culture of Central is different from that of four-year universities or colleges. He based this difference on three factors: on the diversity of the student population, on the fact that the College does not have dorms, and on the fact that the average age of a Central student is thirty-one thus bringing to Central a range of life experience:

That diverse population base really changes the types of activities that take place within a technical college campus. We don't have a sport's team that rallies everyone together on Saturday afternoons to watch a basketball game. We have different ways to reach out to our students and I think that culture is a little bit different. The fact that we are a community based college and that students come in, they take a class, they go home, you know, they make dinner, take their children to soccer practice, and then they might take a class a semester later. So there is not like you're here

for 4 years or 5 years or 6 years and then you're done and you leave. You're here for the rest of your career most likely because you are going to be here, take some classes, go to work, come back, take some classes; twenty percent of our students have a bachelor degree so it becomes a part of the fabric of the community.

Another key difference that President Smith noted was the occupationally based programs the college offers:

They're integrated with local fire departments, they are integrated with local hospitals, and they are intergraded with local banks. Our students are interns, co-ops, volunteer fire fighters; EMT's and we re-train that professional as well. In Cosmetology, you have to be re-licensed every 5 years, which means you're coming back to your community college. Fire Science, every year you have to take 5 hours of retraining, so you're back at the campus. We are part of the community in the infrastructure of training of qualified work force.

Police officers are another good example; you can go to Marquette and get the degree in Police Science, Parkside to get a degree in Police Science or Central and get a degree in Police Science. Once you graduate, in order to be licensed as a police officer, you have to go to Central to go through the Law Enforcement Academy. They all have the same degree, but in order to be licensed, you have to go through the Academy, which is offered here. We touch all of those students and that's the same with Nursing. You can go to Mt. Mary to get a 4-year degree in Nursing, UWM and get a 4-year degree in Nursing, or Central and get a two-degree in Nursing. You all sit for the same exam, the state Registered Nursing Exam. So, no matter where you go, it's the same license that you have.

He emphasized several times how it is important that the staff of Central recognize the difference in the culture of these institutions. Thus, he reasoned that the staff hired at Central is different from the staff at a four-year university. Most staff at Central, of course, has occupational degrees like the ones their students are obtaining, they work in the field: "so they're already nurses, and they're teaching Nursing courses in the evening. They're welders, and they come here to teach welding courses. They are pilots, so they can teach in the aviation course." President Smith noted how these differences created a unique technical college culture that the entire Central community

needed to be aware. Providing an avenue that would expose employees to the culture of the institution was seen as a way to manage the culture. In short, what they bring to the table is what the students want.

Keeping abreast of what is occurring at the college was also viewed as important to managing the culture. President Smith stated that he does this in various ways, including maintaining a commitment to visibility on the campuses. To do this, President Smith initiated an open door policy for staff which he used to become a student in a classroom:

I visit a lot of classrooms and that's an important aspect of my work and I spend quite a bit of time meeting with students during their time. In the student lounges, student center and libraries just to get a feel for what's going on in the world of our students. We have president's blog, so I do a video blog each month, about programs and initiatives and we do that in conjunction with students and faculty, we have a weekly message, which is my way of communicating, I encourage feedback and employees can send notes back.

Social media was yet another tool used by President Smith to share the mission and vision of Central thereby sharing the culture. He has a Facebook page, sends tweets, and uses Linked-In. He stated that he writes all of his own blogging as well as responding to all of his own email. In addition to this wide use of social media for the entire college, President Smith sponsors employee-learning days. He tied these types of events back to creating and managing a positive culture:

All the events that we do are developed in partnership with our faculty and staff, so there is a committee, so people has input to what we do during those days; they have a chance to help select workshops. All workshops and seminars that are provided, I shouldn't say all, but 99% of workshops are provided by our own faculty and staff, so it's a peer to peer relationship, which is always a good thing. A lot of folks have outside interests and talents that they are able to share that maybe we wouldn't see because they are in a classroom environment for the most part. That is an important piece. I think the fact that we take time to invest in our

employees...it's a paid day, so it's not like they are losing any income from it and we are investing in them, whether it's through wellness, whether it's through Professional Development to improve their own opportunities in the classroom or at the college.

This systematic effort made to change the culture of Central President Smith argued has been hugely beneficial. As the result of these changes, President Smith excitedly informed me of the support and awards the college has obtained:

I think that with all the great support people we've done a pretty good job of that. We are recognized three years in a row now as top employer for south east Wisconsin by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. We've just received a notice for being one of the top ten work force development colleges in the country so we are competing for the Bellwether Award again this year.

In summation, he stated with pride that the college has done some unique things: "we were able to pull together and I think we have changed our image in the eyes of a lot of people." Changing the image of the college and managing and influencing culture was exactly the goal of President Smith through the various initiatives. Overall, President Smith sees himself and his administrative team as purposefully both managing and influencing the culture.

*Provost and Executive Vice-President – Provost Jones*

Provost Jones considers President Smith as the significant actor in managing and influencing the current culture. She believes that in recent years the culture has shifted quite dramatically. It has moved, she noted, from a culture where increasing full time equivalents was the basis of moving forward and supporting the president's agenda, to one where the focus has changed to be about the college's image in the community, student success, and student completion. She said, "All those types of things are now a part of our culture moving forward." In particular, she emphasized that moving forward

is now about everybody and not just a few, and she attributed a large part of this cultural shift to the current president. Provost Jones talked about how the president includes everyone in the picture, like with the creation of the strategic plan. Everyone, she explained, now understands his or her current role throughout the college and how that role has changed.

Employees get a significant amount of their knowledge of the college through their orientation program, called the Central Journey:

Every new employee goes through it. It's a year-long program and it's broken into three chunks. There are so many activities you have to do in the first thirty days, in the first four months, and within a year there are activities you have to do. Everything from meeting with the president to going to a board meeting, to going to a department outside yours and having a discussion with them, meeting the campus dean, there are lots and lots of activities they have to do, strength workshops, they have to visit all the campuses, all the facilities so they are able to talk about not just their own area, but the whole college.

She described the Journey as a means to provide employees hands-on experience of the way the college works. She sees the program as designed to assist the employee in getting to know both co-workers and the inner workings of the College. She emphasized that this is important because the program develops an understanding and appreciation of the culture, "so you get the feel of the culture as you go along."

In addition to this required orientation program, Provost Jones spoke at length about various opportunities the college offers employees to learn about the culture. She mentioned how the college has employee days, professional development learning opportunities, and district-wide committees all working to help employees learn the college's culture.

Another key way that she associated with managing and influencing the culture was her emphasis on the growing of staff into leadership positions. To do this, for

example, the College invests money in programs like tuition reimbursement. This investment shows she argued that the College is serious about their staff. By promoting staff from within, administration is placing in positions those that have been indoctrinated into the culture they are supporting. They believed in this method of advancement that they included it in the strategic plan with the necessary funding attached:

We need to start developing those people. To do that you need to put some money behind that. In fact, one of our Strategic Plan goals was to measure how much percentage of our budget goes toward professional development and the percentage of people who actually take advantage of it, like tuition reimbursement and all those type of things. It became really important and that really ties into also growing your own, because that's how you do it. You have to develop them and move them up. The next step in that process is we want to develop our own internal leadership program.

This practice of investing in their own people, according to Provost Jones, is crucial to building trust between administration and staff. The administration believed in this so much that according to Provost Jones that they have created opportunities for staff to move up:

But I think they have actually seen we really put our money where our mouth is in that we are actually doing it. A good example, I brought in a Nursing chair and is now an Associate Dean. I had an IT faculty member who became Associate Dean, who became a dean and is now a campus dean. To actually see things happen. I had one that helped me that is now also a campus dean. So we actually do, once we start developing people, there are opportunities to move forward. In fact, when we re-engineered Student Services, we made it so we created lateral positions for people. When we used to have entry level people front line, it was part time, and the other positions were so far away (for counselor's you need a master's degree). So there weren't any ways to really build on the skills that they had in the same department. So when we re-engineered Student Services, we made sure that was available, looked at the grades of jobs, and put responsibilities based on job so people have opportunities to move.

Administration had the opportunity to increase trust with staff, with the passage of Act 10. Trust needed to be increased if the team was going to be able to manage and

influence the culture. She detailed how with this legislation, that virtually eliminated contracts, provided the opportunity through the necessary development of an employee handbook. To increase trust, administration chose to work closely with employees to create this staff handbook. Provost Jones indicated that although administration managed this process, they developed a team of volunteers who worked together to produce the finished product:

When those changes were first made there was a lot of, how do I say this, people were afraid of the unknown because they did not know what was going to happen. Because we had three bargaining units, pretty strong bargaining units that had really binding contracts that kind of kept us from doing a lot of things I would like to do, so without that people were fearful. They were fearful for their jobs, changes that administration would make but I don't know if they thought about it as individuals or if there was any propaganda going on about what was going to happen you know the union but found out a lot of that was going on after the fact. So there was a lot of fear and a lot of mistrust and asking what was going to happen. But I think the district [the area Central is responsible] did a good job in bringing in people to input on what we wanted to see happen after Act 10 was implemented and we had a handbook.

