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PHILANTHROPY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION? A QUALITATIVE  
ANALYSIS**

Joy DeDonato

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WHAT STYLES OF LEADERSHIP SUPPORT THE PROCESS OF PHILANTHROPY  
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION? A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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of

THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

at

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

New York

by

Joy DeDonato

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Dr. James Campbell

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## ABSTRACT

### WHAT STYLES OF LEADERSHIP SUPPORT THE PROCESS OF PHILANTHROPY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION? A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Joy DeDonato

This qualitative research examined how styles of leadership can impact the process of philanthropy for higher education. Effective leadership can aid in the successful transformation of organizations, influence donors, and implement change. In recent years, higher education has evolved from being an altruistic source of learning to becoming a source of income to advance an institution. Philanthropic funding for higher education can serve to assist researchers, labs, buildings, theaters, athletic stadiums, and endowments. The organizations included in this study were three community colleges within the State University of New York (SUNY) system. Research data were collected via interviews of the executive directors of the foundations and donors at each respective institution. In addition, subsequent observations as well as artifacts were used to triangulate the research data. Data analysis explored thematic connections linking leadership style and philanthropic success within the organizations. Raising funds to aid a college/university can be historic in its efforts in philanthropy, and those in leadership roles are essential. This study examined which style of leadership can be most effective.

*Keywords:* leadership style, fundraising, community college philanthropy, leadership style in higher education

## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my family. To my parents JoAnn and Richard Cavalieri, who are my heroes. You have supported me through every failure and success throughout my entire life with unconditional love. You have pushed me and believed in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. You raised Richie and me to be the best we can be. You both epitomize loyalty, candor, authenticity, and most importantly: love. You are both the smartest people I have ever known. You are both the real *Doctors*.

To my brother, Richie; sister-in-law, Jill; and their family; my "sister friend" Lisa and her family; my father-in-law, Ted Sr.; and my brothers- and sisters-in-law, Rose, Don, Suzi, and Richie and their families (all of which never stopped asking me if I was a Doctor yet); and to my extended family and friends who encouraged me to keep going: thank you for your support.

And to those who are no longer with us, like my grandmother, aunt, and mother-in-law: thank you for being the whispers in the wind that I heard telling me to keep going (even when I wanted to quit). I hope I made you all proud.

Most sincerely, to my husband, Ted, and our daughters, Alexandra Grace and Cara Faith: Thank you for being so understanding throughout this process. I appreciate your love and commitment more than I could ever show. Thank you for your patience during this process. It's finally time for that long-overdue family vacation.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

This qualitative research examined how styles of leadership can impact the process of philanthropy for higher education. The organizations included in this study were three community colleges within the State University of New York (SUNY) system. Research data were collected via interviews of the executive directors of the foundations and donors at each respective institution. In addition, subsequent observations of as well as documentation such as bylaws, mission statements, and meeting agendas were used to triangulate the research data.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research was to examine which leadership styles best supports the process of philanthropy for higher education. Leadership plays an integral part in measuring success when strategic organizational importance is placed on raising funds, specifically in higher education. Effective leaders succeed in transforming organizations, influencing donors, and implementing change. In recent years, higher education has evolved from being an altruistic source of learning to becoming a source of income to achieve organizational goals. Areas that help with funding in higher education aid researchers, labs, buildings, theaters, athletic stadiums, and endowments. To this end, this study examines which style of leadership can be most effective.

### **Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

Servant leadership, transactional leadership, emotional leadership, and transformational leadership were the leadership styles that were analyzed for this research. Servant leadership can be described as when the leader humbles himself to the

status of serving others holistically within the applicable environment (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002). Transactional leadership is often explained as a cost-benefit exchange between leaders and their followers (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). The transaction or exchange involves something of value between what the leader possesses or controls and what the follower wants in return for his/her services (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). Emotional leadership, according to Goleman's research, relies on the most competent leaders all presenting a high degree of emotional intelligence (EI). Transformational leadership has evolved in interpretation throughout the years. This theory was developed by Burns (1978) and later enhanced by Bass (1985, 1998) and others (Avolio & Bass, 1988; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). The major premise of the transformational leadership theory is the leader's ability to motivate the follower to accomplish more than what the follower planned to accomplish (Krishnan, 2005).

In conclusion, this research took a closer look at the different styles of leadership and the characteristics of each and examined the traits that can be a positive influence or detrimental towards fundraising in the higher education sector of development and beyond.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework: Theory Applied to Yield Successful Results*



## **Significance/Importance of the Study**

Fundraising for higher education institutions has become more important as there is increasingly limited government funding for public education. Philanthropy within the advancement/foundation department in the college sector has evolved from being a department that was perhaps in the peripheral view to evolving into one of major focus. Raising funds for scholarships, endowments, and programs on campus may have been done; however, oftentimes, this activity was not a necessity. The need now to raise income to help fill in the gap of programs not being filled, enrollment at some institutions decreasing, and capital projects waiting for grants that were either promised or not being fulfilled have applied pressure now to a department possibly overlooked in the past. It is currently a function in which many college presidents must engage as part of their job/role.

The significance of this study is to examine what type of leadership supports the process of philanthropy for higher education, and ultimately what strategies will aid in income generation to increase revenue for colleges as a whole.

## **Connection to the Vincentian Mission**

The Vincentian Mission, based on the life and works of St. Vincent de Paul's compassion and fervor for service, is linked in many ways to this research. This qualitative study examined the impact of leadership styles that include servant leadership (most closely connected to St. Vincent de Paul) as well as the styles of transactional leadership, emotional leadership, and transformational leadership, which are also reflected in the empathetic and emotionally driven way that St. Vincent de Paul lived his life. Philanthropy, especially in funding higher education, provides a way for others in the

community to give back financially and improve the way of life for all people, especially those lacking economic, physical, or social advantages.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the relationship between leadership style and institutional advancement?
2. Can leadership style help explain successful institutional advancement programs?
3. Which particular aspects of leadership style have the most influence on successful institutional advancement programs?

### **Design and Methods**

This qualitative research was a case study and involved three separate community college foundations. The research questions were guided by a theoretical lens, incepted from fundraising in philanthropy and its impact on higher education. The study utilized the information received from the interviews of the donors as well as the foundation leadership to retrieve the data to analyze. According to Ewert (2013), enrollment in independent schools increased until the early 2000s. However, since that time period, enrollment in schools has steadily decreased (Ewert, 2013).

There are many reasons for this to occur; however, in relation to this study, one could surmise that some of these trends could be attributed to the economy (Aud et al., 2013). Many who once could afford an education can no longer afford tuition (Aud et al., 2013; Ewert, 2013). The purpose of this case study was to explore the impact of the leadership style of foundation leaders and their donors, because part of their philanthropic mission is to fundraise for student scholarships.



## **Identifying Participants and Sampling**

The selection of foundation leadership and their donors was integral because the study relied on the perspectives of both leaders and donors. First, it was important to interview the foundation leadership staff to see what strategies were important for the college community and the schools. Second, it was key to interview the donors and board members to ensure not only that the strategic vision matched the college communities' plans but also that the vision was also working in tandem with the community at large as well, since each institution was a community-serving entity.

To recruit participants, an email was sent to the SUNY foundation leadership advancement staff members asking if they would voluntarily participate in this study via a Google Form. The form also asked if they could provide two board members or donors from their foundation to also participate. Three schools were selected at random from the responses. Once the three schools were selected and the feedback was received from those interested in participating, each participant was followed up with via email to begin the process of interviewing and next steps. Nine subjects were selected to participate in the research study. Prior to the interview process, all consent forms were submitted and signed by each participant.

## **Data Collection**

The research on fundraising and philanthropy in the higher education setting is limited to date (Caboni, 2008). The data collected were to help further extend this research and provide increased data retrieval for future research. Each participant was interviewed. The data collected via interview were recorded with consent from each participant utilizing Webex secure software. Research was supported by the Webex

software utilizing the transcription feature to support the coding process. In addition, documents and artifacts, such as follow-up telephone calls, emails, notes, and foundation documents, were utilized and examined for thematic associations.

According to Nicholson (2007), a better comprehension of leadership theory, and the attributes that are associated with leadership, can not only help leaders shape and mold their approach to fundraising but also enable them to impart a better sense of the significance of fundraising to their institutions while increasing the amount of funding they acquire (p. 255).

### **Definition of Terms**

#### *Annual Report:*

A voluntary report published by a foundation or corporation describing its grant activities. It may be a simple, typed document listing the year's grants or an elaborately detailed publication. A growing number of foundations and corporations use an annual report as an effective means of informing the community about their contributions activities, policies, and guidelines. (The annual contributions report is not to be confused with a corporation's annual report to the stockholders.). (Council on Foundations, 2021)

#### *Bass Transformational Leadership Theory:*

The Bass transformational leadership theory was formulated by Bernard M. Bass in 1985. This theory expanded upon Burns's original definition. This theory specifies how a leader influences his/her subordinates. (Bass, 1985)

*Bequest:*

A sum of money made available upon the donor's death (Council on Foundations, 2021).

