

# Leadership Transitions: Preparing Faculty and Staff for Leadership Roles at Volunteer State Community College



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### Executive Summary

The organization examined in this work is Volunteer State Community College (VSCC), a two-year community college with the main campus located in Gallatin, TN. In working with Dr. Jerry Faulkner, President of VSCC, concerns have been raised that with the upcoming retirement of many of their faculty and staff, they feel unprepared with the quality of internal candidates to be promoted into leadership positions. VSCC has noted they currently have no significant leadership development programs available to their faculty and staff. Regardless of their current employee retention rates, VSCC recognizes the need to further develop the skills of their current employees to help them become more viable and skilled candidates for leadership positions.

In conducting a literature review of the types of challenges presented, I was led to the literature on competence theory, qualities of effective leaders and the use of mentoring programs to improve the behavioral competencies also required of emerging leaders. In recognizing that leader competency is more than just knowledge and skills, but also involves the ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and activating resources, I used the ice-berg model to consider competencies which are often unseen such as attitude, traits, self-image, and organizational fit (Bhuvanij, Kasemsan, & Praneetpolgrang, 2015).

Putting together the context, problem, literature, and framework, five research questions were developed.

1. What professional competencies must one possess to be considered for leadership roles?
2. How are leadership positions perceived by current faculty and staff?
3. Do current faculty and staff want to move into leadership positions?
4. What skills are needed to move into leadership positions and do current faculty and staff have access to developing these skills?
5. Given these findings, what types of professional development might impact the transition plans for Volunteer State Community College, and are there internal resources which could be utilized?

To investigate these questions on this institution's campus, a mixed-methods approach was used. The initial collection of data was a quantitative survey distributed electronically to all 430 employees located on the main campus. Further data was collected through qualitative interviews. Interviewees were nominated through the Office of the President and consisted of 5 faculty members and 5 staff members.

### **Finding 1: Overall, VSCC holds a strong emphasis on knowledge and skills while also having the ability to influence processes.**

Results of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected show those surveyed felt the need to improve in areas of technical and human skills. The qualitative data also showed a need for improvement in many areas such as coaching, difficult conversations, and communication. To remain in line with the type of leaders currently on campus, VSCC would be looking for professional competencies such as problem-solving, critical thinking skills, professionalism, technical expertise, and strong communication skills.

### **Finding 2: Despite VSCC being an institution of higher education, professional development and leadership opportunities are few and far between.**

According to qualitative interviews, faculty and staff feel the leadership is approachable, empathetic, and accessible. Additional findings indicated a desire to advance within the institution. Unfortunately, there seems to be no clear path for staff advancement and faculty members seem to be unclear about the roles and responsibilities of leadership positions.

The qualitative data reflected a want to improve interpersonal skills while the quantitative data revealed the requirement to improve administrative skills. This same data indicates there is developmental opportunity for a structured leadership-based program. Such a program would include training on competencies such as communication, problem-solving, and difficult conversations which can also improve confidence of faculty and staff.

### **Finding 3: Culture fit of rising leaders will be necessary.**

While unrelated to the project, I feel it is important to note that throughout qualitative data collection, the most prevalent theme was that of culture. In this finding, culture refers to a team-based environment, willingness to support each other, and transparency from leadership. In tandem, with culture, I found an additional desire for innovation and a more evenly distributed workload. The importance of culture on VSCC's campus speaks to the type of leaders the institution should look for.

Based on these three primary findings, four recommendations are made for Volunteer State Community College to improve the quality of internal candidates for leadership positions.

### **Recommendation 1: Structured Professional Development**

VSCC has the opportunity to prepare the next generation of institutional leaders by creating an internal Professional Development Plan. These future leaders would then be in line with the institution's own culture and strategic agenda while ensuring a greater supply of candidates with the essential skills VSCC most values. The recommendation is to have a core set of development courses to utilize as building blocks. These building blocks would support the continuation into more concentrated areas of development based on an individual's role within the institution. Front-line leaders should have professional development opportunities which are guided more towards essential leadership skills while mid-level leaders would focus on strategic development.

### **Recommendation 2: Structured Mentoring / Coaching Program**

Transitioning into leadership roles can be daunting as individuals are learning to utilize a collection of new skills while taking on new responsibilities for the institution. Adopting a leadership coaching model can assist in the development of new leaders as they transition into these complex roles. Further, coaching and mentoring can provide valuable insight into many difficult situations, assist in learning how to navigate the landscape of an institution, and create strong relationships that align with the culture and community found on VSCC's campus.

### **Recommendation 3: Career Progression Pathway**

Creating a career pathway would enable and encourage staff and faculty to advance in their professions. Career pathways can take on many different forms but would allow staff and faculty to work with supervisors and human resources to determine overarching, long-term career goals, and determine a path to help them achieve those goals. By providing a clear pathway, from entry-level positions to higher executive-level positions, staff and faculty will gain an understanding of what is needed to take the next steps towards their career goals. These pathways would allow VSCC to see improved employee satisfaction, retention of top performers, and potential leaders for the institution.

### **Recommendation 4: Implementation of an Employee Suggestion Tool**

Higher education is constantly in need of innovative research, pedagogies, and organizational structures (Tierney & Langford, 2016). To avoid stagnation and progress forward, innovation needs to be promoted at VSCC. Qualitative data also revealed the need to communicate new ideas through alternative means and a desire for faculty and staff to be heard. Therefore, the recommendation is to create an Employee Suggestion Tool for faculty and staff to have their concerns and ideas voiced. To preserve the team-based, transparent culture currently at VSCC, new ideas, concepts, and challenges should be heard and addressed.

Like all research, this project has limitations including being unable to distinguish faculty and staff responses in the quantitative data, a small sample group for qualitative data collection, and a nomination process for determining who would be interviewed. However, it is still proposed, with some degree of confidence and through connecting these results to the literature, that VSCC should endorse several effective recommendations including a structured development plan, career path development, coaching/mentoring program, and an employee suggestion tool.



### Institutional Context

Volunteer State Community College (VSCC) serves an 11-county area in Tennessee with campus locations in Gallatin, Springfield, Cookeville, and Livingston. The main campus, founded in 1971, is in Gallatin, TN, approximately 30 miles northeast of Nashville. Over 11,000 students are enrolled for the average semester with more than 100 areas of study in six major divisions. Additionally, VSCC is the third-largest employer in Sumner County with more than 870 full and part-time employees. VSCC contributes more than \$117M per year into the local economy, pays \$28M annually in wages, and \$11M in operating expenses (About us, n.d.).

According to records from the Fall semester of 2018, 55% of students enrolled at VSCC were full-time with 60% of students being female and 40% male. The average student age was 23 encompassing a diverse student body demographic at 77% White, 9% African American, 6% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 6% Other. In addition to several degree-granting programs, VSCC facilitates continuing education programs by providing relevant, non-credit learning opportunities as well as certificate programs. At VSCC, 65% of their faculty and staff have earned a Master's Degree, while 31% hold a Doctorate/Professional Degree. Of the remaining 4%, a Bachelor's degree or no degree is held by faculty or staff.

### Definition of Problem

The mission of VSCC is to provide “quality innovative educational programs; strengthening community and workforce partnerships; promoting diversity, cultural awareness, and economic development; inspiring lifelong learning; and preparing students for successful careers, university transfer, and meaningful civic participation in a global society” (About us, n.d.). While providing educational programs is one of VSCC’s highest priorities, they have noted that with the upcoming retirement of many of their faculty and staff, they feel unprepared with the quality of internal candidates to be promoted into leadership positions. In working with Dr. Jerry Faulkner, President of VSCC, concerns have been raised as the institution currently has no significant leadership development programs available to their faculty and staff.

While VSCC has high employee retention rates, including 2-3 individuals employed since the founding of the institution, the economy has led higher education to be in a state of unrest. Many colleges have seen applications for academic roles drop, while several faculty and staff are considering retirement or alternate employment (Appadurai, 2009). Regardless of their current employee retention rates, VSCC recognizes the need to further develop the skills of their current employees to help them become more viable and skilled candidates for leadership positions.

### Literature Review

In a research study conducted by Muller and Turner (2009), leadership development questionnaires were used to profile various competencies of successful managers. The results of the study showed that successful leaders were high in critical thinking, influence, motivation, and conscientiousness. Further, Muller and Turner noted that as individuals progress in leadership roles, from manager to supervisor to executive, they will need to continue developing these competencies.

Many management educators believe leadership can be a teachable skill, however, there are differences in how successfully leadership skills can be learned (Doh, 2003). Professional learning of leadership skills begins with self-awareness, moving on to self-development, and culminating in ongoing continuous improvement (Griffith, Baur, & Buckley, 2019). Individuals can be taught to take on difficult tasks and thrive, but leaders are the ones who possess the ability to develop their own environment, cultivate the culture of the institution, and have the conviction and self-belief in the value of what they are doing (Deverell, Hodgson, & Moorhouse, 1998).

It is important for all leaders, no matter their station, to recognize that continuous improvement is a constant need in the ever-changing landscape of leadership. Raising awareness of skill gaps in individuals can assist in determining the types of professional development needed. Notably, there are some aspects of leadership which are innate qualities and therefore limitations exist as to how effectively they can be taught. Yet, these innate qualities can be enhanced through various learning experiences (Doh, 2003). Acknowledgment and awareness of personal limitations are vital to the growth of a leader. Moreover, individuals who are drawn to leadership development not only benefit their own success, but also add to the success of the entire organization (Doh, 2003).