The opportunity was present, of course, for administration to change things completely and put into place the policies they wanted that were denied in past contracts. However, according to Provost Jones the administration made a very thoughtful decision not to make changes in a vacuum. Consequently, they enlisted the assistance of all types of employees to be a part of the committees that would develop this employee handbook:

When we started the handbook process we asked for volunteers and we also sat down and thought about who do we really need on these teams, make sure we get the people we need and then add on volunteers who are interested in helping for whatever reason. We set up a lot of committees to work on a lot of different topics. I was chair of the overall handbook committee.

We had a compensation and benefit committee; we had an instructional assignment committee looking at how faculty workload would be designed that was chaired by the assistant provost where eight-five percent

of that group was faculty. My team we had a cross-functional group, I had everything from a computer tech, to faculty, I had deans, had counselors, had secretaries, every facet of the college was on the handbook team. We were charged with designing the handbook, how it would look, the flow, what needed to be included, we were responsible for things like will we have a dress code, came up with a code of ethics, and came up with attendance, everything besides compensation and benefit, calculating workload that kind of stuff.

Although the administration was completely involved in the process, Provost Jones indicated that it was open to a wide range of employees at the college and they were encouraged to participate. She noted how they developed a communication committee, which was responsible for keeping the Central community updated on the progress of the committee. This committee also actively solicited community input. Provost Jones emphasized that the union chair was invited to be a part of this handbook committee and that other union leaders were on various other committees related to the handbook.

The handbook committee, according to Provost Jones, was a great success. She recounted that not only did Central receive a completed handbook but also that it was the catalyst for several additional initiatives. One of these key initiatives was supervisor training:

Another thing that came out of it we also developed supervisor training. Every other week we spend four hours together everybody's that's a supervisor with different topics of the handbook. We do other supervisor training every other week. So one meeting we will have handbook topics. Two weeks ago I did one on the role of the supervisor as a resource. And since people can't run to the union anymore, they can but there's not a lot they can do, so they are going to come to you and you need to be able to provide all the answers. So I went through what you need to know as a supervisor. You ought to be able to answer things about the history of the college. You ought to be able to answer things about how do I advance at the college. You ought to know the organizational structure. All things you ought to know as a supervisor so they are prepared and it doesn't look like we need this union cause these people don't know what to say cause

that's the first thing they are going to say. Training initiatives are coming out of this now.

Although not stated as directly as President Smith, Provost Jones indicated that the administration manages and influences the culture through the Central Experience, the Central Journey, and the investment the college makes in their employees. These are not just isolated initiatives but she sees them as at the heart of the college's culture. In the next section, Vice-President Frame provided his thoughts on how the administration manages and influences the culture.

*Assistant Provost/Vice-President – Vice-President Frame*

Vice-President Frame made it clear that he definitely believed that both the administrators and president influence the culture at Central. When he talked about the current culture and compared it to the past culture, he noted a definite difference. This comparison leads him to point out the important role administrators' have in developing the college's culture:

Well, I have to say; under the old model when I was the Vice President at [a campus] I did not have the president's attention. He was interested in the advanced technology centers that we were building over here and the business relationships he had over here. I don't think he ever connected with [this County], so as the Vice President out there, trying to start initiatives and trying to get things started to move that campus forward...I guess expectations were pretty low because I knew it wasn't part of his agenda to advance things in [this County]. Obviously, there are taxpayers out there, we have to do some lip service, we have to do something, you know. But it was very difficult knowing that it wasn't really part of his agenda. I'd say my expectations were quite low as far as what was going to happen. I figured we were going to maintain. If we wanted to do something new, we'd have to shift resources from something else. We weren't really growing.

I would also say under the old culture, I think administration had the same feeling like I need to protect myself. As far as expectations, there was very much a sense that you had to be cautious in what you did. I know I wasn't the only person that felt that way; I know I felt that way. You had to be careful because you might've crossed a line that you didn't know was there. But I think the college was moving forward. We weren't getting a ton of new students because the economy was poor - that was more of a recent development. Resources and enrollment were a bit of a

struggle. We knew we were expected to do more with less since resources were very limited, that also caused us to have lower expectations of what was possible.

Vice-President Frame continued to state that, he saw both the former president and the current president contributing to the college's culture. He clearly notes, however, that employees are more involved, have greater expectations, and more trust under the current president than the former president:

Now, I think, the two presidents are labels for these periods. I think there were other things going on throughout the college. Right now, I am a lot more optimistic as far as expectations in moving the college forward. There's a lot more sense of possibility because even though enrollment is flattening out, and we don't have the boom years we've been having, we have more resources coming into the college from business partners than we've ever had. And we are seeing change: we are seeing labs upgraded, we are seeing facilities changes, we are seeing improvement in the way things are done so I think when people are seeing change and are hopeful about change.

A lot of the change going on in the prior culture was maybe change that was outside-- it wasn't change that was mainstream in the college. It was more these are the side projects we are getting more attention. There was change, but not necessarily change people understood; change that people could connect to what they did. It didn't really, a person in the classroom, a person in Student Services, or a person in the Business Office would not say that change impacted me. I think now people are seeing more changes to our core business, to our instructional environment, the technology that's available for teaching things like that. I think it causes people to be more optimistic. I expect that we will be able to continue to grow.

Earlier I noted that Vice-President Frame believes that President Smith has played a significant role in influencing the current culture. To Vice-President Frame the president is very open to innovation, and to all the employees of the college. He characterized the president as a person who embraces all and their ideas, which in turn allows employees the freedom to speak out:

One of the things you can see very much from [the president] is he's really open to innovation. When someone brings him a new idea, he tries to find a way to make it happen if he thinks it's a good idea. People notice that. They are willing to speak out more and say, "I have an idea!" even if they

are not the dean. “I have an idea for this program, or I think this lab could be better, or maybe we should have a relationship with this business,” and people are willing to say more. I think the non-administrative leaders do too. I mean, there are thought leaders in all of our departments, there are all over the place; it’s *that* person that everyone listens to. Those people have a big impact on culture too.

He stated, “One of the things we should be doing as administrators, if we want to influence the culture, is know who those people are and know what their agendas are and work with that.” He talked about how the president does this very well.

Although Vice-President Frame emphasized the important role both the president and administrators have on developing the culture, he also noted the equally important role that employees have had in creating the culture. He detailed, however, that they look to leadership to understand the culture and the boundaries:

Not exclusively, but I think people look to the leadership to kind of figure out what the culture is and to figure out if they can step outside of the assumptions. I think people are willing to say this has been the norm, but maybe we can do a little differently, but let’s just see what the leadership is saying, and what the likely consequences of that will be. A lot of people want to do innovative things and they don’t want to the administration to tell them no.

Yet another way that the administrators manage and influence the culture, according to Vice-President Frame, is through the college’s “extensive orientation program.” It is thoroughly this program, he detailed, that they are “trying to exercise in our culture that it’s all about relationships and collaboration.” He talked at length about this program and the perceived benefits:

For example, one of the things we ask for people to do in the first thirty days is to look in their immediate area and figure out what everybody does, what is everybody’s job, and how does it relate to my job and there’s a chart they have to fill out. They meet with their supervisor, and have an Expectations meeting and document what the supervisor said the expectations were.

Then, when they get into the next phase of the journey, they have to do things like meet with the president and talk about his vision regarding technical education, which is kind of amazing. I would have never asked [the former president] to do that, because he wouldn't. But [current president] meets with every new employee and talks to them about the vision, which is tremendous. Everybody gets to meet with [provost] because she does a workshop on Strengths, and they have to go and have to tour their campus, meet with a faculty member and learn about at least one area the campus has.

A lot of it are activities that force them to talk to someone. When they get into their last leg of their journey, which is four months to one year, they have to go to a board meeting, they have to meet the foundation director, and they meet with me to talk about accreditation.

Within the first year, they have to physically go to all the facilities in the three counties and have to get out even if they are not going to work anywhere but in [campus] they have to get out to [other campus] sometime in that first year just to see what is there. They have to go to another campus and meet with a faculty member who's not on their campus and learn about their programs.

We really, in the first year, push them outside of their immediate job. They all have said how great it was that we made them do that. It seems like a lot of work, and I probably would have never done that if you hadn't made me, but now I have a really good sense of what the whole college is about. It's been a great program. It reflects what we consider important in the culture.

The strengths too: we have every new employee take the Strength Finder and identify their top five strengths, [provost] talks to them about their strengths. We try to emphasize the positive aspects and do what your good at, know what you're good and building teams around that. I'd say that's real reflective of what we are doing with the new employees.

Although the college provides the various initiatives and support to make staff aware of the changed culture, Vice-President Frame suggested there are some employees that still cling to the older culture. He believes this will change as new employees indoctrinated in the current culture increase:

There are still people that like to the old bottle, that's part of our institutional culture, although its changing with all the new employees, is that there is value in the traditions that go back 100 years, it's hanging on

to the way we've done things. People get comfortable. We all do that because we know it. There is still some of that but I feel like the emphasis on strengths, collaboration and teamwork builds the good service we have been building for the last six years has made it more possible to the things we are doing in student services right now.