*“Bricks and Mortar”:*

An informal term indicating grants for buildings or construction projects (Council on Foundations, 2021).

*Bylaws:*

The governing rules of a nonprofit corporation. Bylaws often provide the methods for the selection of directors, the creation of committees, and the conduct of meetings (Council on Foundations, 2021).

*Capital Campaign:*

Also referred to as a *capital development campaign*, a capital campaign is an organized drive to collect and accumulate substantial funds to finance major needs of an organization, such as a building or major repair project (Council on Foundations, 2021).

*Charity:*

In its traditional legal meaning, the word “charity” encompasses religion, education, assistance to the government, promotion of health, relief of poverty or distress, and other purposes that benefit the community. Nonprofit organizations that are organized and operated to further one of these purposes generally will be recognized as exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and will be eligible to receive tax-deductible charitable gifts (Council on Foundations, 2021).

*Donor:*

A person who donates something, especially money to a fund or charity (Council on Foundations, 2021).

*Emotional Leadership:*

Emotional leadership is a process that leaders use to influence their followers in a common goal (Goleman, 1995).

*Endowment:*

The principal number of gifts and bequests that are accepted subject to a requirement that the principal be maintained intact and invested to create a source of income for a foundation. Donors may require that the principal remain intact in perpetuity, or for a defined period of time or until sufficient assets have been accumulated to achieve a designated purpose (Council on Foundations, 2021).

*Fundraising:*

The seeking of financial support for a charity, cause, or other enterprise (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

*In-Kind Contribution:*

A donation of goods or services rather than cash or appreciated property (Council on Foundations, 2021).

*Matching Gifts Program:*

A grant or contributions program that will match employees' or directors' gifts made to qualifying educational, arts and cultural, health, or other organizations (Council on Foundations, 2021).

### *Philanthropy:*

Philanthropy is defined in different ways. The origin of the word *philanthropy* is Greek and means “love for mankind.” Today, philanthropy includes the concept of voluntary giving by an individual or group to promote the common good.

Philanthropy also commonly refers to grants of money given by foundations to nonprofit organizations. Philanthropy addresses the contribution of an individual or group to other organizations that in turn work for the causes of poverty or social problems, improving the quality of life for all citizens. Philanthropic giving supports a variety of activities, including research, health, education, and arts and culture, as well as alleviating poverty (Council on Foundations, 2021).

### *Servant Leadership:*

The servant-leader is servant first. Servant leadership begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first (Greenleaf, 1970).

### *Transactional Leadership:*

Transactional leadership uses rewards or punishments and includes three components, which are typically distinguished as instrumental in follower’s target achievement (Bass, 1997).

### *Transformational Leadership:*

Transformational leadership is a process in which “leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation” (Burns, 1978).

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter introduced leadership style and why it should be examined further in relation to its impact on philanthropy in higher education. It expressed how the data

would be collected and the importance of the vantage points of both those in leadership positions and those who give to the foundations at higher education foundations selected at the community college level. Also demonstrated was the theoretical and conceptual framework and how the data collection would be conducted. A brief description of the design was included along with the methodology. Lastly, the definitions of terms that were important to the context of this study were included for perspective.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Introduction**

Effective leaders succeed in transforming organizations, influencing donors, and implementing change. In recent years, higher education has evolved from being an altruistic source of learning to becoming a source of income to achieve next level accomplishments. The research questions examine if there is a relationship between leadership style and institutional advancement; if leadership style can help explain institutional advancement programs; and lastly, if there is a particular leadership style that has more than others demonstrated success in advancement programs.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study examined how styles of leadership can impact the process of philanthropy for higher education. Servant leadership, transactional leadership, emotional leadership, and transformational leadership were the leadership styles that were analyzed for this study.

As Bell et al. (2010) explained, “Today’s effective leaders hold impact and financial return in an integrated way; all the time.” (p. 50). Working with each foundation’s board of directors, their donors, the institution’s board of trustees, leadership in higher education constantly analyze their fiscal situations and that of other schools in pioneering ways. Working in concurrence with the board, foundation leadership must develop strategic plans; raise funds; and maintain a vision and mission, a plan for scholarship support, new programs, buildings and facilities, as well as a powerful short-term and long-term fiscal strategy. In this way, foundations as well as their institutions can be strengthened.

## **Related Research and Leadership Styles**

Leadership style can influence a donor to give, a program to begin, and a strategic plan to take flight. This study explored the influence of three executive directors' leadership styles and the impact these styles have on influencing donors and board members for each school. The study was intended to increase understanding of the effects of the characteristics and leadership behaviors on scholarship fundraising efforts, programs, capital development campaigns, and fundraising in three community colleges within the SUNY system.

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1996) conducted an experiment to study the impact of leadership behaviors. These behaviors included visioning, expressive communication, and providing clarifying work advice to employees. These leadership behaviors resulted in a greater sense of trust. Those following leaders who had a strategic plan and vision had a greater sense of urgency about completing the efforts and thought that the work was interesting. In addition, they set higher goals. Having a clear message and a strong vision had a positive impact on employees' work. This could be replicated for those who work in philanthropy in higher education, and the results for those who are donors and raising funds.

Discussing college presidents, Bornstein (2005) wrote:

Fundraising is cited by fifty-three percent of all the respondents as a daily activity. As many as ninety-one percent say they engage in fundraising activities at least every week. Since colonial times, presidents of higher-education institutions have been expected to demonstrate both academic leadership and fundraising prowess. But the magnitude of dollars that presidents must now raise



dwarfs past expectations; added to the other demands that presidents cite, the job is much more complex today. (p. 11)

This research examined if leadership style impacts the results of this planning.

### ***Servant Leadership***

Servant leadership can be described as when the leader humbles himself to the status of serving others holistically within the applicable environment (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002). Greenleaf was noteworthy in defining aspects of servant leadership; specifically, the leader exemplified the following: proper stewardship, promoting the communal growth and wellness of subordinates, and accurate conceptualization through persuasion (as opposed to coercion). Proper stewardship derived from the premise of the American nature of philanthropy, while retaining the promise of benevolence in trust of another (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002).

The philanthropic nature in business seeped into academia, while not overlooking its connection to the community (Greenleaf & Spears, 2002). However, with the formerly ample resources of the community no longer offsetting the dwindling academic resources, servant leadership aided employees to re-establish human connections as motivation, as well as permitted communal wellness, and accurate conceptualization of tasks and projects. Greenleaf (1977/2010) stated that ego promoted achievement, but it must remain in alignment.

### ***Transactional Leadership***

Transactional leadership often explained as a cost-benefit exchange between leaders and their followers (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). The transaction or exchange involves something of value between what the leader possesses or controls and what the

follower wants in return for his/her services (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). Transactional leadership involves leaders clarifying goals and objectives, communicating to organize tasks and activities with the co-operation of their employees to ensure that wider organizational goals are met (Bass, 1974, p. 341). The success of this type of leader-follower relationship depends on the acceptance of hierarchical differences and the ability to work through this mode of exchange.

Transactional leadership expresses that subordinates and systems work better under a clear chain of command. As Bass (1985) explained, “Transactional leaders pursue a cost-benefit, economic exchange to meet followers’ current material and psychological needs in return for contracted services rendered by the subordinate” (p. 16). The implicit belief in the leader/follower relationship is that people are motivated by rewards and penalties (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

### ***Emotional Leadership***

Emotional leadership, according to Goleman’s (1995) research, is based on the concept that the most competent leaders all present a high degree of EI. It includes the following five components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Emotional leadership is one of the most important skills that those who work with teams must have.

People who want to motivate others need to have the ability to inspire and guide because that’s the key to reaching any goal. Emotionally intelligent leadership (EIL) theory combines relevant models, theories, and research in the areas of EI and leadership. With an intentional focus on context, self, and others, emotionally intelligent leaders facilitate the attainment of desired outcomes.

### ***Transformational Leadership***

Transformational leadership has evolved in its interpretation throughout the years. This theory was developed by Burns (1978) and later enhanced by Bass (1985, 1997) and others (Avolio & Bass, 1988; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Tichy & Devanna, 1986). The major premise of transformational leadership theory is the leader's ability to motivate the follower to accomplish more than what the follower planned to accomplish (Krishnan, 2005).

Transformational leadership has four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Burns described that transformational leaders inspire followers to accomplish more by concentrating on the followers' values and helping the followers align these values with the values of the organization.

