MCINNIS, WILLIAM DALE. The Managerial Roles of North Carolina Community College Chief Business Officers. (Under the direction of Dr. George B. Vaughan)

This dissertation examines the managerial roles and organizational status of the chief business officer in North Carolina community colleges, with the intended purpose of better understanding how the roles are performed. This study is conceptually framed with the managerial role theory of Baker, which was based on the work of Mintzberg. As a qualitative research study, interviews developed through the constant comparison method were conducted with six community college chief business officers (CBOs) in North Carolina, based on the following research questions:

1. How do CBOs perceive their managerial roles?
2. How do the perceptions of the CBOs correspond to the perceptions of the president and chief academic officer in their respective college?
3. How do CBOs perceive their place and status in their college?
4. How do the CBOs feel their roles and place in their college have changed over the course of their tenure in the position?

The study’s results, triangulated through document analysis and interviews with the CBOs’ respective presidents and chief academic officers, show the perceived roles the CBOs performed and their status in their colleges. Labels for the roles were initially based on Baker’s model and modified by the descriptions of the CBOs, who saw their roles as divisional or institutional, with a hierarchy of roles in each category and sub-categories of peripheral roles, variable roles, and core roles. Resource manager, liaison, problem solver, monitor and information clearinghouse were identified as core to both
the divisional and institutional roles, with negotiator, visionary, ambassador, and advocate seen as peripheral roles, while the CBO was not found to be an agent of institutional change. Experience and longevity were identified as factors that positively affected the CBO’s status, while also increasing the importance of the advisor role. Implications from this study include opportunities to expand the study of the CBO position and functions, and to apply the findings of this research towards improved identification and training of potential CBOs, as well as providing current CBOs with improved professional development.
THE MANAGERIAL ROLES OF NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICERS

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education in Higher Education Administration

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Biography

The researcher, a life-long resident of North Carolina, was raised, along with his two younger brothers, on his family’s farm in the Sandhills of Richmond County. After graduating from Richmond Senior High School in 1984, he attended N.C. State University and Sandhills Community College before receiving a Bachelor’s degree in Business Management from the University of North Carolina at Pembroke in 1988. While working for United Parcel Service and Lowe’s Companies, he earned a Master’s in Business Administration from Campbell University. He began his doctoral studies in 1998.

After teaching as an adjunct professor for Richmond Community College and Gardner Webb University, the researcher accepted a position as lead instructor for business administration with Montgomery Community College in 1992. He soon entered college administration, accepting the position of Vice President of Administrative Services there in 1993. In 2001, he received the position of Vice President of Administrative Services at South Piedmont Community College. Currently he serves as Vice President for Administration, at Richmond Community College. The researcher, with his wife Thomasa and son Ryan, resides in Ellerbe, North Carolina.
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Recognizing and thanking all the people who have helped me complete my doctoral program and this dissertation would require more space than allowable, yet there are some individuals to whom I am deeply indebted.

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Chapter One: Introduction of the Study

According to Mintzberg, “the prime purpose of the manager is to ensure that his organization serves its basic purpose - the efficient production of specific goods or services” (1973, p.95). In the case of the community college, that specific service is fulfilling its mission of meeting the educational needs of its communities, students, and stakeholders. The community college chief business officer (CBO) “provides the critical business, financial, and administrative support, as well as professional guidance that allows the institution to realize its academic mission” (West, 2000, p.5). The importance of the community college CBO position and its functions in the college’s operation are recognized by college accrediting agencies as necessary elements of an educationally sound and financially stable institution. “The chief business officer should have experience or training in handling educational business affairs sufficient to enable the business office to serve the educational goals of the institution and assist in furthering its stated purpose” (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, 2000, p.70).

This study examines the community college CBO in North Carolina, developing an understanding of the different managerial roles the CBOs perform in helping to fulfill the community colleges’ mission, as well as their status in their organizations.