As a result of these several key changes, like the orientation program and other similar initiatives, Vice-President Frame recounted how now there is a greater “sense of optimism and energy.” He believed that faculty embraces new initiatives, like service learning, and are excited. He notes that most has occurred because “it fits with the culture of collaboration and improvement.”

Overall, Vice-President Frame believed administration both managed and influenced the culture of Central. He stated that they managed it with various initiatives like the Central Journey. He also stressed that the culture of the college has changed to one that emphasizes strengths, collaboration, and teamwork which was strongly supported by the administration especially President Smith.

The administrative team shared that they manage and influence the culture through the use of the Central Experience and the Central Journey. They believed this because these are initiatives they insisted were created to do that after it was determined that a change needed to occur. The administrative team, especially President Smith was very vocal about their purposeful managing and influencing of the culture of Central in this manner.

### Summary

This chapter shared the views of President Smith, Provost Jones, and Vice-President Frame in response to the research questions:

Research Question 1: To what degree do the members of the administrative team make meaning of their institutional culture?

Research Question 2: What importance do the members of the administrative team attach to their institutional culture?

Research Question 3: In what ways do the members of the administrative team perceive that they both manage and influence their institutional culture?

Each informant provided a rich dialogue and an insightful view of his or her college regarding the culture of Central State Technical College. They expressed their views on the college's mission, vision, the role they play as well as the staff's role. They have now told their story; Chapter five compared the informants' stories for similar and different themes then analyzes the themes and documentation in relationship to the literature review.

## Chapter Five

### Assessment, Findings and Recommendations

Culture exists in all types of academic institutions and becomes an important variable in understanding how a particular institution functions. Therefore it becomes necessary for the administrative leadership team members to understand this variable in order to influence the culture of their institution which in turn could maximize the effectiveness. This research project focused on technical college culture to determine if a particular administrative team was aware of their institution's culture.

In conducting this research project, observation, interrogating documents, and interviews were the initial methods used to determine if the administrative team was aware of their institution's culture. It was determined that observation did not provide substantial data in this regard. To a lesser degree, documents were viewed and interrogated in relationship to the subject areas identified. Specifically, the documentation of The Central Journey and mission was identified and interrogated. As a result of this, the analysis is focused primarily on the interview data received.

It is important to note at the outset that the presentation of these findings is not generalizable to the culture of all technical colleges. These findings specifically represent this administrative team at this particular technical college at this particular time. However, I do want to suggest the transferability of these findings, where possible. Understanding how culture works in one context can help illuminate the power of culture in other contexts.

The interviews of President Smith, Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame combine to tell the story of culture at one technical college. Each individual brings a

perspective, based on his or her experiences and history at the college. When comparing the informants' stories, a chart was developed that allowed the responses to be studied collectively to determine the similarities, differences, and themes that emerged. Subject areas were identified as a result of this examination. The subject areas included in this research were topics in which two of the informants or all of the informants commented on in detail while telling their story. Themes emerged from review of those subject areas. For example, when comparing research question one, each of the informants discussed the mission and the importance of the mission being articulated to the entire college community. This became a subject area identified by all members of the administrative team. From this subject area the particular theme emerged was that the mission was one way the administrative team made meaning of their institution's culture.

This chapter discussed the informants' positional context, various subject areas with their emerging themes against the backdrop of the research questions, findings and recommendations for further study. The discussion begins with the informants and their context in relationship to their experiences and longevity at Central, and moves to comparing and analyzing the administrative team's views against the backdrop of the research questions.

### The Informants' Context

Each of the informants told their story of the college's culture as seen through their tenure at the college, their various positions, their experiences, and staff interactions. As was evident in the previous chapter, the length of time at the college and in their various positions shaped their view of Central's culture.

Although, President Smith has been at the college less time than Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame, their perceptions are similar in many ways. Because of the positions, specifically the position of Chief Operating Officer provided the opportunity for President Smith to be in a position that allowed him the opportunity to learn Central's culture without benefit of having been at the college for a number of years. Whereas, the tenure and various positions of Provost Jones and Dr. Frame allowed them to experience the many changes that occurred throughout the college and provided them with the opportunities to learn the culture. The following chart is a visual representation of each informant's position framework.

Table VIII

*Informants' Position Framework*

	<b>President Smith</b>	<b>Provost Jones</b>	<b>Vice-President Frame</b>
<b>Time at the college</b>	9 years	25 years	23 years
<b>Former college positions</b>	Director, Technology Center	Director, Financial Aid	Communication Instructor
	Chief Operating Officer	Student Services Vice-President	Divisional Chair
		Campus Vice-President	Campus Vice-President
			Institutional Effectiveness Vice-President
			Institutional Effectiveness and Student Services Vice-President
<b>Current Position</b>	President	Executive Vice-President and Provost	Assistant Provost, Vice-President Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success

It is important to note that the positions held by both Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame has been located at the various campuses of Central as well as their main campus. This is important because the campuses have their own culture identity based on their respective locations, programs, and staff. Spending time on these campuses provided them with the opportunity to develop a well-rounded picture of Central's culture that they have been able to use in their current college-wide positions. While President Smith was provided the opportunity to see the inner workings of Central as chief operating officer, he did not have the opportunity to experience being located on other campuses of Central. His lack of a varied long-term exposure can be both a positive and negative. It has worked out to be a positive in this instance, as it provided him with the ability to question the status quo. Therefore, each informant provides their perceptions of Central's culture based on his or her experience in his or her past and current positions at the College. As stated earlier, it is important to note that each informant's experience informed their answers. I now turn to each of the three research questions that framed this study to analyze the similarities and differences each see in Central's culture.

Research Question 1: How do members of the administrative team make meaning of their institutional culture?

While investigating this question five major areas emerged from the informants' stories: their belief in why the institution exists, the articulation of the mission and vision throughout the campus, the heart of the institution, the influential groups at the institution, and the institution's culture shift. From these areas, three themes emerged: an active purposeful creation of the college's mission and vision, the belief that there were influential persons and groups on campus, and that a cultural shift occurred. These

themes relate directly to how the administrative team makes meaning of their culture. The mission and vision serve as a roadmap to the purpose of the college, various people and groups can influence the mission and vision, and the team must first know what the culture is to make the determination that it has shifted. This relates directly to the suggestion of Tierney that culture cannot be investigated without looking at the mission of the institution (2008).

The major subject areas identified and the themes that emerged focusing on what is both similar and different in each informant's story is discussed first. This allowed for a determination to be made regarding if the administrative team truly have a significant understanding of Central's culture. As suggested by Tierney (2008), "an administrator's correct interpretation of the organization's culture can provide critical insight about which of many possible avenues to choose." Therefore, understanding of the culture becomes critical.

### *Existence of the Institution*

An understanding of why the institution exists is necessary for these key administrators to have because it provides a foundational basis for the development of the culture. Therefore, when provided with specific reasons from which to decide as to the existence of Central, the administrative team agreed that it was to prepare students for successful careers and responsible citizenship. Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame agreed, for example, that the institution exists to encourage the potential of all its employees and students, and to contribute to inner-institutional and global learning network. President Smith agreed but also noted how the institution exists to generate, interpret and disseminate knowledge, and to create meaning and personal identification

through campus and institutional traditions. These reasons linked to the particular cultures that Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) developed.

Using Bergquist and Pawlak's (2008) culture classifications, the administrative team's responses classified Central's culture as having components of a managerial, advocacy, and developmental culture. According to Bergquist and Pawlak (2008), a managerial culture has specific goals and purposes that evolve into having the ability to define and measure the institution's goals and objectives clearly. This culture has at the core the ability to infuse specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes into its students and has as one of its specific outcomes to assist those students to become successful and responsible citizens. The advocacy culture looks to distribution of resources and benefits of the college through equity and egalitarian. This culture has included in it unions and fair bargaining. The developmental culture, the last culture of Bergquist and Pawlak's (2008) culture the administrative team is in complete agreement, has at its core the creation of various programs and activities for all members of the college community. This culture values research and curriculum planning.

The administrative team agreed that Central's culture is a combination of the managerial, advocacy and developmental culture, but the team arrived at this combination with differing reasons. President Smith based his classification on his belief of the prominence of the workforce skill set that affected the students. Provost Jones based her classification on the encouragement and preparation provided to their students and staff. Vice-President Frame based his on the fact that Central provided the skills to students to obtain jobs and create careers. Their beliefs can be seen clearly in the following:

President Smith: I'd say [to provide specific knowledge, skills and attitudes in students] because that is the one that's closest aligned with our mission and that's what differentiates us from maybe the university system. Yes, I think it's that workforce skill set....pick [this one] just because of the unique time that we are in, and there is a huge transition under Act 10 and again...The majority of our employees are faculty; faculty are geared towards the success of their students and all of our programs have industry advisory committees to help guide that so they rely on that structure of curriculum, making sure that is aligned with the needs of the community.

Provost Jones: It's even clear to people from the outside when you come in and see what we do and talk to faculty and staff that we really do believe that that's what we're here for, to prepare students...I think when you think about bargaining, our contracts went away June 30, 2012, I think even though everyone believes we bargain fairly when we don't have the formal contracts like we used to have, I truly believe that everyone believes everything was done fairly and openly and relatively transparent...I think encouraging the potential of staff and students—that is really what makes us unique.