The prediction of a high rate of staff and faculty retiring from VSCC has drawn attention to the concern that remaining employees are inadequately prepared for leadership roles. Accordingly, VSCC would like to better prepare current faculty and staff to improve the quality of internal candidates for leadership positions. As with most succession planning, this is not simply about filling positions or replacing personnel. Considering VSCC is a public institution with deep history, community roots, and a strong mission, the institution seeks to promote from within as a means to safeguard the integrity of its mission and vision.

In order to better prepare current staff and faculty for leadership roles, and if necessary, recruit the right candidates, front-end planning will need to involve defining desired qualifications while aligning succession with strategic objectives (McKee & Froelich, 2016). Without a distinct plan in place, it is easy to overlook potential leaders who have simply not had the opportunity to develop their talents (Wallin, Cameron, & Sharples, 2005). In creating a strategic plan, and following the research questions defined for this paper, organizations must first determine the competencies and skills the institution considers necessary for continued growth and prosperity (Wallin, Cameron, & Sharples, 2005).

Once these competencies and skills are defined, the creation of a strategic succession management plan can be useful as a career development tool regardless of career stage. Research conducted by Baker, Lunsford, and Pifer (2019) revealed that mid-career level faculty are in the leadership pipeline, but do not necessarily aspire to executive leadership positions. Research has shown that succession management plans would likely be most suitable at the mid-career level for any organization as it can provide further insights into the leadership pipeline by learning the leadership aspirations and motivation of employees. (Baker, Lunsford, & Pifer, 2019).

While being steeped in nonprofit values and driven by a passion for the mission is often instrumental for success, research has shown that the bulk of nonprofits, or organizations with strong nonprofit values, are often challenged when developing internal candidates due to lack of development opportunities (McKee & Froelich, 2016). Prior research has shown that leadership development plans can be highly effective in contributing to employee retention, leadership capacity, and greater continuity for successful transitions (McKee & Froelich, 2016). Therefore, it will be important to investigate the current succession planning and leadership development currently existing at VSCC.

### Conceptual Framework

In considering the need for continuity in leadership and professional development, I turned to leadership theories which have evolved greatly over time. These theories include the Great Man Theory, Trait Theory, Behavioral Theories, Contingency Theory, Transactional Leadership Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory. Based on this evolution, leaders now must be visionary, willing to take risks, and highly adaptable to change all while demonstrating the values, goals, and culture of their organization (King, 1990). Most recently, Competence Theory has emerged as a culmination of all the earlier theories and can be defined as encompassing knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics (Muller & Turner, 2010). I chose competence theory as the framework for this project as it is the most well-rounded theory and encompasses the skills and traits most desired and valued by VSCC which was further validated through the research conducted and summarized below.

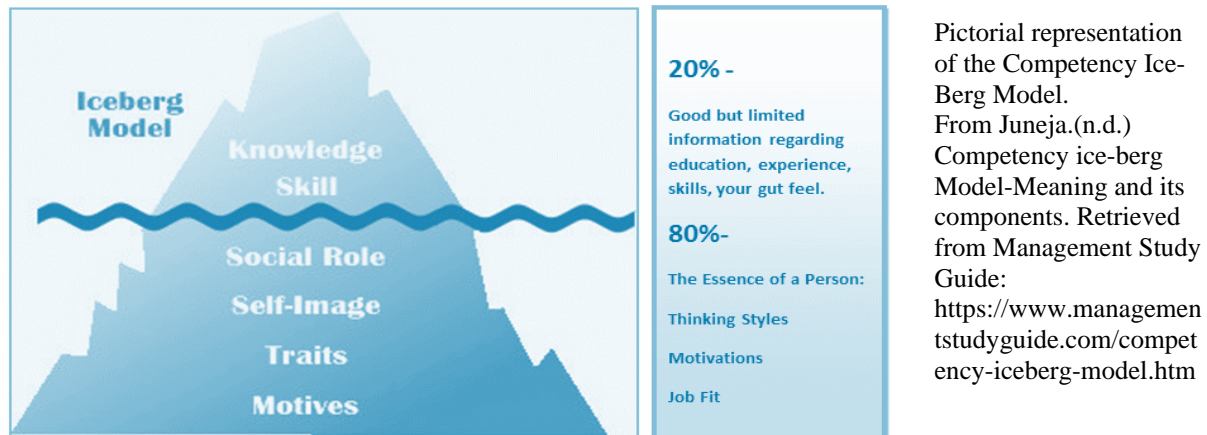
In using the competence theory framework, personal traits and qualities such as self-confidence, integrity, and initiative are considered in addition to technical, human, and conceptual skills (Morden, 1997). While technical skills deal with one's ability to complete the tasks at hand, the human skills needed are to deal with the people, or the human relations aspect of the role, and finally the conceptual skills needed involve the ability to think strategically and work with ideas (Northouse, 2014). Competence theory also relies on current leaders to be open to criticism and honest self-evaluations so leaders can improve and gain new skills (Tucker & Au, 2016).

The ice-berg model is a system thinking tool designed to help discover patterns of behavior, supporting structures, and mental models which support a main theme (Juneja, n.d.). In considering the concept of competency using the ice-berg model, you'll notice that "competency has some components which are visible like knowledge and skills but other behavioral components like attitude, traits, thinking styles, self-image, and organizational fit are hidden beneath the surface" (Juneja, n.d.).

The aspects of competencies that lie below the surface of the ice-berg model, as shown in Figure 1 below, directly influence the practice of knowledge and skills for a leader to be effective (Bhuvanij, Kasemsan, & Praneetpolgrang, 2015). Competencies like knowledge and skills are often easily developed while behavioral competencies are not only more difficult to develop, but also to assess. Competence is more than just knowledge and skills; it involves the

ability to meet complex demands by drawing on and mobilizing resources in a particular context (Bhuvanij, Kasemsan, & Praneetpolgrang, 2015).

Figure 1: Pictorial representation of the Competency Ice-Berg Model



In support of the ice-berg model and the framework of competence theory, an effective leader is one who will have a strong skill-set for problem-solving, critical thinking, professionalism, attention to detail, and technical expertise (Tucker & Au, 2016). The effectiveness of a leader who is dependent on subordinates to do the work is often measured by how the leader increases motivation, subordinate task skills, and the organization of task delegation (Yukl, 1971). However, leadership does not necessarily require direct reports, it can still be found in a variety of ways including working within a team to maximize effort towards a common goal (Kruse, 2013).

Culture, leadership, and mission are often intertwined in conventional organizations, and therefore leaders should have relationships with their followers (Thomas Whetstone, 2005). Considering individuals with strong skills, knowledge, and technical expertise is important when considering them for leadership roles. However, VSCC can further define professional competencies needed of future leaders by using the competence theory framework and the ice-berg model, including behavioral traits, conceptual skills, and engagement with faculty and staff.

### Study Questions

Harmonizing the broader objective of generalizable findings and VSCC's unique needs, the following study questions were identified and supported by VSCC administration:

1. What professional competencies must one possess to be considered for leadership roles?
2. How are leadership positions perceived by current faculty and staff?
3. Do current faculty and staff want to move into leadership positions? Why or why not?
4. What skills are needed to move into leadership positions and do current faculty and staff have access to developing these skills?
5. Given these findings, what types of professional development might impact the transition plans for VSCC, and are there internal resources which could be utilized?

Project findings will provide the foundation to develop an instructive model that will impact the transition plans for VSCC. This model will encompass strategies employed to promote staff and faculty engagement while stabilizing employee retention. First-year implementation strategies that address the unique needs and concerns of VSCC faculty and staff can be identified and recommended as being critical to the successful transition into the institution and subsequent employee retention. This study will inform VSCC's development and transition practices while strengthening current initiatives and assisting in identifying potential leaders.

### Study Design & Analysis

This project utilized a mixed-methods approach. While there are four campuses, the focus of this project is based on the faculty and staff at the main campus located in Gallatin, TN. VSCC approved the collection of quantitative data via survey method distributed electronically to their main campus consisting of 430 Full-Time Employees along with qualitative data collected via interviews with faculty and staff.

#### *Quantitative Methodology:*

Quantitative data collected used a combined adapted survey including both the Conceptualizing Leadership and Leadership Skills Questionnaire by Northouse (2011). These questionnaires have been used in a variety of research studies including Antecedents of Servant Leadership (Beck, 2014), Clinician Leadership (Chapman, Johnson, & Kilner, 2014), and how Leadership Styles Influence Employee Performance (Velu, Manxhari, Demiri, & Jahaj, 2017).

These two questionnaires are designed to have participants self-assess and reflect on their personal perception of leadership ability. The Conceptualizing Leadership Questionnaire (CLQ) provided individual scores for each participant to better understand how they define and view leadership. The survey consisted of 24 questions and then categorized those questions into six separate categories (described below). The Leadership Skills Questionnaire (LSQ) consisted of 18 questions and measured three broad types of leadership skills (described below). See Appendix A for full survey items. These results were then compared to determine individual leadership strengths and weaknesses.