In conclusion, Burns identified transformational leadership as a relationship in which the leader and the follower motivated each other to higher levels, which resulted in value system congruence between the leader and the follower (Krishnan, 2005). Bass (1985) refined and expanded Burns's leadership theory. Bass (1985) said that a leader is motivational, inspiring others to accomplish more than they had originally intended or planned. He said that this motivation could be achieved by raising the awareness level about the importance of outcomes and ways to reach them. Bass also said that leaders encourage followers to go beyond self-interest for the good of the team or the organization. Hoy and Miskel (2013) described the importance of vision in organizations as follows:

These leaders display conviction about important issues; exhibit high standards

of ethical and moral conduct, sharing risks with followers in setting and attaining goals; consider the needs of others over their own; and use power to move individuals or groups toward accomplishing their mission, vision, and cause, but never for personal gain. Transformational leaders energize people by projecting an attractive and optimistic future, emphasizing ambitious goals, creating idealized visions for the organization, and clearly communicating to followers that the vision is attainable. Hence, team spirit, enthusiasm, optimism, goal commitment, and a shared vision arise and coalesce within the work group or organization. (p. 450)

### **Relationship Between Prior Research and Present Study**

The common goal of all foundations, those cited in this study included, is to reach the philanthropic proverbial heartstrings and purse strings of each prospective donor. To connect with the community and donors, and to remain true to the mission of the foundations, philanthropy is the heart, and this study examines what make each heart beat. The origin of the word *philanthropy* is Greek and means “love for mankind.”

Today, philanthropy includes the concept of voluntary giving by an individual or group to promote the common good. Philanthropy also commonly refers to grants of money given by foundations to nonprofit organizations. Philanthropy addresses the contribution of an individual or group to other organizations that in turn work for the causes of poverty or social problems, improving the quality of life for all citizens.

Philanthropic giving supports a variety of activities, including research, health, education, and arts and culture, as well as alleviating poverty (Council on Foundations, 2021). The rationale for giving was explored by Loyd (2010), as is how an organization

receiving gifts feel about the donations. According to Conway (2003), the responsibility of managing and receiving philanthropic donations is one aspect of stewardship that the school leader must consider. Leadership should think about their empathy for donors and make sure that all of the constituents of the organization have sincere gratitude for and sense of caring for the donors (Muir & May, 1993).

To shed light on the relationship between leadership styles and outcomes, this study utilized the mission of each organization, the philanthropic history, and data on the funds raised over time, as well as the leadership style impacting donations. Further, the researcher took into consideration the shared vision of the organization as a whole.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter explained the theoretical framework and defined the leadership styles being examined in this study. These styles include servant leadership, transactional leadership, emotional leadership, and transformational leadership. In addition, this chapter included a discussion of the definitions of philanthropy and how imperative it is to ensure that the foundations and/or organizations remain mission focused to receive the funding necessary for their strategic plans. The examinations of the history of each leadership style offers an investigative approach to discover if one style more than another impacts philanthropy for higher education.

## CHAPTER 3

### **Introduction**

Leadership style is determined by deep-seated values and beliefs about how people learn. Leaders may call their leadership style whatever they wish—emotionally led, mission-focused, transactional, transformational, top-down, bottom-up—but ultimately, their deep-seated values and beliefs are mirrored throughout the school. One can know the essence of the school leader, then, by looking at the tone and educational environment of the school (Goldman, 1998). The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of leadership style of three executive directors and the donor and board impact on the philanthropy at three community college foundations.

### **Research Questions**

This study was a case study and involved three community college foundations. The research questions were guided by a theoretical lens, which examined how leadership style—specifically, servant leadership, transactional leadership, emotional leadership, and transformational leadership—can impact philanthropy in higher education. The research questions were:

1. What is the relationship between leadership style and institutional advancement?
2. Can leadership style help explain successful institutional advancement programs?
3. Which particular aspects of leadership style have the most influence on successful institutional advancement programs?

### **Qualitative Research Design**

Creswell described the qualitative approach to a case study with the investigator focusing on one or more cases over time through detailed, in-depth data

collection involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). This study utilized this method to retrieve the data from its participants. Qualitative research starts with ideas and the use of theoretical frameworks that guide the research investigation that relate to some dilemma or problem. A qualitative researcher, therefore, investigates people and places in a particular context and is able to establish a particular pattern or theme (Creswell, 2013). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stated that

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Qualitative methods involve extrapolating evidence for a theory from what people say or write (Field, 2013). Interviews were conducted with the executive directors as well as board members of the foundation at each of three participating schools.

### **Case Study Approach**

This study used a case study approach including interviews. Leadership style and leadership attributes were examined for patterns, trends, and evolving themes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the strength of qualitative research must conform to being credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable when the data are analyzed. Yin

(2014) suggested that the quality of qualitative research design can be examined through four lenses: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

Case studies are frequently used to chart previously uncharted territory and can serve as the basis for future investigations by creating richly written descriptions (Yin, 2014). This study examined through the interviews the commonalities of these executive directors, their board members, the school leadership, and the community. Having these dialogues with each participant from each respective school, one could surmise if a common theme presented itself or if each leader had a unique style that presented itself for each school that reflected the impact on philanthropy at the foundation. These dialogues would bring up rationale for training for future leaders within foundations, or they could show that a particular style worked better within a certain constituency. Could a specific style create more success in fundraising, better morale, stronger allegiance, more alumni engagement, or more community collaboration? Yin (2014) suggested a case study approach for research questions that are cutting-edge and ones that the investigator cannot directly manipulate.

For this study, interviews served as the basis. In-depth interviews were to provide professional judgment about leadership styles and philanthropic efforts. I interviewed nine participants over a four-week period during the summer of 2022. The focus of the interviews was to get an in-depth view of the participants' experiences in relation to leadership style and its impact on their organizations.

### **Research Site**

The research was conducted via interviews virtually through St. John's University's secure Webex Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA)



secure platform. The participants included executive directors and donors of foundations within the SUNY community colleges sector. In addition, subsequent observations of board meetings (virtually) as well as documentation such as bylaws, mission statements, and meeting agendas were used to triangulate the research data. Each foundation included in this study is a separate 501(c)(3), and the research was performed virtually. The Institutional Review Board was presented with the study and provided written consent. To maintain confidentiality, the names of the foundations are be cited as Foundation A, B and C.

Foundation A's mission is to raise funds to provide scholarships and support the college's initiatives that will have a significant and direct impact on the students, faculty, and staff. Foundation B's mission is to serve as a nonprofit corporation formed to develop additional resources that enable the college to provide quality educational experiences for its students. A donor's gift will help provide scholarships, emergency student loans, support for unique academic enrichment programs, special projects for faculty and staff development, and efforts to enhance the community's awareness of the college and its services. Foundation C's history includes being built through the efforts of many generous individuals, philanthropists, volunteers, corporations, and foundations, all of whom committed time, talent, expertise, and funding to provide for the college and its students with what public funding cannot. The foundations' total income generated annually ranged from \$1.3 million to over \$7 million.

### **Population and Sample**

The objective in finding appropriate participants for this study was to ensure that the subjects all could speak to the subject matter and their experiences would be relevant

to the research being completed. Therefore, the selection of these subjects for this study was purposeful, and the study included nine participants. Three participants were executive directors of their respective foundations, and the other six participants were board members of/donors to the organization.

The participants varied in gender, ethnicity, age, educational background, and years serving their respective foundations. This qualitative study used a case study approach which includes interviews. Leadership style and leadership attributes were examined for patterns, trends, and emergent themes. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the validity of qualitative research must conform to being credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable when the data are analyzed.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Yin (2014) recommended that the value of qualitative research design can be examined through four lenses: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability. An initial recruitment email and Google form was sent out for participation in the study. Once the responses were submitted and the participants were selected, a call from me to each participant explaining the study took place. In addition, I conducted recorded interviews virtually through the University's secure Webex account, a secure platform with the participants. The researcher then observed meetings virtually, and reviewed artifacts such as bylaws, mission statements, and public reports to see if the leadership style and culture of the organization has an influence on the philanthropic success of the organization. The goal was to share the results of the study with the directors to see which leadership styles are most supportive of philanthropic efforts, specifically in higher education.

### ***Observations***

The beginning stages of the data collection process included observations of the executive directors' leadership during meetings with their donors via a Webex account, which is a secure platform. These meetings were conducted via Webex with permission, so that they could be recorded for me to study. The transcription feature in Webex was utilized to convert the audio file to text.

### ***Interviews***

The interview process with each subject was most valuable in the data collection process. This provided an open dialogue for each participant to share their experiences of learning, success, and pride points throughout their years serving each respective institution's foundation, as well as to share the leadership styles that made the organizations most successful in philanthropy. Each participant was emailed or called to set up an interview via Webex secure platform and recorded. Each participant signed a consent form (Appendix B). The informed consent form included all researchers, including the primary investigator and the co-investigator.

Benefits and potential risks were disclosed to participants before administering the survey or conducting the interviews. The informed consent form also includes an explanation of the study. The interviews took place utilizing the Webex secure platform and the transcription feature on Webex was utilized so the files could be converted to text so the dialogue could be used as a reference. The interviews were held within 60 minutes each. The participants were asked questions regarding leadership style, their foundation's history, and areas of pride and success within their tenure within the organization. The interview questions are attached for both the

leadership (Appendix C) and the board members/donors (Appendix D). All questions were asked as listed.