Vice-President Frame: We have to give them the skills to get the job and get the career and really have to make sure we are focusing on that...Even though it has changed so much, I think the fair bargaining is still the bargaining piece, I think the fair treatment. The fair treatment and interaction between former authorities, that's still very much a value. People want to be treated fairly, that's important...I think we do focus on the individual and their potential. I think it also comes from us talking about the strengths that everyone has. There is potential in everybody and it is our job to bring it out.

The administrative team has at its core students and providing them the necessary skills and abilities needed to obtain employment as seen in the previous comments. The administrators' stories identified a Central that is a combination of cultures or as Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) argue "a mixture" of academic cultures. It is important to understand this mixture because it provides the opportunity for an institution to correct, change, grow, and appreciate their cultural dynamics (Bergquist and Pawlak, 2008). Specifically, this shows that the administrative team has similar beliefs about Central's

culture that is necessary for them to work together to correct, change, and grow the institution.

Understanding that the administrative team has the same view of the institution culturally, the discussion turned to what the team believed the important culture elements were. One such element was the mission and vision, a consistent theme throughout the interviews, which is explored next.

#### *Awareness of the mission and vision*

Each member of the administrative team viewed the mission as being important. This is in line with the work of Tierney (2008), who argued that it is important to understand how the college defines its mission, how it is articulated to the college's community, in what way, if it is used as the basis for making decisions, and how much agreement there is surrounding the mission. As illustrated earlier, after taking office, President Smith immediately addressed defining the mission and vision of the college. He explained the mission and vision by stating it is centered around "one degree of difference:"

With that one degree of difference being the one thing that they can do differently or better to improve our relationship with each other, with faculty, with the community, our relationship with our students, the appearance of our buildings, the way we maintain our classrooms and our facilities, all of the things that we know need to be happening to create a strong culture but sometimes taken for granted and lost in the other duties that we have.

President Smith detailed various methods and ways used to communicate the vision and mission at Central. Clearly, President Smith, Provost Jones, and Vice-President Frame all believe that Central's internal and external community is aware of the mission and vision of the college:

President Smith: So one of the strategies to address the mission and purpose and really create greater transparency was to develop processes for the college. We started with a vision which we called Vision 2012...I accepted the responsibility to be our point person to the community so I'm currently on 55 local, state and national boards. I am very vested in our community...As a result of that and I think probably an off shoot has been a tremendous growth in our business support...It's much easier the second time around to vet our vision because people have been through it once before so now they get it.

Provost Jones: People are aware of the mission. I think people really understand how the mission ties to the system mission...We do the PACE survey every other year...It is a climate survey for staff and every year the questions related to their job being purposeful as how it relates to the mission we always get really high scores...So I think people really know what their mission is and how their jobs tie to the mission.

Assistant Provost Frame: I think we've done a really good job in recent years making the mission clear to everybody. [President Smith]...in his president role and he has been very good about getting the mission in front of everybody and talking about it in the community. I think that has made a great difference.

Both President Smith and Assistant Provost Frame noted how their successes extended and how multiple interactions with the faculty, staff, and community assisted in the awareness of the mission and vision. Provost Jones also noted the importance of her interactions with Central's varied communities but also noted the importance of the PACE survey. The Personal Assessment of the College Environment, PACE, is an instrument Central uses to promote both open and constructive communication, and to determine the environment of the college. This survey, given periodically, provided the basis on which the administration can document how the college community has changed over time. It also served to generate data that they used to support needed change. The next section focuses on the members of the college community that take the PACE survey: these are the individuals that the informants believed were the heart of the institution.

*Heart of the Institution*

Lee (2004) suggested that the institution's community contributes to shaping the culture and it is incumbent upon the leaders of the institution to work on shaping the culture to maximize the effectiveness of the institution. Thus, knowing what is going on in the community becomes crucial. Keeping this in mind, each member of the administrative team discussed keeping their hands on the pulse of the college:

President Smith: Well I try to maintain visibility on the campuses so I actually have an initiative kind of an open door policy that any instructor can schedule time with me and I become a student in their classroom. I visit a lot of classrooms and that's an important aspect of my work and I spend quite a bit of time meeting with students during their time. In the student lounges, student center and libraries just to get a feel for what's going on in the world of our students. We have president's blog, so I do a video blog each month, about programs and initiatives and we do that in conjunction with students and faculty, we have a weekly message, which is my way of communicating, I encourage feedback and employees can send notes back. The weekend message can be as simple as things I did over the weekend, initiatives that we are doing at the college, recognition for something that happened. So it creates a dialog opportunity for our staff. I write all of my own articles for the student newspapers. We have an electronic community newsletter that I help write for, I write articles for the local papers, so I really try and find as many different avenues for communication as we can. Social media is really big so we are on all of those, so we have a Facebook page, twitter page, and we are on linked in and I try and write all of my own blogging for all of that.

Provost Jones: Also like I said we do the PACE survey of staff every other year where we get a feel from staff as far as how things are going we also do the Noel Levitz survey of students the opposite year and so we get data all the time.

Vice-President Frame: I think a lot of it for me is communicating with staff. I do because you can get kind of locked up in your office, if you are not mindful of that. I have a lot of interaction with the President's cabinet we meet every other week so I'm aware of what they are doing, uh and I happen too because one of my divisions is institutional effectiveness, I have a lot of cross functional committees so my people are not just my people but people from all over so I get to talk to them. I think then, I'm a communication's person. I just like to talk to people; I like to hear what

they have to say. I'm not really introverted. I'm pretty much out there. You have to be, I do think you have to be. There's a lot of walking around.

Although each member of the administrative team agreed that keeping their hands on the pulse of the college was important; they had different methods of accomplishing this task. President Smith and Vice-President Frame used direct communication as a means of keeping informed. President Smith directly communicated with faculty, staff, students, and the community through a variety of means. Vice-President Frame used direct communication primarily with faculty, staff, and individuals on campus. Unlike both President Smith and Vice-President Frame, Provost Jones used data gathered through various methods to accomplish this task. The combination of the methods employed by the administrative team provides them with a compressive view of Central. It is evident then, that knowing what is occurring on the college allows the administrative team to understand what individuals and groups are in a position to influence the culture.

#### *Influential Individuals and Groups*

McCaffery (2010) argued that those in management positions needed to understand that culture is a process that includes every person on campus. If as McCaffery stated this is true, this becomes a major task for the administrative team. Depending on the size of the institution this may not be possible but what is possible is for the administrative team to know those on campus, which can be influential to those they do not know. This administrative team appeared to have this knowledge. Each determined that a particular instructor in the college's manufacturing division was very influential because of his work with a learning community, developed articulation agreements, his personality, and the respect he has from other faculty and staff. In

addition to this particular faculty, they also agreed that other faculty and staff respect him. They agreed that there are others on campus, faculty and staff, who were also influential.

President Smith: Well [Roy] comes to mind. [Roy] is the program chair for the engineering department. [Roy] has always been a tremendously positive strong teacher in the classroom He's helped students to succeed. He's developed our articulation program between high schools, Central, [Midwest School], and Marquette. He's built a really seamless path for students, very giving instructor; he will do anything that it takes to make them successfully rise to the top.

Provost Jones: As far as academics, our engineering department is one of the strongest departments we have. It is because of the faculty in particular because of the faculty chair. He is someone. He almost has the spirit of [our President]. Now that I'm sitting here thinking about it he is always open to new ideas. He is always, always promoting his program. He has no problem going to a high school if they ask him. And they have one of the best retention rates of any of our departments. They do things like have an annual chicken dinner that's just for engineering students stuff like that, that other faculty would never think of doing something like that. The idea that he creates a community within all the engineering department and he has become the chair of all of the engineering department. I think engineering would be the leader as far as the academic departments.

Vice-President Frame: There's a gentleman in our manufacturing division, named [Roy], for example, he's one and he has built a really impressive learning community in his program and a lot of it is because and he has developed articulation agreements and he has done all kind of things to position his program to be successful. And a lot of it is because of his personality, the way other teachers respect what he does and also because he knows who in administration to connect with to get his ideas across.

There are others. These are the people who are at the front of the line when we try and think of what is the next classroom to be remodeled and what is the next technology to try. I think those are the kind of people who are the innovators who are willing to do new things. I think they have a lot of influence here because the college likes to innovate. We are always looking for the next thing. And so I think people who are open to that kind of rise into a leadership position. Sometimes even more than the long timers, I don't find that there are as many, as you know on some colleges it's the people that have been there forever that determines what

everybody's opinion is going to be. I don't know if that's so true here, I don't know if we necessarily look to who has been here the longest as much as to the people who are doing interesting things. I think that is true, I think it's true in a lot of our faculty.

As was detailed in Chapter 4, Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame agree that President Smith is extremely influential, and that his influence based in large part on his personality. In fact, Provost Jones argued that is why Roy, the engineering instructor is so influential: "he has the spirit of" President Smith.