The CLQ categories provided by Northouse (2011) include Trait, Ability, Skill, Behavior, Relationship, and Process. Each category allows for an individual to reflect on their perceptions of the leadership role and process. Trait emphasizes the individual's ideas of leadership characteristics while the capability to learn and manage tasks refers to the emphasis placed on Ability. Process emphasis indicates a belief that leadership is centered more on communication with faculty and staff, while Skill emphasis refers to a leader's knowledge and ability in their role. Behavior emphasis places importance on dealing with people, poise, and being influential over others. Finally, Relationship emphasis refers to the importance of interpersonal relationships and working together towards a common goal. Ultimately, these



categories reveal an individual's perception of leadership, thereby influencing how they practice leadership.

The LSQ uses three constructs to determine leadership skills and weaknesses. The survey questions assessed Administration, Interpersonal, and Conceptual Skills. Administrative skills include possessing the knowledge to complete tasks as assigned. Interpersonal skills focus more on emotional and relational skills such as motivation and conflict resolution. Conceptual skills concentrate on having the ability to see the big picture and being flexible to change.

The survey was distributed as one survey with two parts in January 2020. This was dispersed by email to the 430 full-time staff and faculty at VSCC's main campus. Each email included an embedded link to an online survey hosted on the RedCap survey platform. Prior to the beginning of each survey, respondents were asked to consent to take the survey after reading a statement that addressed the confidentiality of their responses and reinforcing the voluntary nature of the study (see Appendix B).

Survey design and coding were reviewed with VSCC prior to distribution. The survey instruments and related study materials were submitted to both Vanderbilt University and VSCC's Institutional Review Boards (IRB) and approval was granted prior to any data collection or interviews (see Appendix C).

In order to encourage participation, Dr. Faulkner sent an initial email on January 21, 2020 (see Appendix D) to all faculty and staff, with a follow-up email on January 28, 2020. Participants were given a deadline of January 31, 2020, to complete the survey. The survey had a response rate of 35.3% with 152 responses.

### *Quantitative Analysis – Survey Part A:*

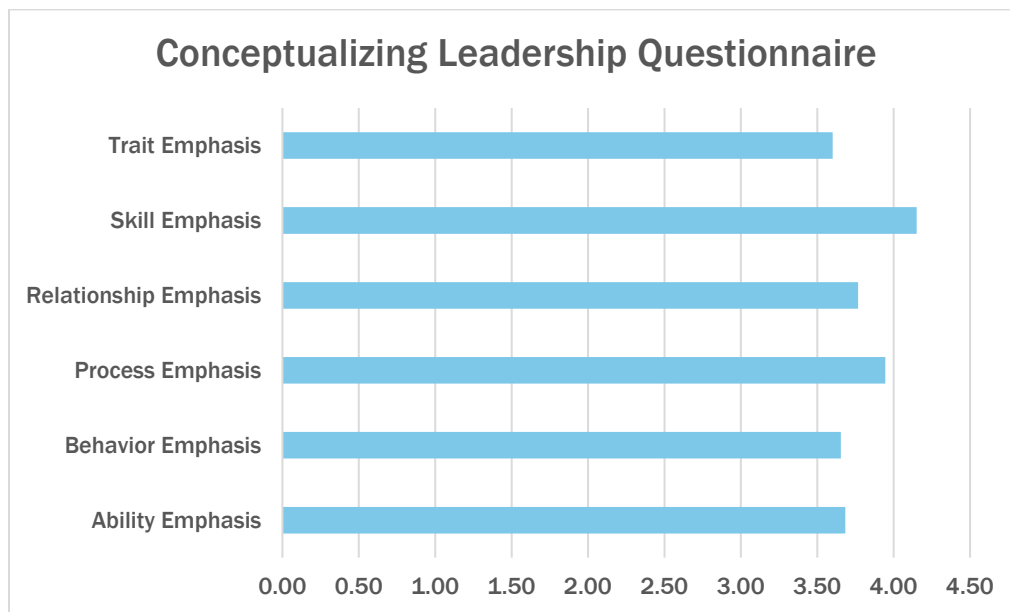
Part A of the survey included the Conceptualizing Leadership Questionnaire (Northouse, 2011). The data from this survey helped to identify how the staff and faculty perceive leadership. The scoring method of this survey allowed for those completing the survey to answer questions about how they perceive leadership using a Likert Scale of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree. This is then transferred into a numerical scoring of 1-5 (1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree), to quantify perceptions of leadership concerning trait, ability, skill, behavior, relationship, and process emphasis and further provides guidelines for scoring interpretation (Northouse, 2011).

## Leadership Transition

After running a repeated measures ANOVA on the six constructs (trait, skills, relationship, process, behavior, and ability; see Figure 2. I found a significant difference between the six constructs,  $F(2,302) = 31.21, p < .001$ . I then ran follow-up paired-samples t-tests and found no significant differences between trait, ability, behavior, or relationship. However, there was significant differences between trait and skill ( $t(157) = -10.35, p < .05$ ), trait and process ( $t(157) = -6.45, p < .05$ ), trait and relationship ( $t(157) = -3.03, p < .05$ ), ability and skill ( $t(157) = -10.33, p < .05$ ), ability and process ( $t(157) = -5.76, p = .003$ ), skill and behavior ( $t(157) = -6.58, p < .05$ ), skill and relationship ( $t(157) = -2.33, p = .02$ ), skill and process ( $t(157) = -6.58, p < .05$ ), behavior and relationship ( $t(157) = -2.33, p = .02$ ), between behavior and process ( $t(157) = -6.58, p < .05$ ) and relationship and process ( $t(157) = -4.54, p < .05$ ). This data shows there are significant differences in how these various dimensions of leadership are perceived.

The scale below allows us to see the highest area rated in the various dimensions of leadership. The data gathered shows faculty and staff of VSCC rated Skill Emphasis highest indicating those surveyed feel leadership is centered more on the communication, rather than on unique qualities. In comparison, the lowest value here was given to trait emphasis suggesting those surveyed do not hold a great deal of importance on the role itself or the character of leaders.

Figure 2



*Quantitative Analysis – Survey Part B:*

Part B of the survey included the Leadership Skills Questionnaire (Northouse, 2011). This part of the survey allows those completing the survey to identify their own leadership skills to provide a profile of strengths and weaknesses using broad types of leadership skills; see Figure 3. The scoring method of this survey allows for those completing the survey to answer questions about how they perceive themselves and their own personal effectiveness using a Likert Scale of Not True, Seldom True, Occasionally True, Somewhat True, and Very True. This is then transferred into a numerical scoring of 1-5 (1 Not True and 5 being Very True), to quantify this self-assessment on their own administrative, interpersonal, and conceptual skills and further provides guidelines for scoring interpretation (Northouse, 2011).

After running a repeated measures ANOVA on the three constructs (conceptual, interpersonal, and administrative). I found a significant difference between the three constructs,  $F(2,302) = 31.21, p < .001$ . I then ran follow-up paired-samples t-tests and found that while there was no significant difference between interpersonal and conceptual constructs, there is significant differences between administrative and interpersonal ( $t(151) = -4.83, p < .05$ ) and administrative and conceptual ( $t(151) = -5.53, p < .05$ ).

Through this portion of the survey, the results showed those who responded felt they measured very highly in interpersonal skills with a result of 4.07 out of 5 and conceptual skills measuring at 4.06 out of 5. The administrative skills area of this survey reflected a self-assessment still considered above average with results measuring at 3.87 out of 5. Despite the confidence level of respondents, the data shows us the area where the need to improve is in administrative skills inclusive of personnel management, obtaining and allocating resources, and detailed aspects of their work.

Figure 3



### *Qualitative Methodology:*

In addition to the survey distributed, qualitative data was also collected via interviews with faculty and staff at VSCC to inform administration of how professional development is perceived as well as what skills faculty and staff felt are needed to help them improve in their roles within the institution. Interview questions included role description, level of happiness, and perceptions of their own skills set, support of VSCC, and development opportunities (See Appendix E). Additionally, the interviews inquired as to participants' overarching professional goals.

All interviews were conducted individually in a neutral space on VSCC's main campus in a private conference room. Interviews were conducted with faculty and staff to address study questions. The interviews were semi-structured with open and close-ended questions in an effort to facilitate the discussion and allow for the collection of information which proved to be helpful in informing stakeholders of opportunities to improve employee satisfaction.

To recruit participants for the interviews, Dr. Faulkner, requested nominations for participants be made through the executive leadership cabinet at VSCC. Nominations were sent discretely and then scheduled independently. Interviews were held in February 2020 over the course of four days. Of the 12 nominations received, 10 interviews were conducted split evenly with 5 faculty members and 5 staff. Each interview lasted between thirty to forty-five minutes. All participants consented to the recording of the interviews and consented to the interview. Participants were given an Informed Consent Statement, a copy of which is included in Appendix F, and were given a unique identification code to ensure anonymity and maintain confidentiality.

### *Qualitative Analysis:*

Once interviews with VSCC faculty and staff were completed, qualitative data analysis began with using Otter ai software to transcribe the digitally recorded interviews. Text was then transferred into Microsoft Excel and organized for coding. The data was then sorted by content and transferred into Microsoft Word for analysis by categories, topics, and subtopics for review. Data was further analyzed for emerging themes and keywords.

