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# The Lack of Intentionality in Recruiting and Hiring of New Community College Faculty

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**Abstract:** The author conducted a national survey of Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) at U.S. community colleges to determine what processes they use to recruit and hire a full-time faculty member. A database of chief academic officers of public community colleges in the United States was obtained from Higher Education Publications. Using the Carnegie classifications for community colleges, a proportionally stratified random sample of chief academic officers was selected. Using Survey Monkey, 176 chief academic officers were sent the survey. This paper presents the results of the survey.

**Key words:** community colleges, faculty, hiring

## 1. Introduction

According to the American Association of Community Colleges, in 2012 there were 986 public two-year colleges in the United States (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). According to the 2009 *Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac* ("Almanac Issue", 2009–2010), public community colleges employ 358,925 faculty members representing 48.2% of the 743,812 college and university faculty members. The *Almanac* also noted that despite the economic downturn community colleges added 4,428 new full-time faculty members in 2009–2010.

In 2012 community colleges enrolled 8 million students — 44 percent of all American undergraduates (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). Moreover, for 42% of these 8 million students, community colleges are the first stop on the educational ladder, many of whom are first-generation/low income (FGLI) college students for whom the choice is often the community college or no college (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Moreover, the American Association of Community Colleges reports that, community colleges enroll 44 percent of black undergraduate students, 51 percent of Hispanic undergraduates, 45 percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 54 percent of Native American students (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). Community colleges enroll a disproportionate percentage of students who come from low-income families (Brewster, 2000; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Kezar & Sam, 2010b; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). The numbers of students they serve make community colleges a potentially dominant force contributing to the economic recovery and growth of the nation. More importantly because of the service they provide to first-generation/low income college students, community colleges can play a significant role in ameliorating the social problems caused by poverty. However, the potential will only be realized if students are successful. A

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critical component contributing to the success of students is quality instruction delivered by well-prepared and dedicated faculty.

Researchers predict that 40% to 75% of full-time community college faculty may retire in the near future (Basham, Stader, & Bishop, 2009; Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Gahn & Twombly, 2001; McCormack, 2008; Outcalt, 2002). Even at the most conservative estimate, we are still looking at nearly, 150,000 retirees. Many of these are the individuals that formed the community college into the powerful educational force it is today. The loss of these individuals creates both a void and an opportunity for community college leaders to create a faculty workforce that will continue the work of the retirees and build the future of the community college. Maguire (2001) reminds us that the culture of the community college as a teaching institution is endangered by the loss of so many of the faculty that built and nurtured this culture. Others have reminded us with the changing times faculty members will need new skill sets. They will have to be much more familiar with technology, distance learning, assessment, alternative pedagogies and curricular revision processes and so on (Austin, 2002; Gibson-Harman, Rodriguez, & Haworth, 2002; Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2008; Murray, 1993; Simplicio, 2007). “Given a rapidly changing context for higher education, these entering colleagues will need new abilities, understandings, and skills beyond what new faculty members have traditionally been prepared for” (Austin, 2003, p. 136).

If, as we believe, dedicated and well prepared faculty are the key to providing excellent instruction, then it becomes critically important that we recruit and retain the best faculty. “There is no question that, to produce good learning outcomes, community colleges must employ effective faculty members. However, how effective faculty members are recruited and selected is unknown” (Twombly & Townsend, 2008, pp. 20–21). Olson (May 25, 2007) has compared recruiting talented faculty to create a “first-rate academic department” to the recruiting of talented athletes in order to build a successful collegiate athletic program. He noted that just as the recruiting of skilled athletes is necessary for a strong athletic program, the recruiting of talented faculty is necessary to achieve a strong academic program. He stated that the first step in achieving a strong academic program was the recruiting, hiring and retaining of excellent faculty; therefore, he asserts that the search process is the “most consequential task” for building an excellent faculty. His argument is even more poignant when we remember that once hired community college faculty tend to stay at the same institution for their entire careers (Grubb, 1999) which can be up to 30 years or more. That makes the initial hiring process critical. Therefore, it becomes incumbent on community college leaders to carefully vet candidates to be certain that we hire the right individuals who understand and can commit to the community college open-door philosophy (Grubb, 1999; Murray, 1999; Townsend & Twombly, 2007).