### ***Documents and Artifacts***

The documentation and artifacts were retrieved for this study during the timeframe of the interviews. Since each of these organizations are separate 501(c)(3)s, most of the documentation for the organizations is available online and to the public. This includes annual reports, fundraising reports, mission statements, bylaws, and more. Additional emails and follow ups were used as artifacts as part of this process of collection. Each organization had a website from which to further collect data as needed for this study.

### **Data Analysis**

Several data analysis strategies for case studies are recommended by Creswell (2013). The data were organized by creating and organizing files for the data. Text transcribed from the recorded interviews were read through and notes were made. Patterns, themes, and their context were then described. In order to interpret the data, Creswell (2013) recommended the use of natural themes. Finally, an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 2013) was presented using narrative, tables, and figures. The data also were coded. This process consisted of coding the data collected from the interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts.

Qualitative research starts with ideas and the use of theoretical frameworks that guide the research investigation that relate to some dilemma or problem. A qualitative researcher therefore investigates people and places in a particular context and is able to establish a particular pattern or theme (Creswell, 2013).

I created category lists by which I coded the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I

also color coded the data from the generalized categories. Creswell (2013) recommended five or six categories with shorthand labels (codes). Additionally, throughout data analysis and initial theme development, I reviewed initial themes in the observations to ensure they were consistent and the reoccurring emerging themes matched the data presented. Finally, I condensed the coding to six themes from which I wrote my synopsis.

### **Trustworthiness of the Design**

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), credibility and validity are the criteria against which a qualitative study is authenticated. Marshall and Rossman stated that “Determining reliability and validity remains the qualitative researcher’s goal” (p. 41). Marshall and Rossman recommended that the subsequent measures assist in ensuring the thoroughness and trustworthiness of a qualitative study: searching for evidence, extended engagement in the field, collaboration, and peer debriefing.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) offered these procedures in order to ensure that there are standards of trustworthiness. These criteria provide assurance that the data and their interpretations are both believable and sound (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) discussed trustworthiness in qualitative research in the following way: validity, reliability, and objectivity are criteria used to evaluate the quality of research in the conventional positivist research paradigm. Credibility refers to the “adequate representation of the constructions of the social world under study” (Bradley, 1993, p. 436). During this study, credibility was validated by using triangulation, which consisted of the review of notes of observations, interviews, and documents and artifacts.

## **Role of the Researcher**

In order to be objective in this research, it was important for the purpose of this study, that although in my vocation as an executive director of a foundation at a community college, I did not impart my opinion to the interview process and simply took the feedback from the interview questions to analyze, code, and interpret the data. Although I have nearly 20 years of experience in nonprofit management and over a decade of experience in the higher education sector, it was imperative for me to be as objective and impartial as possible. And although I have a keen understanding of varying leadership styles as they relate directly to this research, I wanted to be as unbiased as possible.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter outlined the study of the design and the process by which the collection of data would be retrieved and the formula showing why a qualitative case study approach was best suited for this study. In addition, the research site was described as well as the selection of participants of this study. Included were the recruitment process and the manner in which the data would be recorded and transcribed. Also, the consent process was explained. In addition, the importance of trustworthiness and data cleanliness was discussed through varying methods, including but not limited to triangulating data. Lastly, known limitations or biases were addressed to the best of my ability.

## CHAPTER 4

### **Introduction**

The key purpose of this study was to investigate how leadership style—specifically, how servant leadership, emotional leadership, transactional leadership, or transformative leadership impacts philanthropy in higher education. This chapter examines the results of the interviews, representing nine participants' views on leadership, leadership style, and its impact on philanthropy in higher education, as well as the three answers to the research questions.

During these interviews six themes emerged from the participants' experience, and connections to the styles of leadership were made for the summary. The findings are presented in this chapter. The data were coded, categorized, and organized using the following method as described by Nicholson (2006). Participants were asked to self-identify their age, gender, and race/ethnicity (Table 1). All names used are pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality.

**Table 1***Participant Demographic Data*

Foundation	Participant	Age Bracket	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Education	Years of Service with the Foundation
A	Debbie	50-59	Female	Caucasian	Master's Degree	10+ Years
A	Evelyn	60-69	Female	Caucasian	Other	10+ Years
A	Connor	70-79	Male	Caucasian	Master's Degree	10+ Years
B	Susan	60-69	Female	Latino or Hispanic	Doctoral Degree	5-10 Years
B	Brendan	40-49	Male	Caucasian	Master's Degree	5-10 Years
B	Beverly	60-69	Female	Latino or Hispanic	Bachelor's Degree	10+ Years
C	Doreen	60-69	Female	Caucasian	Master's Degree	1-4 Years
C	Marilyn	60-69	Female	Caucasian	Master's Degree	1-4 Years
C	Whitney	60-69	Female	Caucasian	Master's Degree	1-4 Years

*Note.* Participants were asked to self-identify their demographic information

**Participants**

Foundation A is renowned for its rich history, as it brings together alumni, donors, and friends to support the college's mission of preparing students to fully realize their potential and make a positive contribution to their community. Foundation donors help raise approximately \$1.3 million annually, with 30 board members. This foundation makes approximately \$450,000 in scholarships available to more than 250 students annually. The foundation offers opportunities such as planned giving, estate giving, bequests, and annual giving, and it assists with capital campaigns and other legacy gifting options as well. The support is raised through various avenues. This includes but is not limited to an annual gala, golf tournament, annual appeal, and fund drives. Additionally, the foundation is the link between the college and its more than 40,000 alumni. The



communication with the alumni and the donors continues via a digital newsletter and regular email communication. The key leadership style connector is communication and relationship building.

Debbie is the executive director of Foundation A. She has been with the organization for 17 years. She has worked with three different college presidents during her tenure, and her board consists of 30 members. She is a Caucasian female, in her 50s with a master's degree. She has had a myriad of roles at this organization during her time at the foundation. She is mission focused and expressed how important communication and relationship building are the cornerstones of her leadership style. She also expressed that the monies fundraised for the foundation support scholarship initiatives and annual funds along with events support the mission of the organization. Her dedication, empathy, and commitment are evident in the growth of the foundation.

Evelyn is a member of the board of directors for Foundation A. She has been part of the board and in service to the foundation for over 10 years. She is in her 60s and identifies as Caucasian and female and has served in multiple roles on the board, including chair and vice chair throughout her tenure. She explained how the executive director reports both to the board and the president of the college. She expressed the importance of the structure of the committees and strategy to work in tandem with the college and how leadership style absolutely impacts the philanthropy and funds received for the organization. She expressed that the overall sentiment of the board was mission focused and dedicated to the success of the vision that is collectively planned by working in tandem with the college and the foundation leadership.

Connor is the Chair of Foundation A's board. He has served the institution and foundation in various roles for over 50 years. Connor is a Caucasian male in his 70s and was a faculty member for many decades, then became part of the administration in his role as an academic dean; upon retirement, Connor began to serve on the foundation board. Connor also made note of mentioning how the executive director reports both to the college president and the foundation board, and how that could be a challenge for many; however, Debbie has done so masterfully. He expressed how the foundation structure with its committees and strategic plan must work well to be effective. He expressed that leadership style is absolutely imperative to the critical fundraising efforts and its impact is evident. Given Connor's extensive history with the college, he provided enormous insight into the evolution of the foundation, its leadership and its impact on philanthropy for higher education as a whole and specifically related to institution.

Foundation B was formed to develop additional resources that enable the college to provide quality educational experiences for its students. Scholarship funds constitute the largest single use of the assets of the foundation. Emergency student loans, support for unique academic enrichment programs, special projects for faculty and staff development, and efforts to enhance the community's awareness of the college and its services are also supported by the foundation. The foundation board of directors includes alumni and community leaders who have given financial support and pledged an enduring commitment to assist the college in its mission to provide the highest quality of academic service to the citizens of the region. The foundation is also responsible for alumni and retiree outreach. Alumni activities enhance the well-being of the college, its student body, its alumni network, its faculty, and the community by hosting various

social, cultural, and fundraising events. With nearly 20 board members, Foundation B raises over \$1.5 million annually and boasts over 100,000 alumni. The key leadership style connector is remaining mission focused while raising funds.

Susan, a Latina in her 60s with her doctorate, has been the executive director of Foundation B for nearly a decade. She has a background in mental health counseling and non-profit management for over 25 years. She explained how the foundation supports the college in its philanthropy efforts; however, there are two distinct cultures in which leadership style impacts the philanthropy efforts for their institution. The college has a board of trustees, and the foundation has a board of directors. And while a few members have served in one capacity or the other, it has been imperative that the strategic planning and vision remain mission focused. In addition, it has been a recurring theme within the board members and she herself, that diversity be prevalent in manner in which there is representation of the community within the foundation board to best reflect the constituents in which the foundation serves alongside the college community. During her tenure the board has developed from being driven by alumni and faculty driven to opening up to more board members that serve the community at large. Additional corporate partners, collaborators, and contributors have increased their presence and giving based on the recommendation of the current leadership. This has significantly impacted the fundraising efforts due to leadership style.