Knowing these individuals and groups provides the administrative team with the knowledge of how their culture becomes what it is. This provides them with the opportunity to work on changing the culture as needed to meet the external and internal needs of the institution as suggested by Smart, et.al. (1997). The administrative team, through their stories, share the same belief on who they believe are influential which affects the institution's culture. As noted, President Smith does not believe the unions had as significant a role in influencing the culture as Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame. This appeared to be contradictory, which is explained in the next section. After more conversation it is determined that, these are the results of changes. These changes are such that together they have caused the culture of Central to shift.

#### *Institution's Culture Shift*

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that a culture shift had occurred at Central. According to Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame, the beginning of major change at Central started when President Smith became president. This change was also impacted by the introduction of Act 10 by state government.

Provost Jones: We have just completed our first five-year strategic plan under his direction where it really was a strategic plan that everyone knew about.

Everybody contributed too but you know traditionally in the past and I have been in higher education a long time you create a strategic plan and it sits on the shelf somewhere and then at the end of it you pull it out and say ok what we did. This was a living breathing document and now we have started our next one and agreed that everybody is a part of it. He is a participatory type of leader where he has in his mind, he always have ideas but he always like to hear what everybody else has to say.

When you go to anyone at the college, they can tell you who the president is and even the students. He meets with students a lot and even goes into the classrooms. He will just walk into a classroom and say who he is. He is just phenomenon and that's why I say I don't want to go anywhere else. He's just genuine even outside of [Central]. He's a nice guy and he really has the school at heart.

Vice-President Frame: to me culture is about some of the unwritten rules about how we do things, you know how do people interact and I think we have also over the years had varying levels of tension or cooperation between administrations and staff. And we have gone through some periods of very little trust and then we I think have gotten to where we are now where I think trust is a lot stronger at the college. And a lot of that had to do with the leadership style. We were very at times we were very focused on seeing everything through the labor management lens. It was very much about what does the union contract say, what are the unions doing, what union group are you in, what's your position and it had a lot more influence on what people thought.

I mean I saw that the most doing [Dr. Weeks's] regime, the presidency before [President Smith]. I think that was, a lot of it was because there was a lot of concern about he's over here doing some things and we really don't understand what they are and he's not really focused on what going on over here. People were looking for something to gravitate too and it was their bargaining unit. [Dr. Weeks] was very antagonistic with the unions. So it really affected the culture so I think people instead of being more...I'm just going to go back and focus on my campus and hunker down there it was more like I'm going to get behind my bargaining unit because they are going to take care of me and put all of my thoughts into that. But I think now we are shifting away from that.

President Smith also speaks of the previous presidency as one that was composed of mistrust and disconnect with the administration, staff, and faculty. President Smith was aware of this because he worked at the college directly under the previous president. After becoming president he began to address the mistrust with the creation of the committee that worked to create the new mission and vision where he used a number of

communication initiatives to inform the Central community. He worked to eliminate site-based leadership, which eliminated competition for resources.

One significant difference between the three informants is that President Smith does not believe Act 10 affected Central's culture whereas both Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame believed that it influenced the culture. In his view because of Act 10 certain employees decided to retire but "nothing really happened at Central." This is contradictory based on his next statement where he argued that because of those employees leaving, "new people helping to establish a higher level of culture" replaced those that left. When referring to a higher level of culture, President Smith is speaking in regards to individuals that are now focused on the mission and vision of the institution and not on their personal gain through the union. He is not making a connection between the retirements and the passage of Act 10 whereas Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame link them directly to this legislation. Not seeing this linkage could be traced back to President Frame's lack of experience interacting with the unions at Central.

It would seem that the length of time at Central has influenced each administrator's reflections on how they make meaning of their college's culture. It appears however, that the administrative team agrees more than they disagree in their assessment of the importance of the culture change at Central. Overall the themes that emerged from the informants in response to how they make meaning of the college's culture is the active use of the college mission, vision, the influential groups and knowledge of why the culture has shifted. These themes are discussed next.

### *The Themes*

As noted previously, in investigating how the administrative team makes meaning of the college's culture several themes emerged. The first theme was the creation and active use of the college's mission and vision. Tierney (2008) suggests that to avoid the topic of mission would be "remiss." The point, of course, is not to say that one or another mission is good or bad, but, instead, to come to terms with how those in the organization use the term." As in the case of Central, each informant uses the term mission to describe what Central does. The mission became crucial because it was a part of the not fully implemented strategic plan as informed by both President Smith and Vice-President Frame. Vice-President Frame stated it directly:

So HLC told us we needed a plan. I was in charge of Strategic Planning and I went right to the president and I said, "How do you want me to do this?" He said, "I don't want a long document, I don't want anything that is going to prevent me from doing what I want to do." So just take that in! That was the seam of the whole process, for me, but of course that is not what we told people because no one would want to participate in that strategic plan. We went through the motions, we created a strategic plan and it had goals and everything, and we used it as part of the process. But I, as the leader, knew perfectly well that it was going to go in a shelf because he had his own plan and he didn't want the college's plan to get in his way, which was ridiculous.

The mission of Central is a single statement. It states, in part that, "We collaborate to ensure economic growth and viability by providing education, training, leadership, and technological resources to meet the changing needs of students, employers, and communities." To begin, it is important to note that the mission of Central has related elements to the Wisconsin Technical College System, as it should. Key system elements in the mission are economic growth, employers, and training. As

Central is a part of the Technical College System it is required that, these missions agree as they do.

It is also important to note that Central uses the mission as a foundation for action. It was used in conjunction with the vision to implement the direction of the college identified in their new strategic plan.

The second theme that emerged was the importance of influential groups and individuals within the College. It was important that the administrative team be able to recognize these groups or individuals and involve them in change activities. According to McCaffery (2010), each person enhances or adds to the culture of their institution. He further states that in order for the leaders to be successful they need to recognize that culture “embraces all players within the organization.” My analysis supports this insight. Members of the administrative team each named the influential groups and one specific individual as being influential to faculty, staff, and administration, as evidenced by his presence on numerous committees.

The third theme that emerged was that a cultural shift did occur. According to Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame, this shift began with President Smith in the presidency. President Smith attributes the shift to the different leadership style and focus that was much different from the previous president. Self-realization of the culture, according to McCaffery (2010), provides a lens for those at the college to know what the college is about, what the college considers important, and what the purpose of the college is. The administrative team clearly articulated that they were able to realize these elements after President Smith became Central’s president. President Smith, of course, had the opportunity to realize these elements in his position as chief operating officer. He

noted how he considered all of these elements when he assumed the role of president.

Changing the perception of the college, the internal and external community, became his first challenge as noted earlier. He addressed this challenge by initiating the development of a focused mission, vision, and strategic plan. He enlisted the assistance of faculty, staff, administration, students, and the external community including business partners.

Thus, knowing the culture of the institution is critical to administrators being able to understand the college, which in turns allows them to be able to know how to move the college forward. It allows them to gain insight into how the community will best accept decisions and necessary changes. This idea, central too much of the research regarding culture, also emerges as important in regards to the technical college. Central spent a significant amount of time working with its community to understand what they expected from the college and how they viewed the college. The team President Smith assembled to develop the mission, vision, and strategic plan for the college used this information gathered to great effect. Based on this extensive hands on research it is determined that the administrative team make meaning of their institution's culture primary through the mission, vision, and strategic plan. This is in agreement with the work of Tierney (2008) when he argued that an institution's culture could not be fully examined if the mission is not included.

Research Question 2: What importance do the members of the administrative team attach to their institutional culture?

Tierney (2008) noted that culture provides a basis for administrators to “understanding management and performance in education.” Consequently, the administrator's stories were compared based on the importance each administrative team

member attached to the community, the elements of their culture, staff feelings and attitudes, what the college community values, and information employees need to be cognizant of for them to be successful and survive. Each of these subject areas are individually discussed to determine the importance and understanding the administrative team attaches to their culture. The discussion begins with the importance attached because of the community.

### *The Community*

To investigate the idea that culture is important, I explored with the administrative team why they believed it was important and what made it important. Each member of the team believed that culture was very important to the College. President Smith relates the importance to the creation of the mission and vision in which the College invested a tremendous amount of time and effort. Provost Jones expresses the importance in terms of a rating scale whereas Vice-President Frame expresses it as always being present.

Regardless of how they expressed it, they all agreed on its importance:

President Smith: I think it [culture] is very important. In fact, we were just talking about it yesterday with our leadership team. At Central, we created a vision, a vision we called 2012, our new vision 3.2.1 that we spoke about last time takes us now from 2012 all the way to 2016 to create a more positive working culture and we have carried that over into our vision 3.2.1 philosophy.

Provost Jones: If I were to do a scale from one to ten, I would say it's probably an eight, because the culture is really what makes us who we are. I think that is one of the most unique things about [Central] is the culture.

Vice-President Frame: I think that it's very important. It's the one thing that controls what we do; it is hard to change and how pervasive it is. As administrators, we do a lot with policies, we have a lot of ideas, and we can change a lot of procedural things, but the culture is just always there; you have to work within that, it's sort of the environment.