Despite the fact that researchers have concluded that recruiting and retaining a well-prepared faculty will present a serious challenge for many community college leaders (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; DeBard, 1995; Grubb, 1999; Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2008; Miller, 1996; Murray, 1999; Rosser & Townsend, 2006), we know very little about community college recruitment, hiring and socialization practices (Eddy, 2010; Flannigan, Jones, & Moore Jr., 2004; Townsend & Twombly, 2007; Twombly, 2005). This is a symptom of a larger problem — the marginalization of community college faculty worklife and the consequent tendency of researchers to ignore community colleges (Barry & Barry, 1992; Clark, 2001; Gibson-Harman et al., 2002; Outcalt, 2000; Seidman, 1985; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000). This has led one researcher to conclude that despite their importance in preparing students academically to complete a baccalaureate degree and to enter the labor force community college faculty receive scant attention from post-secondary researchers — or worse, are simply dismissed as [a]

separate, and by implication lesser, class of college professors (Huber, 1998, p. 53).

A quick glance at recent publications provides further evidence that community college "faculty and the institutions they serve have traditionally been "unnoticed, ignored by writers about higher education" (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 35). Since 1998, there have been 14 books discussing the plight of college faculty. Of these books nine have been devoted to faculty in general. Of those nine, six devote less than 5% of their pages to the discussion of community college faculty (Finkelstein et al., 1998; Graubard, 2001; Kezar & Sam, 2010a, 2010b; O'Meara, Terosky, & Neumann, 2010; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006), two do not mention community college faculty at all (Buckhold & Miller, 2009; Wilson, 1995), and one devotes a single derisive paragraph dismissing community colleges from the higher education hierarchy as being a waste of time and money for students (Neusner & Neusner, 2000). During this same time period, there have been only five books devoted to community college faculty (Grubb, 1999; Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006; Outcalt, 2002; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). One of which was devoted to the hiring process (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2008).

## 2. Method

A critical first step to improving the hiring process is to first understand what current practices are used to hire faculty. Because the first step in this process is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of current hiring practices, the author conducted a national survey of Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) at U.S. community colleges. After carefully reviewing the literature on community college faculty, the researcher constructed a survey instrument. The instrument was reviewed by two chief academic officers and was modified according to their suggestions. This paper will present the results of the survey that inquired of community college chief academic officers about the hiring processes they use to recruit and hire a full-time faculty member. Moreover, they were asked to rank a series of qualities that they believed were important in a candidate.

A database of chief academic officers of public community colleges in the United States was obtained from Higher Education Publications. Using the Carnegie classifications for community colleges, a proportionally stratified random sample of chief academic officers was selected.

Using Survey Monkey, 176 chief academic officers were sent the survey. After three iterations, 26 (14.8%) surveys were returned because of incorrect web addresses and 70 (39.8%) usable surveys were returned. Table 1 shows the response rate from each Carnegie classification.

**Table 1 Returns by Carnegie Classifications**

| Carnegie Classification | N | percent |
|---|---|---|
| rural small FTE students 500–1999 | 19 | 27.1% |
| rural medium, and FTE students 2000–4999 | 25 | 35.7% |
| rural large, more than FTE students 5000 | 5 | 7.1% |
| suburban single campus | 5 | 7.1% |
| suburban multicampus | 3 | 4.3% |
| urban single campus | 7 | 10.0% |
| urban multicampus | 6 | 8.6% |

It can be seen from Table 1 that the response rate from rural community colleges was greater than from either suburban or urban campuses. Consequently, readers attempting to apply the results to suburban or urban campuses should use caution.

## 3. Results & Discussion

### 3.1 The Importance of the Job Description

One very basic flaw in the hiring process occurs at the very beginning of the search process. Often the creation of the job description is viewed as necessary exercise needed to placate the paper shufflers in HR. When Jones-Kavalier and Flannigan (2008) researched the hiring process they found that in many cases institutions began by dusting off a generic job description. Such job descriptions rarely get at the unique characteristics of the community college teaching position. On the premise that an accurate job description is beneficial to both the institution and the candidate, the participants in this study were asked how they developed job descriptions. Only 7 (10%) develop a new job description, which is the same number of participating colleges that simply dust off an old job description. 53 (75.7%) review and modify as needed an existing job description and 3 (4.3%) didn't indicate what they do. Those who indicated that they review and modify an existing job description stated that they tended to make minor changes, such as changing the discipline and/or the closing date. In essence, most of the community colleges responding to the survey were apt to use a boilerplate job description.