Brendan, a Caucasian male with a master's degree, has served on Foundation B's board for nearly a decade. In his role as the foundation board's treasurer, he has a unique perspective on and analysis of the correlation between fundraising dollars being brought in and if leadership style has made an impact on that. Within his role he has seen an

evolution of the board and identified that the growth and diversity of the constituents on the board has led to the development and strength of the board, raising more funds and reaching more community members. He also explained that more students have received funding for scholarships and transfer opportunities, in addition to job placement and growth culturally, developmentally, and educationally.

Beverly, a Latina female in her 60s, having earned a bachelor's degree, has multiple roles on both sides of the structure of the institution. She currently serves as Foundation B's board chair and has also served on the college's board of trustees. She has an incredible amount of experience in the community, as a parent, as a community leader, and as an advocate for students and for the community at large. She has worked with various college presidents for this college and has been a volunteer in service for over 10 years. She is proud of the evolution and growth of the foundation and said with confidence that the leadership style has a huge impact on the foundation and college as a whole.

Foundation C proudly shares its trailblazing history of over 50 years of support for its college and fulfilling potential. Foundation C was built through the efforts of many generous individuals, philanthropists, volunteers, corporations, and foundations, all of whom committed time, talent, expertise, and funding to provide for the college and its students with what public funding was not able to provide. Foundation C generates approximately \$7 million annually and has over 50 board members. To date, \$100 million has been raised, \$24 million in scholarships awarded, 250,000 volunteer hours dedicated, \$3.25 million invested in faculty excellence, and 72,000 square footage of instructional space added—because philanthropy has been valued as an investment for

this institution via their foundation. The key leadership style connector is strategic planning and relationship building.

Doreen is the executive director of Foundation C. She is a Caucasian female in her 60s who has been in her role for the past few years. She has earned a master's degree, and in this role she reports to both the college president and the foundation board. The board at Foundation C is exceptionally large, having over 55 members. One could infer that it may be the strong community involvement that also impacts the success of the foundation. Foundation C is one of the most successful foundations in all of the SUNY system. The members are diverse in their professions and interests, and those spoken to agreed that leadership style impacts the philanthropy efforts in higher education. Doreen shared that the mission and vision of the foundation is to work in tandem with the college. It was important to her that the board members really partake in the mission statement and vision and strategic planning with the college so that the mission of the foundation stays on track and works to its potential. Doreen explained that the board is very involved in planning and has multiple committees and engages frequently. According to Doreen the engagement and dedication of the board is remarkable. Doreen expressed that what she finds amazing regarding the board is the fact that its members represent different political affiliations, different professions, and varied backgrounds; however, the members are all mission focused. They believe in the college and it serving the community.

Marilyn, a board member for Foundation C, has served on the board for about a year and is currently co-chair of the strategic planning committee, part of the outreach committee, and a member of the scholarship committee. She has her master's degree and

has served on multiple boards during her professional career. She admires the leadership and expressed pride in the size of the exceptional board she is part of. She expressed that the leadership is professional, organized, and very engaged with the board members. She shared that the diversity of professions strengthens the board for assisting with planning, strategy sessions, and implementing fundraising efforts and campaigns for the future. She shared that the leadership style impacts the philanthropy efforts as well as impacts the fundraising within the organization.

Whitney is a board member for Foundation C. She is in her 60s and is a Caucasian female with a master's degree. She has served on the board as a chair of the strategic planning committee and been on the board since January 2020. She marveled at the size of the board and shared that it is incredible that so many board members are as involved as they are. With over 50 members, it creates a business model in which is highly effective in strategy planning and deliverables for the college in fundraising efforts. She expressed how leadership is communicative, collaborative, professional, and very engaging.

### **Research Question 1: What Is the Relationship Between Leadership Style and Institutional Advancement?**

#### ***Theme 1: Mission Focused***

One of the primary themes consistently shared by the participants was their focus on the mission of the foundation. Each organization's mission is primarily focused on being the fundraising arm for their respective college, and their philanthropic efforts can directly impact the students they serve.

When asked what the relationship was between leadership style and institutional advancement, nearly all participants shared that it was congruent. Brendan shared that the donors they are working with believe in the mission first. He explained that the leadership style trickles down from the college, the foundation staff, board members, etc., who all work together, and that is directly demonstrated in the advancement model and results in institutional advancement.

Susan explained,

Our donors are mission focused. They understand that leadership style is critical to the mission and the more money we raise, the more funding can go towards the mission. A donation amount that could be given at Foundation B would be considered nominal (would not make a dent in tuition) at a private university; however, for us at the community college level, that same donation changes a trajectory of life.

She went on to share, “we can do a lot with very little, and that impact is transformative. And when they donate to us, we can affect more lives.”

Debbie shared that mission is always the top priority. She stated,

First and foremost, it’s about our students. If they need our support, we must do whatever is in our power to support them. When it comes to the foundation, it’s really about what’s important for the students and to take everything back to the students, and I keep all our conversations in that direction.

Whitney concurred with the sentiment, saying that as for the foundation’s leadership style, the relationship between leadership style and institutional advancement includes “loyalty and to always be mission focused.”

Connor shared,

Tangentially, the students and staff and other people who benefit from pursuing our mission also. You know, fully invested in the, in the process in a very different way. And again, they become our future and in a very real way.

He went further in expressing the future of the scholarship student:

When the leadership style is mission focused, and a student earns a scholarship, he/she has earned a scholarship, for example, and goes down and becomes a heart surgeon, or an inventor work with a large corporation. These students come back to the college and remember their experience and how the leadership always kept them, the students as the mission—first and foremost.

Beverly concurred, and the sentiments regarding the foundation being mission focused was a recurring theme in relation to the leadership style and institutional advancement. She also expressed the following: “The mission makes it all worth it, it’s the volunteerism. We’re here to transform lives.”

Mission focus was exemplified when speaking with Debbie. She gave an example of a student who benefited from the generosity of the donors and that the community at large was astounded by the impact of how leadership within the organization impacted advancement in a grand way. She shared how she has conversations with donors and how one particular dialogue went. She shared that

the school has a food pantry. This is due to the population of students (many you’d never know) go to school, eat and live in their cars. They must make that choice: school or a place to live or whether or not to eat that day.



She explained that a donor was so moved by the conversation they had (which was a direct link to her leadership style) that the donor initiated a student housing fund.

Through Debbie's advocacy efforts in going to the state, the foundation received funding, and now there is a fund to support homeless students—aiding them to be able to utilize the residence halls on campus. The leadership style in the conversation had influenced the conversation to turn into action, which then increased philanthropy, directly impacting the higher education institution.

### ***Theme 2: Relationship Building***

Relationship building was a theme brought up by nearly all participants relating to leadership style impacting institutional advancement. Relationships amongst the board members and the community leveraged philanthropy and fundraising for each foundation.

Beverly shared the following: “The connections that we have within the community, which is so important, ties directly to the mission which impacts the fundraising efforts.” She shared,

We have people on our board who donate money, but the impact is so much more. For instance, we have a donor so impacted by the mission that due to the relationship building that was done he donated a large sum of funding for our scholarship programs. This scholarship partnership began with one funding opportunity which evolved to so many more scholarship opportunities for more students. In addition, based on my own relationships and ties with the community, I have made numerous calls to the government officials in our community and begin partnerships that benefit our students.

These sentiments were echoed by Marilyn. She explained the leadership style demonstrated by the executive director and shared by the board is one of continuous relationship building. She explained that many board members were donors and utilized their own professional relationships to assist with growing the advancement funding at the foundation. She shared that many board members give their time, dedication, and large donations of funding to support as many students as possible. This is based on a style of giving that is most closely described as mission focused coupled with transactional actions that in part bring forth a transformational outcome with growing the advancement funding.

Whitney concurred, sharing that leadership style impacts advancement by influencing the building of relationships amongst those who are extremely wealthy and are education minded board members. When they see the impact, it motivates them to give more as the impact reaches more and more students. What came to mind for her were the words: “Engaging—communicative—ultimately, relationship building is key.”

Evelyn shared that in her experience, relationship building and relation to leadership style impacting institutional advancement were absolutely correlated. She shared that

the college chose to keep “Community” in the college name for a myriad of reasons but most importantly because of the “community” component of the school and its foundation. The relationships that are built within the community for the college are incredibly important, and to lose the word “Community” for any reason would be a disservice. We are all proud to be build greater relationships for this community college.

Connor explained that in his experience, relationship building is central to leadership style impacting institutional advancement because those on the board, including leaders, are willing and really eager to get involved and to share what they know whether it's community affiliation that they have separate and apart from the college, or in the case of some of the lawyers on the board, sharing, knowledge that they have from that perspective. There are many different angles of wisdom and relationship we all bridge together to focus on whatever our immediate concern or need is at the foundation to benefit the college.

### ***Theme 3: Shared Vision***

A shared vision between the college and the foundation is integral in making sure those who are creating the programs and those funding programs and the college are on the same page and their vision is being carried out with a consistent tone.