### *Theme 1: Culture*

While unrelated to the initial study questions, I feel it is important to note that throughout interviews, the most prevalent theme was that of culture. Of those interviewed, 90% revealed the culture and family atmosphere was what they enjoyed most about VSCC, while the remaining 10% indicated they enjoyed working with the students. The importance of culture on VSCC's campus, while not directly related to our study questions, does speak to the type of leaders the

**“WE ARE A COMMUNITY AND A FAMILY. THERE IS A TRUE-OPEN DOOR POLICY HERE AT VOLSTATE. IF I NEEDED TO TALK TO DR. FAULKNER RIGHT NOW, HE WOULD MAKE TIME FOR ME.”**

institution is looking for when it comes to succession planning. Culture fit is important when hiring new employees as studies have shown when employees values are in line with the values of their institution, employee retention improves and new hires often have a great awareness of the institution's needs and work accordingly (Vandenberghe, 1999).

### *Theme 2: Ambiguous Career Progression*

Of the staff interviewed, all agreed there were few opportunities for advancement and the path to get there is not clear. In one of the staff interviews, an individual, when asked about his career progression, noted how there were no steps between his position and a leadership role in the institution to show progression, growth, or development. Without this evolution, an external candidate would likely be preferable due to the evidence of tiered learning, graduated responsibilities, and expertise.

**“WHILE I WOULD LIKE TO PROGRESS IN MY CAREER, I AM NOT READY BECAUSE MY NEXT STEP HERE AT VOLSTATE WOULD BE THE CIO ROLE.”**

Faculty showed similar concerns as staff when interviewed about professional goals within the institution. Interviewees indicated there is no clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities for upper level positions and the guidelines for faculty advancement remain unclear. For example, in a faculty interview, an individual indicated while they would be interested in taking on a Dean or Chair position, there was no clear indication of what those roles actually were. Current faculty lack understanding of what skills are needed, and what responsibilities leadership roles such as those above would consist of.

### *Theme 3: Lack of Professional Development*

As the interviews delved deeper into the professional development opportunities, it was found that those with little to no higher education, less than 4% of staff, found learning prospects on campus while those with bachelor's degrees or higher struggled to find opportunities. Some faculty indicated that while there was professional development available, there was a definite need for more. Almost everyone interviewed, both faculty and staff, felt the need to personally work on communication skills, how to have difficult conversations, and a need to improve their people skills.

**“I KNOW A LOT OF PEOPLE, WHEN THEY FIRST START THE PERSON WHO HELD THAT POSITION PRIOR IS NO LONGER HERE. I THINK A MENTORING PROGRAM WOULD ALLOW FOR THEM TO BE INTRODUCED TO OTHERS. IT WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR NEW EMPLOYEES.”**

Throughout the interview process, additional discoveries were made. The majority of those interviewed were interested in creating a structured mentoring program, innovation, and a more evenly distributed workload.

### Discussion of Findings

***1. Through data collected, it was discovered that VSCC holds a strong emphasis on knowledge and skills while also having the ability to influence others.***

According to quantitative data collected, those surveyed indicated leadership on VSCC's campus is centered more on communication than having unique traits indicative of a leader. While the data also showed faculty and staff view themselves highly in conceptual and interpersonal skills, there was also a need for further training in administrative skills. These administrative skills include personnel management, obtaining and allocating resources, and improvement in various aspects of their work.

Qualitative data found faculty and staff feel the leadership is approachable, empathetic, and accessible. In considering how leadership was described by faculty and staff, the professional competencies VSCC would be looking for include leaders with exceptional problem-solving, critical thinking skills, professionalism, technical expertise, and strong communication skills. New leaders who possess these competencies would likely transition easily into VSCC's campus and culture. However, as shown previously in the ice-berg model, many of these skills are often unseen as many competencies have components that are behavioral and therefore hidden under the surface.

In review of both the ice-berg model and competence theory framework and as previously stated by Tucker & Au (2016), effective leaders have strong skill sets for problem-solving, critical thinking, professionalism, attention to detail, and technical expertise. In analyzing the outcomes of both the quantitative and qualitative data, the results are aligned in showing a continued need for training and improvement in administrative skills and other various aspects of their work. Further, the results are also aligned in how leadership is perceived and correlates back to the literature reviewed which aids in determining necessary professional competencies for leadership roles.

***2. Despite VSCC being an institution of higher education, professional development and leadership opportunities are few and far between.***

Although the qualitative findings of this project indicate a desire to advance within the institution, there seems to be no clear path for staff advancement. Faculty members seem to be unclear about the roles and responsibilities of leadership positions. With this information in

hand, it is possible to make the assumption VSCC has not been promoting from within the organization into leadership roles as current staff and faculty who are qualified are unclear if they have the skills, knowledge, and ability to fill these roles and thus are simply not applying.

While it is evident there are some professional development opportunities on VSCC's campus, the faculty and staff want more. Those interviewed indicated a need to work on interpersonal skills and the quantitative data revealed the need to improve administrative skills. There is developmental opportunity for a structured leadership-based program to include training on competencies such as communication, problem solving, and difficult conversations which can also improve confidence of faculty and staff.

### ***3. Culture fit of rising leaders will be necessary.***

The most prevalent theme throughout the qualitative data was that of culture. Culture can be defined as a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned through adaptation, integration, and has worked well enough to be considered a valid way of perceiving, thinking, and feeling within the organization (Schein, 1985). At VSCC culture can be defined by what the institution and its leaders have paid attention to, what and how communications were sent, and how problems have been solved.

With VSCC's culture in mind, leaders who are communicative, committed to team building, accessible, and approachable fit into the organization with minimal effort. Unfortunately, during the collection of qualitative data, there was an overarching sense that ideas on campus often go unheard. Additionally, one staff member indicated that she was hired into a role with no one to officially train her and never even got a tour of the campus. Effort must be placed on culture fit, regardless of role being filled, to ensure there is an alignment of beliefs and values between person and organization for overarching success.

These findings indicate VSCC's transition plans could be positively impacted by focusing on creating a constant and constructive experience for faculty and staff by taking current professional development opportunities and expanding upon them. There are some internal resources at VSCC which could be utilized to include current departments such as Human Resources and the Division for Workforce and Economic Development. Implementing the following recommendations can help to improve retention, increase the candidate pool for leadership positions, and further engage their faculty and staff.



### Recommendations

As with most research work, this project started with broad questions leading to more specific findings. Originally beginning with a concern that current faculty and staff were not prepared to take on upper level leadership roles, the project initially focused on employee perceptions of their own abilities and of current leadership. With the desire to have employees be more viable candidates for leadership positions, the research project dove deep into how VSCC could provide these employees the training and skills needed to be great leaders.

VSCC will need to be purposeful in their design and planning in order to give employees the skills and knowledge to support individuals in roles as leaders. Given the additional findings throughout surveys and interviews, additional recommendations can be made in an effort to enhance and improve faculty and staff engagement while addressing the problem of practice noted at VSCC.

#### ***Recommendation 1: Structured Professional Development***

Strong, successful organizations have strong leaders at the forefront. Taking into consideration VSCC's desire to promote from within, the organization needs a deliberate way to improve the skills of current employees to effectively create strong supervisors, managers, and executives (Pernick, 2001). By creating an internal Professional Development Plan, VSCC would have the opportunity to prepare the next generation of institutional leaders in line with their own culture and strategic agenda while ensuring a greater supply of potential leaders with the essential skills.

Professional development has long since been used to improve work performance and outcomes in various organizations. In review of adult learning theories, the main conditions that promote learning in the workplace include variation, challenge, autonomy, collective learning opportunities, and the chance to work with and learn from others (Smylie, 1995). Guilford Technical Community College in North Carolina implemented a Leadership Effectiveness and Development Program to facilitate the development of leadership competencies and strategies, resulting in a leadership development portfolio for each participant (Wallin, Cameron, & Sharples, 2005). Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) also recently implemented a Leader Experience Pathway to give leaders the tools and competencies needed to be effective and successful (Vanderbilt University Medical Center, 2020).

I would suggest that the Professional Development Plan be structured similarly to that of VUMC's which is dependent on the path faculty and staff are currently on. VSCC's front-line leaders, the supervisors, team leaders, and managers who take on the day-to-day workflow, should have professional development which is guided more towards essential leadership skills to assist in meeting the daily needs of their staff. The mid-level leaders, those who manage other leaders such as department chairs and faculty leads, should have more strategic professional development which can help better equip them to manage others to achieve organizational strategic and operational goals and initiatives.

Regardless of professional path, there are some shared development courses which can improve confidence, communication, and skills regardless of their current role in the institution. These courses include emotional intelligence, leading problem solving, and unconscious bias. Training in these human skill competency areas are especially important in organizations where it is difficult to recruit and train competent replacements as the importance of human resources and relations are needed to achieve optimal levels of performance (Yukl, 2008).

In interviews with faculty and staff, almost all interviewed felt the need to work on these human skills. Emotional Intelligence abilities correlate with institutional outcomes such as leadership efficacy, employee retention, effective communication, and positive adaptation skills (Codier, Kamikawa, & Kooker, 2011). Leading problem solving would provide leaders with the skills needed to teach their staff how to use creative problem solving to resolve low-level issues on their own and, further, how to bring more complex issues to their supervisors along with possible resolutions. Finally, unconscious bias training is a way to help everyone understand their own biases and improve the interactions with others at the institution to help further the deep community within VSCC.

Once these shared trainings are complete, front-line leaders should move on to technical development in areas such as staff coaching and policy fundamentals. As Northouse (2011) previously described, technical skills deal with one's ability to complete the tasks at hand. Moreover, efficiency can be considered a technical skill in which the organization minimizes the cost of people and resources need to carry out daily operations (Yukl, 2008). Technical development courses such as staff coaching can be used by front-line leaders to develop their staff member's knowledge and skills, improve performance, and how best to provide feedback.