The use of boilerplate job descriptions suggest that there is very little intentionality in the recruiting process (Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Although most colleges have clear human resource policies and procedures to protect them from legal complications arising from the hiring process, often "they lack a clear idea of who they are and how the hiring process can either alter or affirm their being" (Murray, 1993, p. 16). Knowing thyself is increasingly important in a time of dwindling resources when many community colleges may not be able to replace all retiring faculty members, and therefore, need to carefully select the few faculty positions they will be able to hire for. Carefully crafting a new job description provides a "powerful opportunity to address fit in alignment with the cultural values and mission of the college" (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2008, p. 75). Without a clear idea of who they are and who they want to be, community colleges are likely to make costly mistakes in hiring.

Moreover, when community colleges are able to state clearly their values and mission, they are able to communicate clearly who they are to applicants. Using a theoretical framework known as "met expectations", empirical researchers have demonstrated a connection between new hires expectations of the work and their ultimate job satisfaction and performance. Several empirical studies of organizational commitment have concluded that those individuals whose expectations of the job are more closely aligned with the reality of the job are more likely to experience job satisfaction and, therefore, more likely to find a career fit. Individuals whose expectations are met tend to have higher job satisfaction, and those with higher job satisfaction are judged by superiors as being better performers (Bertz & Judge, 1994), are more committed to the organization and have longer tenures (Blau, 1987; Meglino, Ravlin, & Adkins, 1989; Schneider, 1987; Smart, Elton, & McLaughlin, 1986), experience less job stress (Olsen & Crawford, 1998), and encounter greater career success (Bertz & Judge, 1994).

Therefore, conscientiously creating a job description should provoke us to critically self-examine who we are and who we want to be. Thoughtfully done, it can be a means of self-renewal. Done conscientiously, it can lead to transformational change. It provides community college leaders with the opportunity to diversify their faculty from cultural, racial, gender, ethnic sociological, economic, political, and pedagogical perspectives. At the same time, it allows institutional leaders to develop new programs in response to local conditions and discontinue

programs that are no longer viable because of changing economic needs. Moreover, it can provide impetus to hire faculty with greater technological skills and better understanding of the social media used by students.

Generic job descriptions often are very clear about the expectations in regard to courses to be taught, number of hours of class and lab time, minimum and desired qualifications and so on. Some community colleges include desired dispositions for new faculty. However, these are often vague. A review of the recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* job offerings suggests that some community colleges desire faculty members who understand the community college philosophy and are willing to work with diverse student bodies. However, they rarely ask applicants to demonstrate their commitment to community college philosophy, nor do they describe what they mean by community college philosophy. Moreover, they seldom seek evidence that potential candidates understand the challenges of working with a diverse student body, nor do they explain what they mean by a diverse student body leaving it up to the candidate to form his or her own notion of diversity. For many candidates their notion of diversity will include racial and ethnic diversity, while excluding age, level of literacy, single parents, veterans, individuals with disabilities, social services recipients, and so on; the very students they are likely to encounter in a community college class.

### 3.2 Credentials versus Dispositions

Table 2 shows what documentation community colleges require of an applicant for a faculty position. Beyond the standard items of resume, cover letter, and application form, 16 (22.9%) do require a statement of teaching philosophy and 9 (12.9%) require a statement of diversity. However, statements of teaching philosophy and/or diversity do not provide behavioral evidence (Grubb, 1999; Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2008) that the applicant acts on these beliefs or has the pedagogical knowledge or skills needed to translate his or her philosophy into action. The letters of reference (required by 22 (31.4%)) and responses to the specific questions that are required by 10 (14.3%) may address these issues. However, it is just as likely that they do not.

**Table 2 Documentation Required of Applicant**

| Document | Number of colleges requiring | Percent of respondents |
|---|---|---|
| Resume or vita | 66 | 94.3% |
| Cover letter | 62 | 88.6% |
| Contact information for references | 59 | 84.3% |
| Application form | 55 | 78.6% |
| Official transcripts | 35 | 50.0% |
| Unofficial transcripts | 30 | 42.9% |
| Letters of reference | 22 | 31.4% |
| A statement of teaching philosophy | 16 | 22.9% |
| Responses to specific questions | 10 | 14.3% |
| A statement of diversity | 9 | 12.9% |

Although some have questioned the rhetoric (Grubb, 1999; Neusner & Neusner, 2000; O'Banion, 1994), given the fact that community colleges take great pride in being teaching institutions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008), one would expect that the hiring process would place considerable emphasis on teaching ability. However, according to numerous researchers (Flannigan et al., 2004; Grubb, 1999; Twombly, 2005), community colleges fail to authentically assess the candidates teaching ability. “The quality of teaching seems to sink to the bottom of the list” (Grubb, 1999, p. 286) when evaluating an applicant for a faculty position.