Additionally, President Smith believes that administrators must be responsive to the staff and that speaks directly to how staff treat their students, their community, and the way they treat each other. This, maintains President Smith, is why culture is critical to the long-term success of the college. This belief is in agreement with Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) who state that, “If we are to understand and influence men and women in their daily work inside academic institutions, then we must come to understand and fully appreciate their implicitly held models of reality” (p.10). As argued by McCaffery (2010) insight into the reality or the perception of others at the institution provides knowledge to the administrative team in understanding the institution’s culture from others points of view. Their reality of the institution equals their culture of the institution.

Provost Smith states it somewhat differently, but she has the same belief. She argues that a key component in their culture is that they listen to their staff as well as their students. Although this is also seen as a way that staff can influence culture, Provost Smith identified it as a listening culture which she believes is an important component. She states that staff is not afraid to inform administration what works and what does not work, and administration listens. Vice-President Frame states it succinctly, “If there’s an us versus them tradition about employees communication with administration and sharing ideas, that’s going to have a huge impact on how we are able to work together and how we are able to collaborate.” As culture can be seen as being an invisible force according to McGrath, et. al. (2008) communication between all groups at the institution becomes important as indicted by the informants.

Thus, it can be determined that the administrative team believes that culture is important to their successful management of Central and that the community as a whole is one of the reasons why it is important. Interestingly, each member of the administrative team enumerated different elements that contribute to this importance.

### *Cultural Elements*

There were specific elements the administrative team believed contributed to the importance of culture at the institution. They believed that these elements of culture indicated what they thought made Central's culture what it was. Each thought there were different elements of the culture that was important and that, in turn, defined the culture of Central. President Smith focused on community and accessibility, Provost Jones focused on a spirit of innovation, whereas Vice-President Frame focused on how the internal community of Central related to each other:

President Smith: At least one of the top areas [culture element] would be communication. People need to feel that they are informed and involved in the organization. Especially as you go through change within an organization. No one wants to be left out because they feel they are not going to be a part of the long-term future of an organization. The second key thing, I think, is to be accessible.

Provost Jones: I would say the spirit of innovation is the most important...Administration listens and we make changes based on what our staff tells us.

Vice-President Frame: I would probably say the way people relate to one another. The unspoken assumptions about how we work together, because relationships are so important to what we do.

The common thread in their stories is the people at Central, which shows their importance to the makeup of the culture. Dr. Frame summarizes the importance of staff relationships and culture by saying, "I think those types of relationship assumptions are

part of the culture, are really important and you have to be mindful of them and I don't know if we'll ever change that.”

Interestingly, according to Smart, et al. (1997) the adhocracy and bureaucratic cultures are considered to have the most influence on the effectiveness of two-year colleges but in this case based on the informants stories, the clan culture was identified. The author's clan culture speaks directly to the importance of the involvement of the members of the institution's community. They believe that the motivators of faculty and staff are trust, tradition, and their commitment to the institution. The administrative team seeks to get the trust of their faculty and staff at Central by involving them and listening to their input.

#### *Institution Values*

Institution values referred to the importance attached to a particular event or component that has the ability to affect the culture of the institution. When discussing what the administrative team believes the institution values, the main value they agree on is that the faculty and staff of Central value fair bargaining between management and employees. Each administrator arrived at this institutional value based primarily on the Act 10 legislation.

President Smith argued that this value was important because of the “unique time we are in, and there is a huge transition under Act 10.” He believes that because of the mistrust staff had at the beginning of his term, Act 10 had the capability of increasing this because under this legislation, unions lost a significant amount of bargaining power and the college went to a handbook model instead of a union contract. He notes that his

mantra during this period, which continues, is to involve “our employees, they’ll help make the decisions and to communicate, communicate, communicate.”

Provost Jones also based her believe that bargaining is important on the recent Act 10 legislation. She believes that as a consequence of the passage of Act 10 it became even more important that administration work with all staff as fairly and transparently as possible:

I think when you think about bargaining, our contracts went away June 30, 2012, I think even though everyone believes we bargain fairly when we had to sit down and negotiate, but even in this new paradigm where we don’t have the formal contracts like we used to have, I truly believe that everyone believes everything was done fairly and openly and relatively transparent.

Vice-President Frame agreed with both President Smith and Provost Jones that the employees of Central are still concerned about fairness between administration and staff. He notes that:

Even though it has changed so much, I think fair bargaining is still the bargaining piece, I think the fair treatment. The fair treatment and interaction between former authorities, that’s still very much a value. People want to be treated fairly, that’s important.

Unionization and collective bargaining are identified in Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) work as belonging to the advocacy culture. The administrator’s understanding of the importance of Act 10 identified their understanding of the past culture of Central and how as a result of Act 10, that culture was changed.

It also emerged that the administrative team had different opinions regarding additional values the institution may hold. President Smith believed that the Central community values institutional research and student-oriented curriculum planning. He based this on the fact that the majority of Central’s employees are faculty and that as such

they are geared towards the success of their students. In fact, he puts this value over fair bargaining:

That one first, the majority of our employees are faculty; faculty are geared towards the success of their students and all of our programs have industry advisory committees to help guide that so they rely on that structure of curriculum, making sure that is aligned with the needs of the community. And then they're really the bridge between what the community is asking for and what students receive so I think that student focus is probably very critical.

Although somewhat different, but not in complete contrast to President Smith, Provost Jones believes the Central community values the development and dissemination of knowledge in their specific discipline. As with President Smith, Provost Jones sees faculty in their unique role of sharing their knowledge with their students in order for their students to succeed. She broadens this, however, by including all staff in the discussion of sharing content knowledge:

Even if you're not in the academic side, people understand the value of that and it's going to make our students succeed, and grow our college if our students succeed. That's how you get more students and keep going. Even if it's a non-academic department, I mean, we always ask with questions in our interviews about any area to the content knowledge as well as cultural fit, but the content knowledge is always first what we do here.

Interestingly, Dr. Frame believes the Central community values the identification and appreciation of traditions and founding principles. He bases this on the fact of Central having recently celebrated their centennial. He states, "We spent a lot of time talking about our history and where we've come from, that has set some importance to people. I think people would tell you they value the history of the college and where we came from." Although the history is mentioned by President Smith and later by Vice-President Frame, the administrators did not spend a significant amount of time discussing

the history or traditions of Central. Vaughan (1994) defined culture as a phenomenon that includes concepts of beliefs, ideology, language, rituals, myths, artifacts, and values; neither President Smith nor Provost Jones discussed traditions as a Central value although it closely relates to the general meaning of culture. It appeared that the concepts of artifacts and rituals (history) were not significant concepts of importance with regard to this particular technical college.

*Staff Feelings, Attitudes, and Awareness*

President Smith, Provost Jones, and Vice-President Frame believe that staff feelings and opinions are significant in the culture of Central. Specifically, President Smith stated “people need to feel informed and involved in the organization, especially as you go through change within the organization.” Each administrator believed in the importance of staff and there is specific information staff needs to be aware of to be successful at the College, based on their experience at Central.

President Smith, Provost Jones, and Vice-President Fame directly indicated two important factors: the employees understanding their positional role, the importance of that role, and the community’s perception of the College:

President Smith: Even though you might be hired as a registration clerk, you’re going to be taking the students as they come in, that role is absolutely essential to everything else that you’re learned about. They wouldn’t be taking Surgical Technology if you didn’t help them get registered appropriately; financial aid to help fund that or counseling services to make sure it’s the right career path. All of those pieces fit in a big puzzle and everyone’s success is based on everyone making sure that their piece fits as tightly as it can and we try to build that picture for our employees when we go through the orientation.

Provost Jones: They need to understand their role and the role of their supervisor and how their department fits into the big picture, the mission,

and the direction of the college. They have to understand how we operate, like we celebrate things.

Vice-President Frame: We are trying to exercise in our culture that it's all about relationships and collaboration....we really, in the first year, push them outside their immediate jobs.

Additionally, President Smith suggested employees have a responsibility to their students and community and that they need to be aware of that responsibility.

Specifically, he believed that in order to be successful there is a need to connect with the culture of Central.

The administrative team answered this research question by providing their opinion on why they considered culture important. They expanded upon their beliefs by discussing the important elements of culture, staff feelings and attitudes, and what the community considers important. These concepts lead the administrative team to the conclusion that culture was important. This conclusion was demonstrated by the fact that they created an orientation program that was required for all employees to participate. This program exposed all employees to the information the administrative team believed they needed to be cognizant of for their successful entrance into the Central community which included its culture. The overall theme that arises from this discussion with the administrative team is the importance of those entering the Central community is orientated to the ideas, concepts, values, and beliefs held by the Central community. As Tierney suggests, the administrative leads must have an understanding of all the concepts that work together to create that institution's culture because it assists that administrative team on how to respond and perform when necessary. The discussion of that theme follows in the next section.

*The Theme*

Throughout the narratives of the administrative team regarding the importance they attach to their institutional culture, one theme resonated: the importance of the entire Central community and that the entire Central community has a solid knowledge of the culture of the institution and their importance to the Central community. Identifying the culture and the composition of the culture was crucial. The administrative team identified elements included in the six cultures of Bergquist and Pawlak (2008). The identified elements were fair bargaining, innovation, research, traditions, preparation of students, providing specific knowledge and skills to students. Although the information shared by the administration allows for the recognition of all of these elements and more at Central, they have to be able to administer within them for successful results or be able to institute change.