Additional organizational fundamental courses can further help front-line leaders better understand VSCC's practices and performance management.

Mid-level leaders, upon completing the shared trainings, then move on to more specific conceptual skill trainings such as influencing others for impact and situational leadership. Northouse (2011) further discusses how conceptual skills involve the ability to think strategically and work with larger organizational ideas. In an effort to continue with the progression of an executive leadership pipeline, emerging leaders will need to understand how to use leadership behaviors in interactions, decision making, organizational structure, and competitive strategy for the future of the organization (Yukl, 2008). Influencing others for impact will help to develop and practice effective collaboration and negotiation skills in how to achieve results without direct authority. Situational Leadership helps leaders to better assess the comfort and competence of team members to apply leadership styles most likely to help them succeed.

In review of the quantitative data, the need is shown for improvement in administrative skills. Through the qualitative data, faculty and staff further expressed a desire and a need for a structured professional development plan. While a plan has been recommended and outline here, it is certainly acceptable that VSCC might want to tailor this a bit more depending on their strategic vision for the future. In order to do this, VSCC will need to continually assess and evaluate professional development courses to ensure professional progress and leadership readiness (Pernick, 2001).

### ***Recommendation 2: Structured Mentoring/Coaching Program***

Throughout the data collection for this project, faculty and staff indicated they both wanted and needed additional development opportunities. Transitioning from a junior faculty to a faculty lead, a staff to a manager, or a mid-level leader into an executive leader role, can be daunting as individuals are learning to utilize a collection of new skills while taking on new responsibilities for the institution. Through interviews, I learned faculty members do not have a clear understanding of what upper leadership roles would look like for them. One individual expressed that upon taking the role of Department Chair, he was not provided with any clear guidance of what was expected of him. Adopting a leadership coaching model can assist in the development of new leaders as they transition into these complex roles and can also help to identify staff members as budding leaders in the institution (Rathmell, Brown, & Kilburg, 2019).

While there may be some concern here about how to pair up mentors and mentees, it is important to consider the idea that pairs do not have to be within the same department and often times outsiders to a department can offer a different point of view. Undoubtedly, there are different paths here so VSCC would not pair a faculty member up with a member of the finance team, but a faculty member in the History Department could most certainly be paired with a Faculty from the Fine Arts Department. Similarly, you could pair a leader from Finance with a new member of Human Resources. Strategically, one would want to pair up an experienced leader with a novice.

Coaching or Mentoring programs can be aimed at skill growth, improved performance outcomes, and developmental skills. Creating a coaching or mentoring program surrounding the idea of developmental coaching can create a safe space for the mentee to experience reflective learning and assist in an individual becoming more aware of leadership style, improving their communication, and recognizing how they are perceived (Smith Glasgow, Weinstock, Lachman, Suplee, & Dreher, 2009). Coaching and mentoring can provide valuable insight into many difficult situations, assist in learning how to navigate the landscape of an institution, and create strong relationships which align with the culture and community found on VSCC's campus.

Coaches and mentors must have skills in the form of questioning, effective listening, self-awareness, and action (Smith Glasgow, Weinstock, Lachman, Suplee, & Dreher, 2009). In order for these experiences to be effective, ground rules would need to be established to include frequency, topics to explore, and expectations from both individuals. Further, those being coached and mentored must feel safe asking questions, develop their listening skills, and be both open and committed to the process.

VSCC's Department of Human Resources could develop training modules and templates to set guidelines for experienced leaders to standardize how coaching and mentoring is conducted across campus. Through training VSCC can ensure coaches and mentors understand their role and responsibility and consequently the experience will likely be much more successful. In training these experienced leaders, HR could create an open communication with these experienced leaders allowing for further collaboration, identifying potential leaders, and ensure coaching is being conducted in a professional, courteous, and helpful manner. In considering the ice-berg model and how many competencies are often unseen, VSCC might

consider incorporating coaching and mentoring efforts into performance evaluations or annual reviews to further assess progression.

### *Recommendation 3: Career Progression Pathway*

Throughout the interviews conducted as part of this project, I have learned that there is not a path for next steps in staff member's careers. While faculty members have steps to take to reach their next level, this pathway is unclear to staff members. In one of the interviews, I spoke with an administrative assistant who described her role as having responsibilities more reflective of a project manager rather a secretary. Further, she expressed to me that it was very hard for staff members to make the leap to the professional side of VSCC.

**“To even make the leap from an Administrative Assistant to Executive Admin is possible, but it’s difficult”**

Creating a career pathway would enable and encourage staff to advance in their professions. In collecting data via interviews, I have learned that while faculty and staff want to move into leadership positions, they do not know how. Career pathways can include varied forms of career progression including vertical and horizontal movements depending on where an individual is at in their career and where they aspire to be (SHRM, n.d.). By implementing career paths, VSCC may see improved employee satisfaction, retention of top performers, and a pathway for aspiring leaders in the institution.

The ambition and desire to follow a designated path is ultimately the decision of each employee. However, by offering career paths and working to ensure staff are in appropriate positions, VSCC could create a pipeline of employees as they progress within the institution enabling employees to feel secure in their employment and advance over time. Additionally, when considering recruitment of high achieving applicants, organizational characteristics, including broad career paths can be attractive to candidates (Trank, Rynes, & Bretz, 2002). By creating a career pathway, VSCC can demonstrate to faculty and staff how the institution is invested in them, cares about their advancement, and want them to succeed (Messmer, 2003).

VSCC currently has 430 staff and faculty on the main campus. As faculty members have indicated they have a path, albeit not very clear, it is suggested Human Resources start with creating a career pathway for the staff positions. First steps would be to review positions and

## Leadership Transition

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work with managers to determine how many current employees are being asked to complete tasks outside of their job scope. Ensuring staff members are in the right categories and job codes is imperative to ensuring they are able to take the next step in their pathway.

*Figure 4: Career Transition Example*



Review of current roles and aligning them with a progressive path can assist with career transitions, increase internal promotion rates within the organization, and improve transparency of skills required to take the next step. An example of this process, in Figure 4 above, would allow for clear guidance on roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Descriptions would need to be available to all staff, list clear roles, responsibilities, and qualifications.

Understandably, creating career pathways can be a daunting task. It is highly recommended this process be done in smaller chunks to avoid Human Resources being overwhelmed. In order to create these pathways, there needs to be a deep understanding of each role and the expectations of individuals in those roles. Partnerships between Human Resources and leadership will be vital to creating each path and ensuring there is an understanding of how roles can progress.

Creating a career pathway for the employees at VSCC can also show the staff that leadership recognizes the need for change, a desire to create opportunities for advancement, and demonstrate a commitment to the future of both the institution and the employees. VSCC leadership will need to work together to create this career mapping process. With the additional workload Human Resources might take on to complete this career pathway process, extra staffing may be necessary. Therefore, consideration should be given to grouping out roles over several years in order to minimize financial strain on the institution as it is possible that as advancement is created and staff are potentially reclassified into alternative job categories, changes in compensation could result.

### *Recommendation 4: Implementation of an Employee Suggestion Tool*

Organizational culture plays a critical role in motivating behavior. Through the qualitative data collected, VSCC's culture refers to a team-based environment, willingness to support each other, and transparency from leadership. In dispute with this discovered sense of culture, I found an additional desire for innovation and a more evenly distributed workload. Further was discovered that ideas were quickly dismissed before an employee has an opportunity to even present to leadership. It is imperative VSCC recognize there could be a better way to complete tasks and that every employee has the potential to produce creative ideas which can generate valuable innovations for their organization (Fairbank & Williams, 2001).

**"I feel like if I make a suggestion, it just gets shot down. Every single time."**

Higher education is constantly in need of innovative research, pedagogies, and organizational structures (Tierney & Langford, 2016). To progress into the future, innovation will need to be promoted on campus. Innovation can take on many roles in an established institution such as VSCC. Being successful for 50 years, the natural reaction is to dismiss alternative ways of conducting business (Markides, 1998). During one interview, an individual stated there is a desire to not change anything and is often told, "This is the way it's always been done." Another individual stated that when she first started in her role as a manager, she had a great idea to streamline processes, but that idea was "shot down before it could even be brought up to the higher ups."