Although sixty-five (92.9%) of the responding colleges require a teaching demonstration, only 29 (42.0%) of the responding institutions require additional proof of teaching ability. Moreover, the high number of community colleges requiring a teaching demonstration is likely to be deceptive. Consistent with the findings of Twombly (2005), further inquiry found that most of the responding community colleges require only a 15 to 30 minute demonstration. Furthermore, of those requiring a teaching demonstration 63 (96.9%) invite current faculty to participate and 18 (30.5%) invite students. With only 18 responding colleges inviting students, these demonstrations are rather inauthentic.

One commentator (Brudney, 2001) did suggest that a few community colleges do require the candidate to teach a complete class hour . However, teaching one hour of the semester long course is still contrived. Even if authentic demonstrations of teaching were required, few hiring committees would be able to evaluate them. Although 57 (81.4%) provide committees with the opportunity to discuss satisfactory answers to interview questions prior to the interviews being conducted, no respondent indicated that the committee was given the opportunity to discuss views on what constitutes good teaching. Perhaps this reflects a lack of a clear understanding of what constitutes good teaching.

The definition of good teaching has eluded both researchers (Kezar & Sam, 2010a; Worthen & Berry, 2002) and practitioners since the founding of Harvard. Therefore, a discussion of what constitutes good teaching among hiring committee members is unlikely to produce a unanimous agreement. “When faculty are asked how they learn to teach, the primary response is that they imitated the teaching style of their favorite professor” (Fife, 1995, p. xi). This might not be disturbing if we all had the same favorite professor or if our favorite professor taught us to embrace a variety of teaching and learning styles as well as a diversity of students.

Some researchers using personal dispositions to determine teaching style have turned to the Myers-Briggs. They argue that individuals’ dispositions “largely reflect our attitudes and interest, ways we prefer to gather information and make decisions, and extent to which we need order and structure in our lives” (Grasha, 1996, p. 23) and lead us to our preferred teaching and learning style. Grasha argues incompatibility between students and professors dispositions is “often a source of conflict, tension, and misunderstanding” (Grasha, 1996, p. 42).

Using the Myers-Briggs, Grasha’s research shows that often there is a discrepancy between students and faculty on two critical dimensions. 54% of faculty are introverted while only 30% of students are introverted; moreover, 64% of the faculty are intuitive while only 30% of the students are intuitive. Grasha argues that this means faculty members are “largely captured by the inner world of ideas and they are more willing to consider possibilities for things that are not immediately apparent or available to the senses” (Grasha, 1996, p. 43). On the other hand, “most students get their energy from the world of people, objects and events.… Theoretical concerns and analysis is typically not one of their strong points. Thus, when faculty become excited about theoretical and conceptual issues, most students are looking for concrete and clear examples of terms and concepts” (Grasha, 1996, p. 44).

Some scholars might argue that the Myers-Briggs measures personality and is an imprecise proxy for measuring teaching ability. However, it cannot be argued that the dispositions (that is, the values, beliefs and attitudes) that a candidate possesses are unimportant. When the CAOs in this study reacted to the open-ended question that asked “what is the most important characteristic you are looking for in a candidate for a faculty position”, only nine (13.5%) of 66 respondents cited knowledge of the discipline or proficiency with technology. On the other hand, 57 (86.4%) cited soft qualities. They pointed to dispositions such as “energy/enthusiasm — all else can be taught” “willingness to teach and assist students”, “a desire to share their expertise”, “passion for

learning", "commitment to teaching", and "the desire and passion to teach". These qualities are dispositions that are often encompassed by the abstraction "fit". The findings of this survey were consistent with those of Jones-Kavalier and Flannigan (2008). Despite the obvious importance of determining fit many community colleges make little or no attempt to assess the candidate's dispositions and more often focus on candidate's qualifications.

What is perhaps most interesting about these findings is the lack of an evaluation of what kind of person the candidate is and how he or she will fit into the organization. When we consider the importance of fit in successful hiring, we tend to consider the whole person, his or her personality and characteristics as well as behavior. However, when we look at the results of our surveys, the indication is that education, communications, and technical ability are the measuring sticks by which we attempt to determine fit. What appears to be missing from this picture is the way to assess the candidate's personality and potential to merge into the institutional culture (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2008, p. 88).