It appears that the administrative team together was able to identify the cultural elements and work within. This can be seen in the decision the College made to close a program in the Technology Center because of faculty objections but to open another program in a center and close the programs on the campus but this time the faculty was not in support of this. Navigating through these events require the team to be able to employ strategies and initiatives that bring the cultures together as discussed in the work of Bergquist and Pawlak (2008).

In addition to the cultures of Bergquist and Pawlak that can be identified as an element of one of the six cultures, one particular element cannot be directly linked to one of these cultures. That element is the importance of the broader Central community and their involvement at Central. This particular part of the Central community includes

employers, economic development, and business partnerships. The College used the community extensively in developing the focus of the college through the development of the mission. I argue that this is appropriate, as the technical college must speak directly to the needs of the community. This use of the community is not included in work of Bergquist and Pawlak when describing the elements included in each of the cultures identified in their work. Central effectively shows the importance of the community involvement by not only sponsoring numerous listening sessions but also having representatives sit on community boards and committees. President Smith states this clearly, when he noted the efforts to change the perception of Central from a college that only received but also gave back to the community:

So we have to change that (negative connotation of Central always taking) and become a resource for community development. So serving on the boards getting involved in all types of non-profit organizations, from the boys and girls club to the united ways the different organization that are going to help become vested in the community at all levels was important for the outreach. As a result of that I think probably an off shoot has been a tremendous growth in our business support. Our business partnerships have grown because we are much more visible because I think the community sees that Central is attempting to be that resource for the community, to share the expertise of our staff and the finances we have to embrace a wide variety of different organizations in the community instead of always asking for something.

President Smith's analysis supports the assumption that the administrative team is aware of their culture and the elements that make up that culture. They use this knowledge to great effect when administering the affairs of the College.

It is evident that the overall theme that emerged from the analysis was the importance of the entire central community and the crucial role they exercised in the making of the culture. All three administrators discussed this in relationship to the orientation program to the college and the broader community involvement.

Additionally, the orientation program is stressed as a means to managing and influencing the culture. This can be clearly seen as we compare the informants' stories that emerged when exploring research question three.

Research Question 3: In what ways do the members of the administrative perceive they both manage and influence the institution's culture?

Tierney (2008) argued that understanding the culture of the institution and being able to manage it is important for administrators. He noted that they must have more than a passive knowledge if they are to manage their campuses effectively. This concept was demonstrated with President Smith when he immediately begun the process of focusing on the mission, vision, and strategic plan when he became president. As indicated by Tierney (2008), culture cannot be analyzed without including the mission. Additionally, culture provides another method of developing the strategic plan where it allows for the inclusion of the institution's entire community to be a part of the creation of the plan instead of the former method of creation from the top administration. The plan President Smith initiated for the process encouraged involvement across the entire Central community.

This process served to provide not only President Smith but also Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame with an active knowledge of the current state of Central's culture. This occurred as they facilitated and attended listening sessions that included the faculty, staff, students, and the broader community. Although, President Smith believed this was necessary, it was challenging:

It was a challenge at first because remember we had four or five years under another presidency where we had mistrust and disconnect with the administration, staff, and faculty. So people were hesitant....We set some pretty high objectives and there were things that I thought could be

accomplished if we created a stronger buy in of communication between administration and faculty.

By providing these opportunities for the internal community and broader community to share their opinions and ideas through these listening sessions, it is seen as one method of managing and influencing the culture. It provided the community with a forum of listeners (the administrative team) and a mechanism for feedback that held the administrators accountability. Just as it provided the community this opportunities it also provided the administrators the same opportunities to share their visions and goals. Thus, the administrators discussed additional ways in which they see their role in influencing and managing the culture of the college.

#### *Managing and Influencing the Culture*

When discussing with the administrative team how they perceive they both influence and manage the culture of Central, President Smith shared that he felt he was very purposeful in this endeavor through the use of the “Central Experience.” According to President Smith, the Central Experience was an initiative that started because of his frustration with the “mindset of status quo.” The Central Experience was designed, as President Smith describes it, to provide the community with what the College wants the community to think about Central:

What do we want them to think its like? What’s our image of our facilities, our buildings, what programs, and how do we market and what messages do we send out in newspaper articles and whose writing hose pieces and what are we saying about our community. So we took all of those elements about the perception of the college and turned into a positive by saying let’s just change the perception and invite people in to experience it.

President Smith contended they are being purposeful about this activity, and accomplished this as a result of the college's own process of self-reflection. This, he believed, was a necessary activity because of both his frustration but also that of the College. He became aware early of the level of frustration of his administrative team, and saw that change was necessary. As the new person, he reasoned that, they now had the opportunity to change the environment through self-analysis and a systematic strategy of improvement.

Provost Jones did not use the term purposeful in managing and influencing the culture as did President Smith but she explained the "Central Experience" as the philosophy of the college, the overall package of when you come to "Central" and what is expected in order for you to be successful. She suggests that the "Central Experience" is a virtual term for the culture. To Provost Jones, the "Central Experience" is a philosophy, but they both discussed the experience as involving the facilities, their customer service initiative, and their orientation program:

President Smith: I think our strategy worked where we were very purposeful on our "Central Experience", purposeful on our strategic plan, purposeful on the goals that we said about creating culture and communications and all of those, and then finding ways to measure that. How do you know if you're successful in creating images so that people could see themselves in that so we would do one project and invite whole college to see it? If you want this to be your program, help us to build a community partnership to make it happen. And so now throughout the district we've got lots of examples of great program expansions, changes, and new opportunities for students, new facilities. With basically the same financial resources we had 7 years ago, so it can be done so it's just matter of prioritization and what we value in investing.

Provost Jones: The "Central Experience" is just a philosophy, it's not a program. For example, if we are going to renovate, say the welding lab, we want this to be a "Central Experience" so we look at how we remodeled another lab. People get the same feel whether they are in Racine or Kenosha. That's how it relates facility-wise. The culture-wise,

or customer service-wise, everyone has to go through customer service training, so they can deliver the same “Central Experience” no matter where they are or what department they are in.

As stated, the Central Experience was designed to provide the external and internal community what to think of the institution. The philosophy shared with the Central community is composed of the administrative team’s ideas, concepts, and principles that were developed by their interactions with staff, students, and the community and this lead to the creation of the Central Experience. It is believed that President Smith was greatly involved in the creation of this philosophy even more so that the other administrators. But it can be determined that both President Smith and Provost Jones see the Central Experience as a way to manage and influence the culture.

Unlike President Smith and Provost Jones, Vice-President Frame did not discuss the Central Experience as a way to manage and influence the culture. He focused on how the people of Central influenced the culture. He stated directly that he believed both the administration and the president influence the culture. “I think we do. Not exclusively, but I think people look to the leadership to kind of figure out what the culture is and to figure out if they can step outside the assumptions.” As administrators, Vice-President Frame believes that they should also be aware of others that have an impact on the culture:

I mean there are thought leaders in all of our departments, they are all over the place; it’s that person that everyone listens to. Those people have a big impact on culture too. One of the things we should be doing as administrators if we want to influence the culture is know who those people are and know what their agendas are and work with that.

Although Vice-President Frame did not discuss the Central Experience as managing and influencing the culture as President Smith and Provost Jones, all three

discussed the Central Journey as being an important part of informing the Central employees of the culture of Central:

President Smith: We have to understand what our value proposition is, why we were there, and what we can do to improve on the job responsibilities that we have. So we take everyone through the orientation process called Central Journey and they have a book that they use, and it's about six months' worth of orientation, and they visit classrooms, and they visit facilities, and they visit the community, they come to a Board meeting they meet the Board members, they meet with me, and that orientation process gives them the benchmark of what Central is in a larger picture.

Provost Jones: One thing is our new year long...Central Journey where you learn everything about Central. There is a thirty-day mark, a four-month mark, and a year mark. At the thirty day mark you have to have had a tour of your campus, you have to have had a visit with your boss, the dean of your campus, and there are so many things you have to do to be acclimated...So you get a feel of the culture as you go along and it's kind of, you have to pay attention.

Vice-President Frame: We have an extensive orientation program they have to go through. It's a passport based; they have a book they go through and they have activities that they do for their whole first year. We are trying to exercise in our culture that it is all about relationships and collaboration. For example, one of the things we ask for people to do in the first thirty days is to look in their immediate area and figure out what everybody does, what is everybody's job, and how does it relate to my job and there's a chart they have to fill out. They meet with their supervisor, and have an Expectations meeting and document what the supervisor said the expectations were. Then, when they get into the next phase of the journey, they have to do things like meet with the president and talk about is vision regarding technical education, which is kind of amazing. I would have never asked Sam to do that, because he would not. But Brian meets with every new employee and talks to them about the vision, which is tremendous.

As can be seen by the preceding inserts, each informant stressed throughout the interviews the creation and use of the Central Journal. As a result of this, this orientation program was examined in detail in the next section. Included in this examination is an

overview of the program with its major components, the roles of the administrative team, supervisors, and employees.