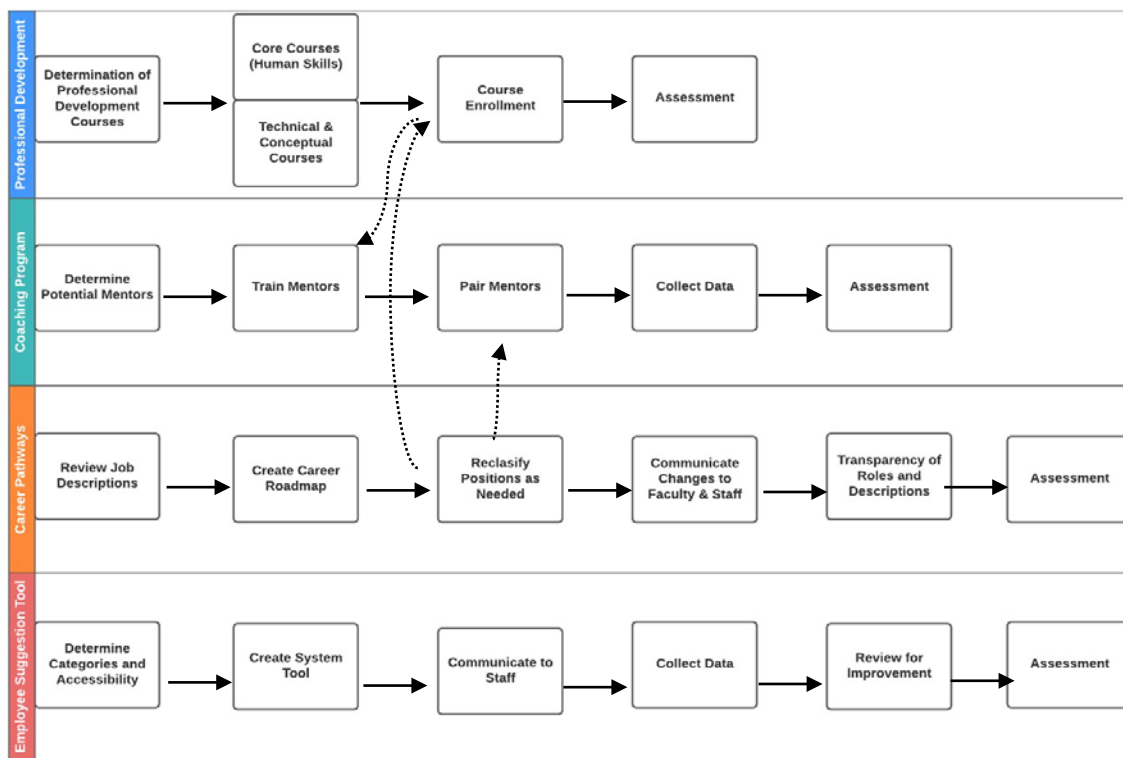
It is recommended VSCC implement a suggestion system for employees to submit process improvement ideas to the higher ups if they feel there is no opportunity for traction within their department. Further, managers should be encouraging their staff to utilize this system and encourage their creativity. Employee suggestion systems are useful tools to obtain and utilize creative ideas (Fairbank & Williams, 2001). These systems can be streamlined with categories such as process, campus, leader, and development improvements. Once a suggestion is submitted, based on the category, the idea can then be submitted to the correct oversight group to help determine if the suggested improvement is a viable option.

In an effort to preserve the culture currently existing on campus, VSCC must be open to new ideas and willing to consider new ways of conducting business.

## Timeline Proposed

In working closely with Volunteer State Community College, the organization has requested an outline of the work to be done with a proposed timeline. This design was created with the structured flow diagram currently used on VSCC's campus to depict process improvement flows. To start this process, a flowchart was created to determine steps necessary to implement these changes and how they influence other recommendations provided. Further, a timeline is proposed based on ease of implementation, costs associated, and to allow for decisions to be made on recommendations while still conducting process improvements.

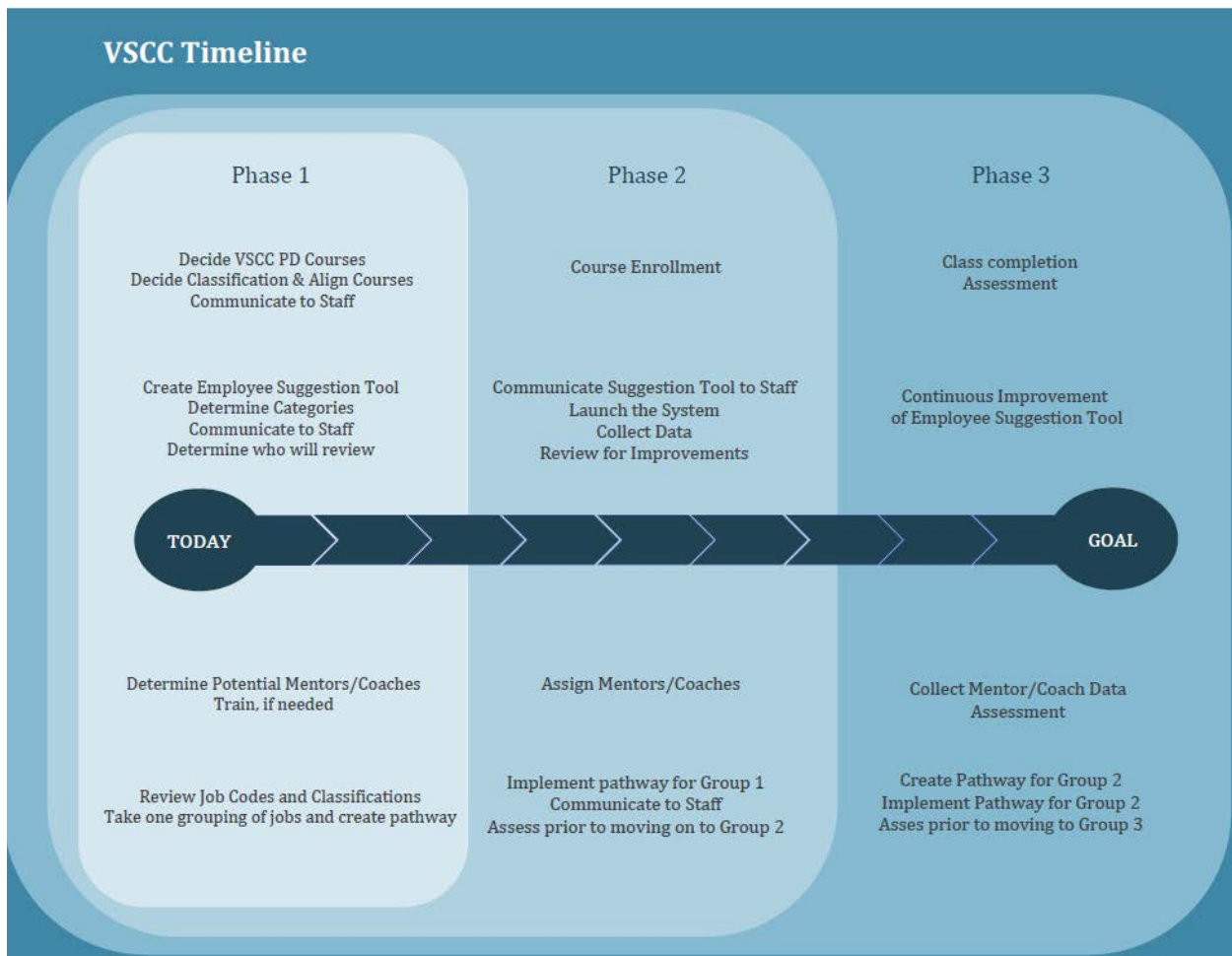
Figure 5: Process Flowchart



The above visual, in Figure 5, is the flowchart which shows recommendations made and steps to be taken to implement and assess success. In the section of each lane, it is shown that VSCC must make some decisions before taking the next step. Each section then ends with reassessing the process improvement implemented to ensure success and make any changes necessary. More, in using this visual, it is easily shown by the dashed lines on the chart how professional development can impact the mentoring process, and how changes in career paths can impact classification for professional development.



Figure 6



The timeline above, in Figure 6, is based three phases. Understandably, the Phase 1 could take much longer than Phase 2 or Phase 3. Phase 1 essentially focuses on VSCC making several decisions, regarding course development, the employee suggestion tool created, mentors/coaches selected, and for HR to begin review of job codes and classifications. By the end of Phase 2 faculty and staff will have begun course enrollment, the employee suggestion tool will be launched, mentors/coaches will be assigned, and the career pathway for the first set of staff will be implemented.

The goal is that by the end of Phase 3 a good majority of courses in professional development will be completed, data from the coaches and mentors will be collected, and the career pathway for the second group of employees will be underway. You'll also notice that on this timeline, there are opportunities to assess each recommendation. Additionally, it is

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important to note that this timeline is dependent on stakeholder agreement, employee buy-in, and resources available for these process improvements.

There are various resources which will need to be used in order to implement these major changes to VSCC's campus. First, and foremost, the President and his Executive Leadership Council will need to meet to make many of these decisions. Leadership, along with the Director for Human Resources will need to be involved regarding the Professional Development Plan. Further, VSCC has the opportunity to utilize already existing programming such as Cultural Diversity, Team Building, and Mindful Relationships. Personnel hours from Information Technology will need to be allocated for the design and implementation of the Employee Suggestion Tool, while a committee will need to be formed for reviewing the suggestions made. Human Resources, as well as the Executive Leadership Council, will play a key role both with the career path mapping program and the Mentoring Program.

### Study Limitations

The widespread lockdowns and social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic have restricted many types of research activities such as in-person observations, interviews, site-visits, and follow-up surveys. Initial data for this project was successfully collected in February 2020 prior to the initial lockdown. Due to the stress and uncertainty already experienced by employees during the pandemic, follow-up surveys and interviews were not conducted at the request and recommendation of VSCC Leadership.

While the quantitative data collected included both faculty and staff, steps were not taken to differentiate responses by that specific category. In hindsight, categorizing responses by role might have shown different ideas, needs, and trajectories. Unfortunately, this data was not collected and therefore serves as a limitation within the data. Additional limitations on this same data include the data was collected solely from the main campus and therefore does not reflect concerns or views from other VSCC faculty and staff primarily located on the other three campuses.