Whitney expressed that the leadership style related to shared vision is one of unity. She expressed how the staff does the heavy lifting, are committed, and are extremely communicative.

Doreen shared that she hopes her leadership style is perceived as it is intended; she hopes to build a collaborative environment. She shared her own experience that it pains me when people feel excluded or there's bad feelings and I really try to make it a positive experience. I want to be collegial, and I want everybody to be supportive of each other feel fortunate that I believe that is what we have here. I find it more effective if we're helping each other vs. burning out. We want to stay focused, but we want a culture of achieving a work-life balance. How can we help each other if we are not balanced ourselves?

Beverly expressed that “the efforts must be collaborative and of a shared vision. There is a partnership that just happened with the foundation regarding scholarships and it’s amazing. It goes a long way.”

Debbie concurred regarding shared vision. She explained, “For the foundation, it’s also about having a vision, it’s about knowing where the foundation is going. We’re doing this to help our students and we need to know that we are on the path that will help them.”

#### ***Theme 4: Empower and Inspire***

Empowering and inspiring students became an emergent theme as well during the interviews. Although the actions of empowering and inspiring may seem to be internal, there is a direct correlation to the way that leadership style impacts philanthropy when the leadership inspires donors to give and empowers students to succeed. It is a direct cause and effect.

Susan shared that empowering students and inspiring them is tangible:

It’s happening within your community. At our community college, education is transformative. It’s not a surprise when we share that inspiring message. With our donors, we can present it in real time. Just this week. At one of our events, we had a couple of graduate students that had just graduated who have the world ahead of them. They can go anywhere. They shared how they are heavily recruited by other institutions. The philanthropy for us is happening in real time. You could touch and you could see it. It’s not something like when you work for an organization that’s raising money for research and hopefully somewhere down the line.

Debbie expressed that “empowering people feels right. Listening to people feels right.” She shared that she believes that the most significant elements of her leadership style are listening, honesty, trustworthiness, and most importantly having integrity.

### ***Theme 5: Strategic Planning***

Strategic planning was continually discussed among both the board members and the leadership participants. Throughout the conversations it was conveyed that the strategic planning for the foundations led the fiscal year’s journey, and that directly impacted the philanthropy efforts. The manner in which leadership pivoted through difficulty and led by example championed the students and also made a path for donors to feel their mobility in helping the students. This was reflected in campaign efforts, events, lobbying initiatives, and planning within the college, supported by the foundation leadership staff and donors, to make a greater impact.

Brendan shared that

For certain goals and planning, communication is key. The staff of the foundation and the board and leadership must communicate the strategies effectively. They must work directly with the college and discuss compromises, alternatives and then bring the final plans to the board and community. It is a collaborative effort for sure.

Beverly expressed that “Partnership between leadership and the stakeholders is key. Collaboration is key. The planning can only get done that way.”

Evelyn shared that without the college having a well-developed plan, the foundation strategy plan cannot be completed. They work hand in hand.

Marilyn, as a chair of the strategic planning committee, stated that it is imperative for both the college and the foundation to work together collaboratively.

***Theme 6: Diversity Matters***

The theme of diversity was mentioned quite frequently in relation to the board members, the students, and the communities each serves. It was brought up that it was imperative to have proper representation and access for the students. The leadership styles presented all conveyed the sense of this being an important theme for higher education as a whole.

Brendan shared that “the full board is made up of over 24 people roughly of all different backgrounds, races and ethnic backgrounds.”

Connor shared that the constant connection with the various constituencies at his foundation made a huge impact on decision making.

Doreen gave the following profile of the campus:

the core of the work is really about scholarships . . . and making funding available to those who are of all different backgrounds and varied needs. But the cost of attending college is much larger than that, and our foundation truly understands that and has come through during coping with special emergency grants to keep people housed has funded a food pantry, has funded car repairs for people.

Because as a foundation, we never wanted anything ancillary being the thing that was going to keep them from coming to school.

Debbie expressed that it was imperative to build relationships with people of varied socioeconomic backgrounds and political affiliations, which would enable the

foundation to serve a broad spectrum of students. She emphasized, “our duty is to help everyone who needs it.”

## **Research Question 2: Can Leadership Style Help Explain Successful Institutional Advancement Programs?**

According to Usmani (2022), leadership style can be defined as how leaders strategize their relationships with their followers. Knowing the leadership style is vital to gaining the loyalty of followers and increasing the effectiveness of the leader. Success, according to Merriam-Webster, can be defined as: “A favorable or desired outcome.”

All nine participants shared that leadership style can help explain successful advancement programs. The rationale of why they felt this way, was varied and shared via the following themes.

### ***Theme 1: Mission Focused***

Whitney expressed that the leadership style at Foundation C was “impressive, communicative, engaging, [and] responsive.”

### ***Theme 2: Relationship Building***

Debbie shared that the leadership style at Foundation A was based on relationship building, and because of the successful relationships being built, Foundation A’s institutional advancement program was impacted in a successful manner.

Evelyn shared a similar sentiment for Foundation A. She shared that they are in the “relationship-business.”

Connor concurred. He agreed that Foundation A’s leadership success was built on relationship building.

### ***Theme 3: Shared Vision***

Susan expressed that “leadership style is critical. In advancement, for a lot of reasons, it goes back to trying to create a holistic environment that is supportive.” For Foundation B, shared vision was instrumental in shaping the success of institutional advancement.

### ***Theme 4: Empower and Inspire***

Beverly stated:

The bottom line is that, you know, we’re here to transform lives and it’s important we’ve reached out to students. You know, unfortunately, for us, we had a pandemic, and our leadership and along with our board members went the extra mile to help students when needed, and the success of those efforts is because of them feeling inspired and empowered.

### ***Theme 5: Strategic Planning***

Marilyn expressed that for Foundation C, “the absolute number of funds raised, of course, is important, certainly the growth, trajectory, and the consistency . . . helps with the strategic planning, which assists in the success of . . . institutional advancement success.”

Whitney, also from Foundation C, shared that “succession planning was key.”

### ***Theme 6: Diversity Matters***

Connor expressed the importance of diversity in regard to the success in institutional advancement. He shared that “having a diverse board in which the members are really serving is imperative to the success. They volunteer their time; [their] expertise and their backgrounds are so varied. It brings the success to the next level.”



### **Research Question 3: Which Particular Aspects of Leadership Style Have the Most Influence on Successful Institutional Advancement Programs?**

Leadership style attributes almost became the sub-themes of the interviews. Certain descriptive words continued to present themselves nearly as much as the themes. Vocabulary like *trust, loyalty, dedication, collaborative, open-minded, patient, team oriented, professional, and organized* resonated throughout all of the interviews describing the leadership style, and it was interesting how each leader navigated these aspects concurrently throughout the themes. Additionally, of significance was how their styles of leadership and influence impacted each of their respective foundation institutional advancement programs.

#### ***Theme 1: Mission Focused***

Evelyn shared the collaborative efforts and teamwork of Foundation A in particular have an incredibly friendly atmosphere and that atmosphere is part of the leadership style. Those attributes have the most influence on successful institutional advancement programs.

Whitney shared that “trust is key. If donors trust the process and the mission- they will inevitably give more.”

#### ***Theme 2: Relationship Building***

Connor shared that “collaborative efforts, relationship building, and the expertise of the foundation leadership really have shined through as the aspects of leadership style having the most influence on successful institutional advancement programs for Foundation A.”

Beverly shared that

for Foundation B, it's the relationships that are stellar. It's the leadership of the board. They are amazing. If I call any of them, within a moment, they're there. And that's how our students feel . . . and that is what makes aspects of leadership style have the most influence on successful institutional advancement programs for us.

### ***Theme 3: Shared Vision***

Evelyn expressed that having a shared vision meant that understanding that the college was affordable and a smart economic choice. That was a shared vision by leadership and the community. That shared vision was part of why Foundation A could be on the same page when communicating effectively.

Marilyn expressed that the leadership showed professionalism and leadership, and that the style of leading with professionalism makes a huge impact on donors, on success of philanthropy, and on advancement's success as well. She expressed that professionals who give their time and attention to boards and who give substantial sums of money, in many cases, want to be confident of the shared vision and professionalism in the manner in which the strategy and shared vision are being delivered by leadership.

### ***Theme 4: Empower and Inspire***

Susan shared that the power to inspire is a success marker that could be used for almost any employee or leadership role, as when she saw people inspiring the students it almost always led to powerful and successful implementation of programs. Specifically, she noted that the institutional advancement programs benefited from the inspirational elements of the experiences of students and alumni, as the empowerment stories were

helpful to raise funds for scholarships and the student success stories were helpful to grow the programs.

Beverly shared that not only was her own daughter inspired to work hard and earn her degree but also she as a board member was inspired by students. She would hear stories from her “daughter about classmates and be inspired by them to donate more time, funds, connections—whatever necessary and it was because of the experience.”

### ***Theme 5: Strategic Planning***

Brendan shared that it was beneficial to know that the leadership had all different skillsets, and he stated that the strategic planning worked very well because of the balance. He felt the style was a bit authoritative in relation to strategic planning.