*The Central Journal*

In viewing this program and the related material, it is easy to determine why The Central Journey was stressed by the administrative team as being mandatory for each employee to participate. The administrators created it as a way to assure that the entire Central community received the same messages regarding the college. The Journey discussed in detail, is crucial to exposing employees to the culture within which the administrators want them to operate. President Smith, Provost Jones, and Vice-President Frame participate in the journey. Vice-President Frame had the overall responsibility for the program, Provost Jones teaches a section of the program and trains the supervisors, and President Smith meets with each employee individually to discuss the history, mission, and vision of Central.

In addition to the top administrators participating in the journey, employees' supervisor serves as their "learning facilitator." One of the first things the supervisor is required to do is to complete a pre-orientation email directly to the employee. The email includes the major hardware and software tools the employee will be required to use during the first thirty days of employment. It also includes five questions that the employee might encounter that can be answered by one of the College's online resources. The employee is required to answer the questions and send the responses back to the supervisor. The second thing the supervisor is required to do is meet the employee at his or her workstation. The third requirement of the supervisor is to meet with their employee for five specified activities during orientation and notify Vice-President Frame

when their employee earns stamps throughout the orientation process. The fourth requirement of the supervisor is to monitor the progress of the employee on orientation activities, and finally to support the employee on completion of the orientation.

The new employee is responsible for meeting the three competencies of the Central Journey. The first competency is to assume responsibility for orientation as a new Central employee and to complete it within the first thirty days of employment. The second competency is to explore the structure and activities of their base location and to complete this within four months of employment. The third competency is to identify the operational structures and activities of Central Technical College and to complete it within one year. Each of these competencies has specific learning outcomes such as: describing the major functions and structures of Wisconsin Technical College System, identifying major divisional and college plans, attend a board meeting, detail their connection to college planning as well as being required to visit each campus. Each employee is provided with a journal for their Central Journey, which is a workbook in which they note their complete activities, take notes, list questions to ask, and record their reflections. In addition, an online discussion forum is provided for the new employees to share ideas, read, and react to other new employees' experiences. The primary idea is that the forum should enhance learning and build community (The Central Experience).

The Central Journey has many more components than those listed above. After reviewing the documentation provided on this program, it appears that it serves as a solid foundation of orientating all new employees to the college. Employees receive the same identical information except for their specific job duties in the same format, as all are required to complete the program online within Blackboard. They are exposed to the

community through the planning processes and the board meetings they are required to attend. It is evident that the Central Journey designed, approved, and implemented, as the orientation program for the College by the administration of the College is one of the primary strategies for managing and influencing the culture of Central State Technical College. This becomes important because as Vaughan (1994) argued it becomes important for the administrative team to understand “when and where to change an institution’s culture (p.65).” I argue that after knowing when and where to change the culture, the administrators must have a viable mechanism to facilitate that change. It is evident that the Central Journey is that viable mechanism.

### *The Themes*

The significant themes that emerged from the discussion on how the administrative team view themselves as managing and influencing the culture was through the development and use of the mission, the Central Experience and the Central Journal. Each of these were discussed by the administrators as having significant influence on how the culture was changed from one of mistrust and lack of communication to one that they wanted shared with the entire Central community.

The creation of the mission can be seen as an effective way of shaping the culture, which as I have noted is important for the administrators to do. Lee (2004) notes the importance for leaders of an institution to work on framing or shaping the culture to maximize the effectiveness of the institution. Likewise, McGrath and Tobia (2008) suggested that in order for culture to be correctly managed, it first must be acknowledged, its features surfaced, mapped, and understood. Additionally, Vaughn (1994) suggested that the President needs to appreciate the culture in order to understand the institution.

Before becoming the president, the position of chief operating officer provided President Smith the opportunity to learn the culture. The result of this knowledge was his determination to make change when he was appointed president: change was needed, he argued, because he saw the culture as one of distrust, neither in tune with the needs of the community, nor meeting the college's stated strategic goals. He reasoned that the change that needed to occur had to begin with a new and re-vitalized mission and vision that had the buy-in of Central's internal and external communities. The self-reflection sessions he initiated provided the opportunity for the culture of Central to be dissected. This proved critical for the administrative team to understand and then re-shape the culture in the desired ways. The Central Experience emerged as one of the most effective methods used to do this.

As noted earlier, the Central Experience became the college's philosophy on what the administrative team wanted the internal and external community to endorse. The Central Experience, as described by the administrative team, is the first impression one receives from their first contact with the College throughout their entire time at the College. The President sees himself as enhancing the Central Experience through his participation and sponsorship of community events that he used to build awareness of the College. It is a concept that in order to have understanding must be experienced which is the goal of the Central Experience.

The intent of this research project was to ascertain how the administrators primarily responsible for academics at a technical college make meaning of their institutional culture, the importance they attach to the culture, and in what ways, if any, and do they perceive that they both manage and influence their institutional culture. As

little to no research had been conducted using technical colleges as the site of investigation, the possibility existed that the culture of these institutions would prove to be different from other institutions of higher education. This research study revealed that this particular technical college had characteristics of several of the cultures introduced by Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) as well as those detailed by Smart, et.al. (1997).

Culture, which is defined as socially constructed phenomenon created by an institutions concept of beliefs, ideology, language, rituals, myths, artifacts, values, and shared assumptions formed over decades, as institutions learn to respond to their challenges (Modaff, DeWine and Butler, 2008; Schein, 2004), and needed change. Through the administrative team stories, Central's culture can be defined as a socially constructed phenomenon created by the beliefs of its employees, students, administrative staff, and external community where they speak a common language based on ideas, values, and assumptions shared through the Central Journey. The administrative team at this particular technical college was aware of the culture of the institution and made a purposeful effort to have it changed. The current President spearheaded this change as he realized the culture was not supportive of the direction he and his administrative team needed the institution to go as it would not allow for the college to grow and continues to meet the needs of the community as required in its mission, which it currently was not completely fulfilling. Because of this, he focused effort, time, and monies to support changing the strategic direction, which necessitated changing the culture.

Although this research study shows that the culture of technical colleges has many of the same characteristics of universities and two-year community colleges, it also reveals a significant cultural element that is unique. Throughout the study, it became

evident that the external community was at the core of many of the initiatives of the college. Stressed in these initiatives was an economic cultural element that was not discussed in the cultural characteristics of universities and community colleges. The introduction of this economic cultural element was first seen in the description President Smith provided surrounding the re-engineering of the College's mission. It was carried through in the discussions with Provost Jones and Vice-President in regards to the Central Experience and the Central Journal respectively. Therefore, a significant finding of this research study was the economic cultural element that is pervasive throughout the culture of this institution.

Another significant finding of this study that was not particularly discussed in the culture of community colleges and universities in the state of Wisconsin was the importance of the community of Central. As stated earlier, the UW Colleges exist to assist students in obtaining educational preparation for entrance into a university, whereas this technical college strived to meet the needs of the community in class offerings and preparing students for employment. Significant time was expended by this administrative team, especially the President, in obtaining the internal and external community's needs, views, and ideas about the college. This can also be seen in the amount of time President Smith is involved with community organizations, responding to emails, blogging, visiting classrooms, and meeting with each employee individually. In short, President Smith is committed to responding to the community and meeting their needs. This is evidenced by the many community focus groups sessions he sponsored and attended.

### Recommendations for Further Study

It must be noted that although institution culture is composed of sub-cultures like employees, students, administrators, the institution's community; these cultures were not elaborated on in this research project. Although the sub-cultures were not elaborated on they compose or make up the culture of the institution as a whole. As a result of these sub-cultures, the stories of the informants paint a picture that has different elements than those of community colleges' culture and university's culture. To further develop the understanding of a particular institution's culture, it is suggested that the sub-cultures be identified and researched. After the identification of these sub-cultures, research can be developed to include the type of institution, public, private, for-profit, as this may also have an influence on the entire institution's culture. It would be beneficial to study all educational institutions in this manner.

Leadership style is not culture but it has a role in shaping the culture of an institution. On several occasions Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame referenced the inclusive leadership style of President Smith. Although leadership style was not included in this research project, further study on culture that included data on leadership styles would be beneficial as there could be a direct link that influences the culture of the institution.

It is important to note here that the research presented is drawing on data from the administrators' point of view at a single technical college. It would be of great importance to conduct additional research that included other employees of the college. Focusing on the faculty, students, and other administrators, for example, would assist in determining to what degree other individuals or groups experience the culture of Central

in the same way. Additionally, technical colleges could possibly benefit from specific research regarding how the local employers as well as the local community affect their culture.

Overall, it appears that the administrative team is aware of the culture, and that the awareness comes from various experiences while at Central. It is also apparent that the administrative team has taken steps to manage and influence the culture of Central. Many suggest (Vaughan, 1994; Tierney, 2008; Gayle et al. 2003) that having a cultural understanding of the college emerges as necessary for President and other key college leaders. President Smith exhibited this cultural knowledge extensively as well as Provost Jones and Vice-President Frame, which provide them with the necessary knowledge to create the initiatives and directives that would move their college forward.

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