Interviews conducted included individuals who were nominated by the Executive Leadership Council to participate in this project as VSCC respectfully requested I not recruit independently for interviews. Participants fell within varying roles to include managers, administrative assistants, janitorial staff, and instructors. While all interviewees were engaged in the process and seemingly honest with their responses and feedback, the limitation exists that VSCC chose these individuals for specific reasons and had I recruited others for the interview process the response might differ. The small sample size of interviews conducted also affects reliability of the data results as it leads to a higher variability which may then lead to bias.

Regardless of limitations noted, it is still proposed, with some degree of confidence and through connecting these results to the literature, that VSCC should endorse several effective recommendations as outlined in this project.

### Conclusion

This project sought to find ways to create viable candidates for leadership positions within Volunteer State Community College. In order to do this, research needed to be conducted to determine how leadership was perceived and what professional competencies were needed to be considered for leadership roles. Further, if faculty and staff wanted to move into leadership positions, what professional development would be needed to help them improve their skills?

Through surveys and interviews, it was found that VSCC holds a strong emphasis on knowledge and skills among their leaders while also having the ability to influence processes. Therefore, professional development recommendations include subjects such as problem solving, influencing for impact, and emotional intelligence. Further findings revealed leaders on VSCC's campus are perceived as having strong communication skills, knowledge, and the ability to influence processes. New leaders who possess these competencies would likely transition easily into VSCC's campus and culture. Regardless of how easily a new employee might transition into their role, a coaching/mentoring program is recommended to assist in acclimating newly hired individuals into their roles, offer guidance on navigating various processes, and potentially be able to help guide budding leaders into effective roles.

Knowing the required competencies one must have to be considered for leadership roles, and the skills needed, we learned through interview data that current faculty and staff do not feel this type of development is readily available to them. It was further discovered that faculty and staff want to move into leadership positions, they simply do not have a clear path to do so. Therefore, the recommendation is to create a transparent career path program through the Department of Human Resources. A career path program will additionally help faculty and staff identify areas of improvement that are needed to take the next step in their professional role on campus. The recommendation is for VSCC to utilize current program offerings, redesigned into a professional development program for all faculty and staff to improve their skills needed to take that next step.

Assessment and continuous improvement are also key to the success of the recommendations made. All faculty and staff, regardless of stature, can benefit from these professional development opportunities. By having the support of upper leadership, the implementation of these recommendations provides an opportunity to improve various processes at this institution. Adding to their already strong culture, VSCC can encourage faculty and staff

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to be both innovating and creative in problem solving. Further, by encouraging a mindset of continuous learning, creative thinking, and increased innovation, VSCC will likely increase the chance of retaining quality faculty and staff, creating a pipeline of emerging leaders, and creating a more engaging workplace.

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## Appendix A: RedCap Survey

Confidential

Page 1

### Preparing Current Faculty and Staff for Leadership Roles: Part A

Consider for a moment your own personal impression of the word "leadership". Based on your experiences with leaders, what is leadership? Now, using the scale offered, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about leadership.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) When I think of leadership, I think of a person with special personality traits. | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 2) Much like playing the piano or tennis, leadership is a learned ability.          | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 3) Leadership requires knowledge and know-how.                                      | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 4) Leadership is about what people do rather than who they are.                     | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 5) Followers can influence the leadership process as much as leaders.               | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 6) Leadership is about the process of influencing others.                           | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 7) Some people are born to be leaders.  | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 8) Some people have the natural ability to be leaders.                              | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

Date of IRB Approval: 12/16/2019

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- |     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| 9)  | The key to successful leadership is having the right skills.  | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 10) | Leadership is best described by what leaders do.  | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 11) | Leaders and followers share in the leadership process.  | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 12) | Leadership is a series of actions directed toward positive ends.  | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 13) | A person needs to have certain traits to be an effective leader.  | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 14) | Everyone has the capacity to be a leader.   | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 15) | Effective leaders are competent in their roles.   | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 16) | The essence of leadership is performing tasks and dealing with people.  | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 17) | Leadership is about the common purposes of leaders and followers.   | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |
| 18) | Leadership does not rely on the leader alone but is a process involving the leader, followers, and the situation. | <input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Disagree<br><input type="radio"/> Neutral<br><input type="radio"/> Agree<br><input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree |

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- 
- 19) People become great leaders because of their traits.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
- 
- 20) People can develop the ability to lead.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
- 
- 21) Effective leaders have competence and knowledge.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
- 
- 22) Leadership is about how leaders work with people to accomplish goals.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
- 
- 23) Effective leadership is best explained by the leader-follower relationship.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
- 
- 24) Leaders influence and are influenced by followers.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - Neutral
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree

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## Preparing Current Faculty and Staff for Leadership Roles: Part B

Place yourself in the role of a leader when responding to this questionnaire. For each of the statements below, indicate the degree to which you feel the statement is true.

- 
- 25) I am effective with the detailed aspects of my work.
- Not True  
 Seldom True  
 Occasionally True  
 Somewhat True  
 Very True
- 
- 26) I usually know ahead of time how people will respond to a new idea or proposal.
- Not True  
 Seldom True  
 Occasionally True  
 Somewhat True  
 Very True
- 
- 27) I am effective at problem solving.
- Not True  
 Seldom True  
 Occasionally True  
 Somewhat True  
 Very True
- 
- 28) Filling out forms and working with details comes easily for me.
- Not True  
 Seldom True  
 Occasionally True  
 Somewhat True  
 Very True
- 
- 29) Understanding the social fabric of the organization is important to me.
- Not True  
 Seldom True  
 Occasionally True  
 Somewhat True  
 Very True
- 
- 30) When problems arise, I immediately address them.
- Not True  
 Seldom True  
 Occasionally True  
 Somewhat True  
 Very True
- 
- 31) Managing people and resources is one of my strengths.
- Not True  
 Seldom True  
 Occasionally True  
 Somewhat True  
 Very True
- 
- 32) I am able to sense the emotional undercurrents in my group.
- Not True  
 Seldom True  
 Occasionally True  
 Somewhat True  
 Very True

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| 33) Seeing the big picture comes easily for me.                               | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |
| 34) In my work, I enjoy responding to people's requests and concerns.         | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |
| 35) I use my emotional energy to motivate others.                             | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |
| 36) Making strategic plans for my organization appeals to me.                 | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |
| 37) Obtaining and allocating resources is a challenging aspect of my job.     | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |
| 38) The key to successful conflict resolution is respecting my opponent.      | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |
| 39) I enjoy discussing organizational values and philosophy.                  | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |
| 40) I am effective at obtaining resources to support our programs.            | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |
| 41) I work hard to find consensus in conflict situations.                     | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |
| 42) I am flexible about making changes in our department and/or organization. | <input type="radio"/> Not True<br><input type="radio"/> Seldom True<br><input type="radio"/> Occasionally True<br><input type="radio"/> Somewhat True<br><input type="radio"/> Very True |

Date of IRB Approval: 12/16/2019

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12/16/2019 11:56am



## Appendix B: Survey Consent Form

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY



Peabody College

Resize font:



### Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a survey for a research project in which we are seeking to understand how best to prepare internal candidates for leadership positions. Your feedback is valuable, and we ask that you answer the questions as honestly as possible.

The purpose of this research is to learn what professional competencies one must possess to be considered for leadership roles, how leadership positions are perceived by current faculty and staff, do current faculty and staff even want to move into these roles, and if so what skills are needed and do current faculty and staff have access to develop these skills?

The following survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time to complete.

We do not anticipate that taking this survey will contain any risk or inconvenience to you. Furthermore, your participation is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. Upon a written request to withdraw, your data will be destroyed.

All information you provide in the survey will remain confidential and will not be associated with your name or other identifiers. There will be no connection to you specifically in the results or in future publications of the results.

You may obtain survey results at the conclusion of the study upon written request.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact:

Jennifer Ray  
Peabody Doctoral Student  
[jennifer.m.ray.1@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jennifer.m.ray.1@vanderbilt.edu)  
(615) 512-2998

Dr. Cynthia Nebel  
Peabody Faculty Advisor  
[cynthia.nebel@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:cynthia.nebel@vanderbilt.edu)  
(314) 740-4218

By clicking **SUBMIT** you are verifying you have read the aforementioned explanation of the research, and that you agree to participate. You also understand that your survey participation is strictly voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

**Submit**

## Appendix C: IRB Approval

Home > Approved Studies > Study: "Leadership Transition: Preparing Staff for New Roles"

### Leadership Transition: Preparing Staff for New Roles

IRB #192326

PI Ray, Jennifer M

Info KSP Approved Documents Submissions Funding Performance Sites Create Submission

**Leadership Transition: Preparing Staff for New Roles**

<b>Principal Investigator</b>	Ray, Jennifer M
<b>Status</b>	Approved
<b>Committee</b>	BSC
<b>Study Coordinator</b>	None Listed
<b>IRB Number</b>	192326
<b>Faculty Advisor</b>	Cynthia Nebel
<b>Study Update Date</b>	
<b>Billable</b>	No

NCT ID (ClinicalTrials.gov registry number)

Save

Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board  
1313 21st Ave S, Suite 505  
Nashville, TN 37232-4315  
(615) 322-2918



## Leadership Transition

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The Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research,  
Planning, and Assessment  
1480 Nashville Pike  
Gallatin, TN 37066  
(615) 230-3204  
[IERPA@volstate.edu](mailto:IERPA@volstate.edu)

January 27th 2020  
Revised: January 27th 2020

Protocol Number: FB20190007  
Protocol Title: Leadership Transition: Preparing Staff for New Roles; Jennifer Michelle Ray  
Type of Review: Full Board Review  
IRB Staff Contact: Colette Catania [IERPA@volstate.edu](mailto:IERPA@volstate.edu)

Dear Ms. Jennifer M Ray,

The Volunteer State Community College IRB Approved by Full Board Review the above-mentioned research.