Connor felt that there were opportunities for students and staff to be part of the strategy sessions. He felt that the funds being raised by the foundation and the strategic planning were excellent. He thought it was important that the leadership was addressing and aligning with the strategic direction of the college:

The foundation board to chair the strategic planning committee, and then now has been invited by the president of the college to participate in the institutional strategic planning so in short – it is of the utmost importance to Foundation A.

Doreen shared that an initiative regarding a tax benefit was something new for the foundation and that the board had to trust her, as a new leader. This was an example of customer service and a donor relations component of making that tax credit available to her donors, and it was very much appreciated. As it assisted with approximately \$175,000 of a benefit and helped with the strategic planning, it was a successful leadership move.

### ***Theme 6: Diversity Matters***

Connor shared that diversity matters as an aspect of leadership style that has influence on successful institutional advancement programs:

Diversity in opinion, in perspective, bringing all of that to the table matters. It's imperative. The board needs to hear and respond to that so they can understand different views coming from the constituents. It's a democratic way to be and it's worked well for us. People want their opinions and views and voices heard. The different perspectives really inform.

Brendan shared a similar sentiment but in greater detail, by saying,

As a White male . . . it is so important for me to hear what a student who has a different background than me may need. Our board has representation of all different ethnicities, views, races, and it helps me open my mind to ideas and needs that I may not have thought of but am seeing we need to fund and help. It's really important, and it's our role as board members to help. The diversification of the board is key. Without that as your vision, your mission cannot be complete.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter summarizes the purpose and methodology for this study.

Interviewing the donors as well as the leadership allowed the researcher to examine what styles of leadership support the process of philanthropy for higher education. Leadership plays an integral part in measuring success when the value is placed on raising funds, specifically in higher education. Effective leaders succeed in transforming organizations, influencing donors, and implementing change. Each of these board members who are also donors for their respective organization have the unique opportunity to be able to

objectively examine how the leadership styles work or could be improved to increase the revenue being fundraised at each foundation. Since the mission of these foundations is to help with funding the following scholarship programs, brick and mortar buildings, future capital campaigns, appeals, and endowments, all of their work is in service of helping the students and the college as a whole. Raising funds aiding a college/university can be historic in its efforts in philanthropy.

The interviews examined which style of leadership can be most effective. Common sub themes that were consistently stated by the participants included all of the different leadership styles previously discussed. There were examples in which the leadership had to make authoritative decisions. Some styles demonstrated the transactional nature of the actions taking place. For example, a donation was requested and then received. Nearly all of the leaders demonstrated servant leadership qualities, serving their constituents and community first.

The style that was prevalent and most noticeable was that of being a transformational leader. This meant they needed to pivot and utilize all skillsets dependent on the task, event, or decision at hand. There was not one approach or a one-size-fits-all method that solved conflict or that helped all students. It was transforming lives that was part of each leader's mission along with each donor and board member. Being chameleonlike and rolling with the proverbial punches that inevitably would come was the style these leaders consistently showed.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

This qualitative research examined how styles of leadership could impact the process of philanthropy for higher education. Comprehension of how the leadership styles influenced fundraising and philanthropy for each institution was shared throughout this research. The research questions investigated included the following: What is the relationship between leadership style and institutional advancement? Can leadership style help explain successful institutional advancement programs? And lastly, which particular aspects of leadership style have the most influence on successful institutional advancement programs? The following themes became prominent while discussing what was leading the charge of philanthropy in higher education and what was driving its success: leadership being mission focused, creating an atmosphere in which leaders were building relationships, leadership having a shared vision, empowering and inspiring donors, strategically planning, and ensuring that diversity matters.

The themes were consistent in all three foundations. The executive directors had to juggle the duties of being mission focused while inspiring and motivating donors to fundraise and believe in their very important mission of assisting students of all different backgrounds and economic status. It was interesting to find that the board members (who were also donors) had relevant experiences and feelings about the importance of the foundations' work even though they were in different locations and demographic settings.

This study examined if leadership style affected the success in fundraising, as well as if one style of leadership (servant leadership, emotional leadership, transactional leadership, or transformational leadership) contributed more to fundraising.

## **Interpretation of Results**

This study took a qualitative approach via case study, with the investigator focusing on one or more cases over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). The first stage of the research was qualitative in nature, whereby the executive directors were contacted via email to determine their inclination to partake in the study. The three executive directors then agreed to be interviewed. In addition, the six board members, two from each the three foundations, also agreed to be interviewed. The interviews took place in the summer of 2022, based on the participants' scheduling availability. The questions asked led to discussions about leadership styles and began to reveal themes about fundraising, philanthropy, donors, and their associated attributes and characteristics.

Each interview was transcribed by the Webex Transcription Feature. Then the coding process took place. The investigator coded the transcriptions and identified themes based on Saldaña's (2012) method for descriptive coding.

The organizations included in this study were the foundations of three community colleges within the SUNY system. Research data were collected via interviews of the executive directors of the foundations and board members/donors at each respective institution. In addition, subsequent observations as well as artifacts were used to triangulate the research data. Data analysis explored thematic connections linking leadership style and philanthropic success within the organizations.

Effective leadership can aid in the successful transformation of organizations, influence donors, and implement change. In recent years, higher education has evolved from being an altruistic source of learning to becoming a source of income to advance an

institution. Philanthropic funding for higher education can serve to assist researchers, labs, buildings, theaters, athletic stadiums, and endowments. Raising funds to aid a college/university can be historic in its efforts in philanthropy, and those in leadership roles are essential in this process. This study examined which style of leadership can be most effective.

### **Relationship Between Results and Prior Research**

Comparing the relationship between prior research overall regarding leadership and the results of the data collected for the subjects included in this research suggests the significance of evolution. When studying leadership styles, theorists such as Bass (1985, 1996, 1997), Burns (1978), Goleman (1995), and Greenleaf (1970) appear throughout timelines of history. However, when analyzing the theorists and their work, it becomes apparent that many of the elements of their styles could be used tangentially. Some, of course, are the antithesis of one another; for example, if one is a servant leader, typically one would then not be authoritative in style. But what this study uncovered in the interviews is that it is not as much about the style of the leader but the reaction to the event in which the style needs to be applied. For example, there are times in which all styles are necessary. Some leaders are more inclined to lead more predominantly than others. As this study has shown, most of the leadership within the realm of the community college foundation staff and boards of directors would most likely be classified as transformative. That being said, as revealed in this study there were decisions that needed to be made in which an authoritative head needed to be firm and make an executive decision. An example of this was when Foundation A needed to completely redraft their memorandum of understanding with the college and stand firm



with what was necessary. Another example was that many times Foundation B was cited by their board as needing to be transactional in decision making. There were many times there was something negotiated for something else. Transactional leadership uses rewards or punishments, which are typically distinguished as instrumental in a follower's target achievement (Bass, 1997). In some instances, participants cited that a building was named for a price.

On multiple occasions, Foundation C referenced being emotionally driven and inspired to offer more opportunities for students. According to Goleman (1995), emotional leadership is a process that leaders use to influence their followers to work toward a common goal.

In nearly all cases the leadership and volunteers had a focus of servant leadership, in which, according to Greenleaf, the servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first (Greenleaf, 1970). Greenleaf shared that to serve the greater good above the individual was paramount. Mission must come first.

Attributes of all of these types of decision-making and leadership styles were combined on a daily basis, causing the analysis in this study to point to transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a process in which according to Burns (1978), "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation."

### **Limitations**

The goal of this study was to explore which leadership styles best supports the process of philanthropy for higher education. Since leadership plays an integral part in

measuring success in higher education, specifically in higher education philanthropy, it was important to examine if there was one style that was more impactful than the others. This study was conducted with the community college foundations within the SUNY system, which includes 30 community colleges. A potential limitation could include that there are various locations with different demographics, and those different demographics could call for different outcomes. Suburban vs. urban settings could yield different results. Further, it should be noted that all of the executive directors interviewed were female. Perhaps the results would be different if the genders were different.

### **Implications for Future Research**

To reinforce the foundation of these conclusions, continuing to study leadership styles to see if there are consistent findings and to continue to study in both four-year institutions and also private universities could be helpful to see if certain leadership styles are found to be consistently most successful for philanthropy in higher education. In addition, interviewing donors who perhaps are not board members could possibly bring forward different results or yield different perceptions of or vantage points on leadership style.

This study brought forward dedicated participants, volunteers, donors, and leaders, and each interviewed shared their experiences, how they responded to leadership styles, and how their constituencies responded to leadership styles. Each foundation represented in the study was part of the SUNY system, and one could infer that perhaps results may be different at a private university. However, since the attributes of the leadership styles discussed by the participants of this study are the same as those that are

prominent in some of the most successful businesses in the world, perhaps the results of a similar study in a different type of institution would be exactly the same.

The summary of this study is that the leadership style that these participants most admired, utilized, and expressed to be most successful was transformative in nature. It had to adapt to the situation. It had components of all leadership styles.

