

American Association of Community Colleges Statement on Competencies for Community College Leaders

The development and availability of well prepared leaders is vital to the continued success of community colleges and their students. Throughout its history, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) has made proactive leadership development a central focus of its mission.

Now, that focus takes on even greater urgency as the level of turnover among community college leaders escalates dramatically. For this reason, AACC has worked to delineate a competency framework for today's and tomorrow's college leaders. The framework has wide utility for both individuals and institutions. It helps emerging leaders chart their personal leadership development progress. It provides program developers with curricula guidelines. Institutionally, it informs human resources departments with direction for staff recruitment, hiring, rewards and professional development. This competency framework is intended as a "living document," evolving over time to meet changing human and institutional needs.

In order to appreciate and utilize these competencies, the following must be understood:

- Leadership can be learned. While it can be enhanced immeasurably by natural aptitude and experience, supporting leaders with exposure to theory, concepts, cases, guided experiences, and other practical information and learning methodologies is essential.
- Many members of the community college community can lead. The competencies will shift in importance depending upon the level of the leader. For example, it is more critical that a president be able to communicate effectively with the board than for a staff assistant to do so. Both, however, can benefit from mastery of the communication competency.
- Effective leadership is a combination of effective management and vision. Ideally, acquisition of management skills would precede vision. In reality the two skill sets often develop in tandem and are presented together in this competency framework.
- Learning leadership is a life-long process, the movement of which is influenced by personal and career maturity as well as other developmental processes.
- The leadership gap can be addressed through a variety of strategies such as college grow-your-own programs, AACC council and university programs, state system programs, residential institutes, coaching, mentoring, on-line and blended approaches. Important considerations that apply to all forms of delivery include sustaining current leaders and developing new ones.

Collaboration - *An effective community college leader develops and maintains responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promote the success of all students, and sustain the community college mission.*

Illustrations:

- Embrace and employ the diversity of individuals, cultures, values, ideas and communication styles.
- Demonstrate cultural competence relative to a global society.
- Catalyze involvement and commitment of students, faculty, staff and community members to work for the common good.
- Build and leverage networks and partnerships to advance the mission, vision and goals of the community college.
- Work effectively and diplomatically with unique constituent groups such as legislators, board members, business leaders, accreditation organizations, and others.
- Manage conflict and change by building and maintaining productive relationships.
- Develop, enhance and sustain teamwork and cooperation.
- Facilitate shared problem-solving and decision-making.

Resource Management - *An effective community college leader equitably and ethically sustains people, processes and information as well as physical and financial assets to fulfill the mission, vision and goals of the community college.*

Illustrations:

- Ensure accountability in reporting.
- Support operational decisions by managing information resources and ensuring the integrity and integration of reporting systems and databases.
- Develop and manage resource assessment, planning, budgeting, acquisition, and allocation processes consistent with the college master plan and local, state and national policies.
- Take an entrepreneurial stance in seeking ethical alternative funding sources.
- Implement financial strategies to support programs, services, staff and facilities.
- Implement a human resources system that includes recruitment, hiring, reward, and performance management systems and that fosters the professional development and advancement of all staff.
- Employ organizational, time management, planning and delegation skills.
- Manage conflict and change in ways that contribute to the long-term viability of the organization.

Communication - *An effective community college leader uses clear listening, speaking, and writing skills to engage in honest, open dialogue at all levels of the college and its surrounding community, to promote the success of all students, and to sustain the community college mission.*

Illustrations:

- Articulate and champion shared mission, vision and values to internal and external audiences, appropriately matching message to audience.
- Disseminate and support policies and strategies.
- Create and maintain open communications regarding resources, priorities and expectations.
- Convey ideas and information succinctly, frequently, and inclusively through media and verbal and nonverbal means to the board and other constituencies and stakeholders.
- Listen actively to understand, comprehend, analyze, engage and act.
- Project confidence and respond responsibly and tactfully.

Organizational Strategy - *An effective community college leader strategically improves the quality of the institution, protects the long-term health of the organization, promotes the success of all students and sustains the community college mission, based on knowledge of the organization, its environment and future trends.*

Illustrations:

- Assess, develop, implement and evaluate strategies regularly to monitor and improve the quality of education and the long-term health of the organization.
- Use data-driven evidence and proven practices from internal and external stakeholders to solve problems, make decisions and plan strategically.
- Use a systems perspective to assess and respond to the culture of the organization; to changing demographics; and to the economic, political, and public health needs of students and the community.
- Develop a positive environment that supports innovation, teamwork and successful outcomes.
- Maintain and grow college personnel and fiscal resources and assets.
- Align organizational mission, structures and resources with the college master plan.

Professionalism - *An effective community college leader works ethically to set high standards for self and others, continuously improve self and surroundings, demonstrate accountability to and for the institution, and ensure the long-term viability of the college and community.*

Illustrations:

- Demonstrate transformational leadership through authenticity, creativity and vision.
- Understand and endorse the history, philosophy and culture of the community college.
- Self-assess performance regularly using feedback, reflection, goal-setting, and evaluation.
- Support lifelong learning for self and others.
- Manage stress through self-care, balance, adaptability, flexibility and humor.
- Demonstrate the courage to take risks, make difficult decisions and accept responsibility.

- Understand the impact of perceptions, world views and emotions on self and others.
- Promote and maintain high standards for personal and organizational integrity, honesty and respect for people.
- Use influence and power wisely in facilitating the teaching- learning process and the exchange of knowledge.
- Weigh short-term and long-term goals in decision-making.
- Contribute to the profession through professional development programs, professional organizational leadership and research/publication.

Community College Advocacy - *An effective community college leader understands, commits to and advocates for the mission, vision and goals of the community college.*

Illustrations:

- Value and promote diversity, inclusion, equity and academic excellence.
- Demonstrate a passion for and commitment to the mission of community colleges and student success through the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- Promote equity, open access, teaching, learning and innovation as primary goals for the college, seeking to understand how these change over time and facilitating discussion with all stakeholders.
- Advocate the community college mission to all constituents and empower them to do the same.
- Advance life-long learning and support a learner-centered and learning-centered environment.
- Represent the community college in the local community, in the broader educational community, at various levels of government, and as a model of higher education that can be replicated in international settings.