Most likely this is because determining if a candidate has the right dispositions, and therefore, will fit with the college community's values is often difficult. Frequently, the dispositions valued by a particular community college go unarticulated. The values and mores of an institution are often deeply embedded in its culture. Often a culture has evolved over years and often it is quite fragmented by subcultures, and those subcultures are represented on the hiring committee. "Even if the qualities are articulated, they are frequently not used as criteria in the actual hiring process. And, if there is a desire to use them, there is no method for blending them into the current process" (Flannigan et al., 2004, p. 826).

Community colleges need to consider a way to articulate common values and the dispositions that uphold those values. The starting point is a close examination and critical discussion of their mission statements. Then, hiring committees should be given the opportunity to examine their individual values and dispositions. It is unlikely that the committee will reach a unanimous agreement; however, the individual committee members may come to a better understanding of the diversity of values held by fellow faculty.

Coming to a common understanding is far from a trivial step in the hiring process. Simplicio notes that faculty who do not "fit" with the institution will experience little personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Faculty and staff will become "drone-like". They will just go through the motions and conduct "business as usual". In turn, they will also feel little need to make a lasting commitment to the school. Eventually, employees mired in this situation will be faced with the choices of leaving the school, denying reality, or experiencing cognitive dissonance (2007, p. 261).

### 3.3 Forming the Hiring Committee

A critical step towards hiring the best faculty is forming the hiring committee. "No matter how well you implement the introspection and advertising stages of the hiring process, your efforts will be instantly annihilated if the make-up of the hiring committee is not carefully considered" (Murray, 1993, p. 17). As is nearly universal in American higher education, the CAOs surveyed indicated that their colleges hired by committee. At all of the colleges, faculty members were allowed to volunteer for committee service; however, at 51 (72.9%) colleges they needed to be approved by administrators. Interestingly only 14 (20.0%) colleges included students on the search committee.

The CAOs indicated that training was available for committee members. 7 (10.1%) provided the committee with an opportunity to practice the interview, 33 (47.8%) provided the committee with training on how to evaluate

an applicant's file, 57 (81.4%) provided the committee with training in regard to legal requirements of the hiring process, and 57 (81.4%) provided committees with the opportunity to discuss satisfactory answers to interview questions prior to the interviews being conducted. They did not indicate the duration of the training sessions, who conducted the training, or whether training was voluntary or mandatory.

Despite the universal use of hiring committees, the practice has many critics (Dettmar, 2007, December 17; Flannigan et al., 2004; Murray, 1993; Simplicio, 2007). Nonetheless, no one has proposed a better alternative. However, these authors have pointed out the pitfalls of hiring by committee. According to authors, the pitfalls include the use of untrained or amateur interviewers (Dettmar, 2007, December 17; Flannigan et al., 2004; Grubb, 1999; Simplicio, 2007; Volkman, 1992), the lack of consistent questioning or probes during interviewing sessions (Flannigan et al., 2004), a lack of a clear understanding of what criteria should be used to evaluate candidates (Flannigan et al., 2004), and most importantly, the domination the committee by ideologues (Dettmar, 2007, December 17; Murray, 1993).

The criticism of using untrained interviewers is because most higher education institutions hiring committees are made up of faculty. While faculty members are experts in their discipline, they usually have little or no experience in hiring. Volkman noted that "university consultant Arthur Ciervo once said, 'The basic difficulty of the interview, as usually conducted, is that it involves making extensive inferences from limited data obtained in artificial situations by *unqualified observers* [emphasis added]'" (as cited inVolkman, 1992, p. 73).

Hiring committees are also criticized for the lack of consistent questioning or probes during the interview. 63 (90%) of the colleges surveyed allowed committee members to develop new questions for each opening. 49 (70%) of the CAO's surveyed indicated that the questions used in previous interviews are sometimes added to those developed by the committee, and questions developed by administrators were sometimes added at 26 (37.1%) of the community colleges.

The most persistent criticism of hiring committees has to do with the possibility of being dominated by a homogeneous subculture of the institution that may be more interested in perpetuating their legacy than what is best for the institution (Dettmar, 2007, December 17; Simplicio, 2007). Balancing a hiring committee, in regard to teaching philosophy, pedagogical approaches, values, beliefs about social justice and about who can be educated, although vital is very difficult.