### **Implications for Future Practice**

Several suggestions for future practice and as well as the future evolution of leadership style would be suggested from this investigation. Community college foundations and their boards of directors will want to be mindful to the results of this study when making appointment choices about their next head of the institution, as in today's higher education environment, philanthropy is affected by the highest level of management, including the institution's president. The leaders of foundations and staffing must be able to work in tandem with the president to effectively leverage philanthropy to sustain and build the organization. There must be a dynamic team in place that works collaboratively on philanthropic projects at the school.

The institutions must have organizational pyramids clearly in place at the school and specifically in the foundations in order to be available to meet with alumni, community constituents, corporate partners, and potential major donors. This is absolutely critical to the success of the fundraising efforts. Boards of directors should consider school leaders who have the capacity and ability to be transformational leaders. Leadership style, specifically having an emphasis on relationship building, was a common theme in all interviews with leaders and donors. It was shared time and time again that due to the leadership style, the success of the organization was defined by the

attributes of building trust, being available, developing the community and donor constituency, and staying true to the mission.

The data suggested that while the leaders were already skilled in forming solid relationships with their donors, this needed to be done with absolute consistency through leadership transition and succession. This needs to be paramount for planning for future succession building of foundation leadership and philanthropy building for future success and evolution. Leadership style has always been and will continue to be a part of the process of determining what motivates a donor to want to donate. This process must not only translate to foundations but also permeate leadership at the college level in order to ensure future growth. Higher education leadership will need to understand the influence that forming a close bond with a potential donor has in the long-term success of the institution, building trust and acting with integrity. Trust building, relationship building, connectedness, and acting with integrity are highly important in forming genuine relationships with donors, alumni, the community, and the college as a whole over the long term. In order for foundations to succeed, there also needs to be buy-in and commitment from the leadership at the college. If everyone is all-in, then everyone wins. The mission succeeds.

### **Chapter Summary**

This culminating chapter summarizes the interpretation of the results of the data collected, the relationship between the results and prior research, limitations, implications for future research, and implications for future practice as it pertains to how leadership style impacts the process of philanthropy for higher education. Regarding this study's consideration of leadership styles, attributes, behaviors, and characteristics associated

with strong fundraising and philanthropy, specifically examining three community college foundations within the SUNY system, several conclusions may be drawn from this research.

Effective leadership can aid in the successful transformation of organizations, influence donors, and implement change. This study has shown that many leadership styles are necessary to make foundations successful. The results from this study indicate that the themes most resounding with the participants have been those of being mission focused, relationship focused, and inspirational and empowering to the students; these aspects of leadership work best in impacting donor fundraising.

The leadership style most used to have this impact was transformational in nature. Transformational leadership and the characteristics and behaviors associated with being a transformational leader were also very important in terms of fundraising. The future of fundraising and philanthropy for higher education will undoubtedly become a powerful resource for colleges in both the public and private sectors, as fundraising has already started to become a fruitful source of income to advance an institution. It has been and will continue to be a funding source to elevate campuses. It will also be able to provide property gains for use of land that can be reimaged for future leaders.

Philanthropic funding for higher education can serve to assist researchers, labs, buildings, theaters, athletic stadiums, and endowments. Raising funds to aid a college/university can be and will be historic in its efforts in philanthropy, and those in leadership roles are essential. According to the Council on Foundations (2021), philanthropy can be defined in different ways. The origin of the word *philanthropy* is Greek and means “love for mankind.” Today, philanthropy includes the concept of

voluntary giving by an individual or group to promote the common good. Based on this study, philanthropy could be defined as investing in our future. There is no greater mission, no greater good, no greater common denominator that binds us all than investing in our future. It is always the right time to give.

**APPENDIX A ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

**APPROVAL**



Federal Wide Assurance: FWA00009066

Apr 19, 2022 12:46:07 PM

**IRB-FY2022-314 - Initial: Initial - Expedited - St. John's**

PI: Joy DeDonato

CO-PI: James Campbell

The School of Education, Ed Admin & Instruc Leadership

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - **IRB-FY2022-314** *What Styles of Leadership Support The Process of Philanthropy For Higher Education? A Qualitative Analysis*

Dear Joy DeDonato:

The St John's University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for *What Styles of Leadership Support The Process of Philanthropy For Higher Education? A Qualitative Analysis*. The approval is effective from April 14, 2022 through April 13, 2023.

Decision: Approved

PLEASE NOTE: If you have collected any data prior to this approval date, the data must be discarded.

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Sincerely,

Raymond DiGiuseppe, PhD, ABPP  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
Professor of Psychology  
Marie Nitopi, Ed.D.  
IRB Coordinator

## APPENDIX B PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



### Consent and Release Form

**Background:** You have been invited to take part in a research study to learn more about professional development. This study will be conducted by Joy DeDonato, as part of her doctoral dissertation. Her faculty sponsor is James R. Campbell, Ph.D., Saint John's University, School of Education, Department of Administrative and Instructional Leadership.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to agree to the following:

1. To be interviewed.
2. To aid the researcher in her analysis of any data collected.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no known risks associated with your participation in this research beyond those of everyday life. Although you will receive no direct benefits, this research may help the investigator better understand how professional development is related to student classroom support.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality of your research records will be strictly maintained by keeping consent forms separate from data, using a coding system to ensure anonymity, and storing all raw data in a locked cabinet off site from the study.

**Participation:** Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. For interviews, you have the right to skip or not answer any questions you prefer not to answer.

**Questions and Contacts:** If there is anything about the study or your participation that is unclear or that you do not understand, if you have questions or wish to report a research-related problem, you may contact Joy DeDonato at [REDACTED]@stjohns.edu or [REDACTED] or the faculty sponsor, James R. Campbell, Ph.D. at [REDACTED]@stjohns.edu, Saint John's University, School of Education, Sullivan Hall, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Queens, NY 11439. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Human Subjects Review Board, St. John's University. You can contact Dr. Marie Nitopi, the Board Coordinator, at [REDACTED]@stjohns.edu or by phone at [REDACTED]; or you can contact the Chairperson of the Board, Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe at [REDACTED]@stjohns.edu .

**Copy:** You have received a copy of this consent document to keep.



**Agreement to Participate**

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Subject's Signature

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Date

---

Subject's Name (Please Print)

## **APPENDIX C FOUNDATION LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Note: Foundation Leadership will be encouraged to answer questions in as much detail as possible:

### **GENERAL**

- 1) Tell me about the leadership structure of your organization.
- 2) Tell me about the culture of your organization.
- 3) What are your overall experiences regarding the leadership structure of your organization?
- 4) Tell me about your donors' involvement in your organization.
- 5) Tell me about your relationships with your donors.
- 6) How do you define successful philanthropy for higher education?
- 7) Overall, do you think the relationships you developed with your donors has impacted your success in philanthropy for higher education?
- 8) Overall, do you think the relationships you developed with the College Community has impacted your success in philanthropy for higher education?
- 9) Are there any attributes of successful philanthropic endeavors at other foundations that you would want to be able to implement now or in the future? If yes, what are they?

### **LEADERSHIP STYLE**

- 10) Tell me about your leadership style.
- 11) What are some of the attributes of your leadership style that you feel make your organization successful?
- 12) What are some characteristics of your leadership that you would like to grow?
- 13) In your opinion, what is the impact between leadership style and institutional advancement?

### **SUCCESS**

- 14) Can leadership style help explain successful institutional advancement

programs?

- 15) Is there a particular type of leadership style that is more than others in successful institutional advancement programs

## **APPENDIX D FOUNDATION BOARD/DONOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Note: Foundation Board/Donors will be encouraged to answer questions in as much detail as possible:

### **GENERAL**

- 1) Tell me about the leadership structure and/or culture of the organization you donate to.
- 2) What were your overall perceptions or experiences about the leadership structure and/or culture of this organization?
- 3) Tell me about your leadership's involvement in your organization.
- 4) Tell me about your relationships with your leadership.
- 5) How do you define successful philanthropy for higher education?
- 6) Overall, do you think the relationships you developed with your organization's leadership has impacted your willingness or desire to give that has benefitted success in philanthropy for higher education?
- 7) Overall, do you think the relationships that has been developed with the College Community has impacted the success in philanthropy for higher education?
- 8) Are there any attributes of successful philanthropic endeavors at other foundations that you would want to be able to assist in implementing now or in the future? If yes, what are they?

### **LEADERSHIP STYLE**

- 9) Tell me about your organization's leadership style.
- 10) What are some of the attributes of your organization's leadership style that you feel make your organization successful?
- 11) What are some characteristics of your organization's leadership that you would like to grow?
- 12) In your opinion, what is the relationship between leadership style and institutional advancement?

### **SUCCESS**

- 13) In your experience, can leadership style help explain successful institutional advancement programs?

14) In your experience, is there a particular type of leadership style that is more than others in successful institutional advancement programs?

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Vita

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Other Degrees and Certificates*	<i>Master of Science, Long Island University, Greenvale, New York Major: Education</i>
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