Date of IRB Approval: January 27th 2020  
Date of IRB Approval Expiration: January 26<sup>th</sup> 2021  
Full Board Review

Informed consent, if applicable, must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. The IRB approved consent form and process must be used. Changes in research or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

This approval is valid for one year from the date of IRB review when approval is granted or modifications are required. The approval will no longer be in effect on the date listed above as the IRB expiration date. A continuing review application must be approved within this interval to avoid expiration of IRB approval and cessation of all research activities. A final report must be provided to the IRB and all records relating to research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 3 years after the research has ended.

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the IRB any serious, unexpected, and related adverse events and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

Please contact the IRB Chair listed above with any questions or concerns.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Colette Catania".

Chair, Institutional Review Board  
VSCC Institutional Review Board

## Appendix D: Emails from Dr. Faulkner

**From:** Faulkner, Jerry <Jerry.Faulkner@volstate.edu>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 28, 2020 10:14 AM  
**Subject:** RE: Leadership development survey

Just a reminder that the deadline for completing this survey is January 31<sup>st</sup>. We need your input to design an effective leadership development model. Please take just a few minutes to complete the survey.

Jerry Faulkner

---

**From:** Faulkner, Jerry  
**Sent:** Tuesday, January 21, 2020 7:45 AM  
**Subject:** Leadership development survey

We are collaborating with a doctoral student at Vanderbilt to help us create a leadership development program at Vol State. Your input is vital to the process. The survey results go directly to the student and not to anyone at the college. Please see the message and survey link below and please participate.

You are invited to participate in a survey for a research project in which we are seeking to understand how best to prepare internal candidates for leadership positions. Your feedback is valuable, and we ask that you answer the questions as honestly as possible.

The purpose of this research is to learn what professional competencies one must possess to be considered for leadership roles, how leadership positions are perceived by current faculty and staff, do current faculty and staff even want to move into these roles, and if so what skills are needed and do current faculty and staff have access to develop these skills?

**The following survey will take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time to complete.**

<https://redcap.link/vscleadership>

**Please complete by January 31, 2020.**

We do not anticipate that taking this survey will contain any risk or inconvenience to you. Furthermore, your participation is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. Upon a written request to withdraw, your data will be destroyed.

All information you provide in the survey will remain confidential and will not be associated with your name or other identifiers. There will be no connection to you specifically in the results or in future publications of the results.



**Jerry L. Faulkner**  
*President*

-----  
Volunteer State Community College  
1480 Nashville Pike | Gallatin, TN 37066  
(615) 230-3500 | (615) 230-3502 fax  
[www.volstate.edu](http://www.volstate.edu)



## Appendix E: Interview Questions

### VSCC Interview Questions

Good Morning/Afternoon. Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to speak with me. My name is Jennifer Ray and I am working on my Doctoral Capstone Project at Vanderbilt University, specifically with Peabody. I have had the wonderful opportunity to work with Dr. Faulkner here at Volunteer State to determine what types of professional development opportunities the faculty and staff might benefit from as a means to help further individuals career growth.

At this time, I would like to ask you to please complete this Informed Consent for my research Project. This document further details out the purposes of the study I am conducting, where the results of this study will be housed and that there is no compensation for your participation. Should you choose to continue, all efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. If you choose not to continue, no further questions will be asked. Do you have any questions about the Informed Consent? Thank you so much. Please simply sign and date at the bottom.

I have just a few questions for you today.

What is your job title and can you tell me a bit about what you do?

1. Do you enjoy the work you are doing and why or why not? What do you enjoy most about working at VSCC?
2. What opportunities and/or routes has VSCC offered you for career and skill development?
3. Have you applied for a higher position at VSCC? If so, were you selected? If not selected, were you offered a reason?
4. How would you feel about VSCC implementing professional development opportunities? Would you prefer a more structure programming in lieu of flexible options?
5. What are your greatest professional strengths and weaknesses? Do you feel VSCC offering professional development could help you improve those areas?
6. What are your overarching career goals?
7. If implemented, how could professional development be fit into your schedule? Would you prefer short in-person classes or day long workshops? Would online courses be beneficial to you?
8. How do you feel about continuing education, professional development, and mentoring programs?
9. What could VSCC do to help support you in your career?

Thank you so much for your time today. It is my sincere hope that my efforts on this study and working with VSCC will result in new initiatives here on campus that will benefit everyone.

Do you have any further questions for me?

Thank you so much for your time. It was truly a pleasure meeting you.

Date of IRB Approval: 12/16/2019

Institutional Review Board



## Appendix F: Informed Consent

### VUMC Institutional Review Board Information Sheet

Principal Investigator: Jennifer M. Ray  
Study Title: Leadership Transition: Preparing Staff for New Roles  
Institution/Hospital: Vanderbilt University

Revision Date: December 11, 2019

The following information is provided to inform you about the research project and your participation in it. Please read this form carefully and feel free to ask any questions you may have about this study and the information given below. You will be given an opportunity to ask questions, and your questions will be answered. Also, you will be given a copy of this consent form.

#### What is the purpose of this study?

This capstone project seeks to understand how best to prepare internal candidates for leadership positions within Volunteer State Community College (VSCC). VSCC, the site for this capstone project, serves an 11-county area in Tennessee with campus locations in Gallatin, Springfield, Cookeville, and Livingston. The main campus, founded in 1971, is in Gallatin, TN, approximately 30 miles northeast of Nashville. Over 11,000 students are enrolled for the average semester with more than 100 areas of study in six major divisions. Additionally, VSCC is the third-largest employer in Sumner County with more than 870 full and part-time employees. VSCC contributes more than \$117M a year into the local economy, pays \$28M annually in wages and \$11M in operating expenses (Volunteer State Community College, n.d.)

Dr. Jerry Faulkner, President at Volunteer State Community College has expressed great concern over these issues and is excited to look at their needs and concerns regarding leadership transition and how to improve for the coming years. While VSCC has a high retention rate, there are concerns that current faculty and staff are unprepared for leadership roles. Furthermore, there is a need for development of skills sets to help faculty and staff become better skilled in their own roles.

The goal of this capstone is to learn what professional competencies one must possess to be considered for leadership roles, how leadership positions are perceived by current faculty and staff, do current faculty and staff even want to move into these roles, and if so what skills are needed and do current faculty and staff have access to develop these skills?

Over the course of this study, an electronic survey will be distributed to the faculty and staff on VSCC's main campus to collect quantitative data. Additional qualitative data will be collected via interviews of four to six staff and four to six faculty, selected by either Dr. Faulkner or his designee.

#### Procedures to be followed and approximate duration of the study:

By moving forward with the interview process, you agree to participate in a structured interview with the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be digitally recorded and is anticipated to take no longer than approximately 30 minutes.

#### Expected costs:

N/A

#### Description of the discomforts, inconveniences, and/or risks that can be reasonably expected as a result of participation in this study:

Professional and/or personal risks are only potential if your individual responses to questions during the interview process are published or your confidentiality is breached in any way. To protect from this risk, you will be identified with a pseudonym on the transcript of the interviews. The list linking your pseudonym to personal identifiers will be kept secure and only known to the principal investigator.

#### The benefits you might get from being in this study:

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. Your responses will assist the principal investigator in understanding how leadership roles are viewed and in what areas further development might be needed to help improve skill sets and leader competencies.

The resulting information could potentially impact changes or opportunities at your place of employment.

Date of IRB Approval: 12/16/2019  
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VUMC Institutional Review Board  
Information Sheet

Principal Investigator: Jennifer M. Ray  
Study Title: Leadership Transition: Preparing Staff for New Roles  
Institution/Hospital: Vanderbilt University

Revision Date: December 11, 2019

**Compensation for participation:**

There is no compensation or payment for participating in this study.

**What happens if you choose to withdraw from study participation?**

If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer any of the interview questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific or professional journals. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

**Contact Information:**

If you should have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact Jennifer Ray at [jennifer.m.ray.1@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:jennifer.m.ray.1@vanderbilt.edu) – 615-512-2998 or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Cynthia Nebel at [cynthia.nebel@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:cynthia.nebel@vanderbilt.edu) – 314-740-4218.

For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, to discuss problems, concerns, and questions, or to offer input, please feel free to contact the Institutional Review Board Office at (615) 322-2918 or toll free at (866) 224-8273.

**Confidentiality:**

All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep your personal information in your research record confidential but total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. All datafiles, including survey data, interview data and observational notes will be uploaded to a secure, encrypted server. Analyses will occur on the principal investigators computer that is password protected. Only the PI and faculty advisor will have access to the data. Electronic files (digital interview recordings) will be transcribed and deidentified. All interview participants will be assigned a unique identification code/pseudonym to be used during data analysis. Research materials will only use the identification code/pseudonym and not individual names. Only the PI will have access to this list that contains the codes and it will be password protected.

This form is yours to keep.

Date of IRB Approval: 12/16/2019

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