Too many colleges make the mistake of repeatedly naming the same individuals to hiring committees. Often these department members are ones who "work well" together. Often they share the same ideology. Often they are concerned with protecting the integrity of the department from interlopers. Sometimes another name for interloper is ideologically different. Frequently interlopers are innovators and change agents. While remaining with the "strategies that made us what we are today" might work well for the elite institutions or those single purpose colleges (such as engineering or church-sponsored colleges), it is also a route to stagnation and decline (Murray, 1993, p. 17).

Often these homogeneous subcultures truly believe that they are protecting the organization from corrupting influences. However, they may be protecting a wounded culture from needed change. This may be especially true if the search committee is made up of senior faculty who believe in "business as usual". As we move into the next stage of the evolution of the community college mission, we may need faculty who are better versed in the use of technology, learning-centered approaches to education; have a better understanding of teaching and learning styles, and greater understanding of an increasingly diverse student body. As George Baker (1998) warned us, entrenched cultures or dominant subcultures can thwart progress.

> … a well-established college culture may be hostile to changes in its inherent patterns. The college is similar in some ways to a biological body that protects itself in three different ways. First, if possible, it prevents foreign organisms from entering (external demands for accountability, for example). Second, it attacks those ideas and concepts that do enter (state-wide effectiveness criteria). Third, it discredits or distorts those organisms that it cannot kill. Leaders are faced with an elaborate culture that tries to keep out new ideas. If ideas enter, the existing culture tries to kill the ideas. If it cannot actually kill the ideas, it finds ways to neutralize them (p. 10).

Baker's warning may be even more poignant when we consider how the successful candidate is selected. At all of the colleges surveyed, the committee is asked to forward the names of 1 to 3 candidates to the final decision maker. The final decision rests with the president/Chancellor at 36 (51.4%), with the CAO at 14 (20%), the trustees at the recommendation of the CEO at nine (12.9%), the trustees at eight (11.4%), or the appropriate Dean at three (4.3%). In all instances, the committee decides by majority vote whose names to forward. At this point in the game, partisanship is likely to slip into the process if the committee is dominated by one clique (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2008; Murray, 1993). "Objectivity is often replaced by pure subjectivity and personal preference or bias. Committee members who foster strong personal opinions regarding candidates can unduly sway other members of the committee in favor of, or against, a candidate" (Simplicio, 2007, p. 258).

If the hiring committee is not dominated by one clique, the decision-making process may result in a highly politicized debate with each of the subcultures battling for its agenda much like members of the Italian Parliament. This often results in recommending candidates "for the position that everyone involved can agree on. In some cases, that procedure will favor the genial but safe candidate, promoting the (imagined) 'good colleague'…" (Dettmar, 2007, December 17). Often this means hiring a candidate who meticulously completed the paperwork, submitted a complete file, who when interviewed presented a "professional appearance", whose expertise and knowledge presents no threat to a committee member, who is unlikely to take a favorite course away from a committee member, and who studiously avoided saying anything that might be controversial or offensive to a committee member.

## 4. Conclusion

Who to hire may be the most important decision community college leaders make. The faculty that they hire will play a large role in determining the future of the community college. Through hiring decisions community college leaders have the opportunity to transform their colleges into institutions that will better serve the students. Leaders will have the opportunity to hire individuals who may have skill sets and knowledge that will transform their colleges into 21st-century learning institutions. Moreover, they have the opportunity to diversify their faculty to reflect the demographics of the student body.

However, the processes and procedures used to hire the faculty during the boom times for community colleges may not work as well during times of economic downturn. With fewer openings, it becomes essential for community colleges to communicate through the job description that accurately reflect the values of the institution. In order to develop such job descriptions an institution must first engage in self-reflection. Self-reflection gives community colleges not only the opportunity to reflect on what they have become, but can also be an occasion to reflect on what they want to become.

A job description that accurately reflects the type of faculty member the institution is seeking is only the first step in authentic hiring. A critical second step is to develop a screening process that will allow those involved in

hiring to assess whether or not a candidate possesses the skills and dispositions that the college believes are important. This is a question of fit. Fit involves more than possessing the right credentials; it also involves believing in the same values.

Because fit is difficult to assess, different individuals may hold differing opinions. It becomes necessary to carefully select the members of the hiring committee and provide them with training. This training should not just be on the legal aspects of hiring, but also should allow the committee time to reflect on their values and how those values fit with the institutional culture.

Who community colleges hire for full-time faculty positions is critical for a number of reasons. Community colleges will not be able to replace departing faculty members one for one, and therefore, it's important to maximize each hire for the benefit of the college. Moreover, a mistaken hiring can be very costly to the institution, and perhaps more importantly, it can be detrimental to student success.

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