Purpose of the Study

A statement of purpose should outline the intended, ultimate goal of the research, indicating how this outcome will fill gaps in or expand the existing knowledge base connected to the topic (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The purpose of this study is to define the perceived managerial roles and organizational status of North Carolina community college CBOs.
"The function of administering business matters in the community college is a complex and demanding task" (Foresi, 1974, p.73). While few in the community college arena would dispute Foresi’s statement, little research has been conducted to understand better the managerial roles of the people who administer the business component of the community college, particularly in the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS).

Unlike other community college positions, the CBO has rarely been the topic of research or examination (Garavalia & Miller, 1996; Weitman, 1997). “Despite the prima facia importance of the position, little scholarly or professional work has been done to clarify and improve practice in the administration of the community college” (Garavalia & Miller, 1996, p.2). This dearth of research is, at least in part, due to the attitudes of community college leaders. “CEOs are not fascinated with finance and governance as topics deserving of study in their own right (which of course they are), but rather as strategies for moving their organizations toward the achievement of priorities” (Richardson & Vaughan, 1985, p.23). The lack of knowledge of the CBOs’ roles and hierarchical status in the community college is apparent when compared to the research conducted on the other leadership positions in the same institutions.

The roles and functions of the community college president, not surprisingly, have been well researched and documented (Hood, Miller, & Pope, 1999; Vaughan, 1989). The managerial roles of leaders of the academic divisions (Mangieri & Arnn, 1991; Mech, 1997), student services, libraries (Mech, 1990; Moskowitz, 1986), and information systems (Grover & Jeong, 1993) have all been researched with varying levels of interest, but each to a greater depth and frequency than the community college CBO.
As a qualitative study, the CBOs’ perceptions of their roles and status in their college are at issue. The CBOs’ view of their own roles can influence their performance and effectiveness as leaders and administrators. “How an administrator is perceived is largely determined by the way that individual sees himself or herself” (Rausch, 1980, p.244). By better understanding the managerial roles of the position, community college CBOs, along with their presidents, may be better prepared to enhance or develop the skills needed to accomplish the positions’ responsibilities and functions. “Management strengths and weaknesses must be assessed so that the college can become more effective in dealing with the external environment” (Richardson & Vaughan, 1985, p.36). This improved understanding of the CBO’s roles and status could also help prevent role conflict and improve administrative effectiveness for the entire college leadership team, as well as initiate further research into the CBOs’ roles and behavior.

Given the scope of this study, my professional experience, and the unique nature of the NCCCS, I am focusing this study specifically on CBOs in North Carolina community colleges. Having been a CBO in this system for almost eight years, I understand my own perspective as it relates to the managerial and institutional roles I have played in this position. Though I now serve in another senior administrative leadership position at a North Carolina community college, I intend to utilize that experience in framing and bounding the framework of the study. Recognizing that the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), I have strived to meet the challenge in balancing my experience with the necessary perspective for subjective scholarly research.
Using the lexicon, knowledge, and relationships I have developed as a CBO, I am well positioned to interpret objectively the individual perceptions of my colleagues and counterparts from other community colleges in the NCCCS. By inductively analyzing these perceptions in the context of the entire group, this study can initiate additional research and greater understanding of the administration of community college business affairs.

**Research Questions**

While the purpose statement sets the goal of the study, the research questions provide the researcher a map on how to reach that intended goal. The initial research questions should succinctly summarize where, with whom, and how the study will be conducted, clearly indicating the relationships sought and the constructs to be generated (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The conceptual framework of this study, described in detail in Chapter Two, is built on a combination of Mintzberg’s and Baker’s respective research on managerial roles and my own professional experience.

My initial research questions have their genesis in the conceptual framework I have constructed and are dependent on the research purpose statement. All of the following questions support the goal of understanding how community colleges CBOs perceive their managerial roles and their status in their colleges.

1. How do CBOs perceive their managerial roles?
2. How do the perceptions of the CBOs in regards to their roles and status correspond to the perceptions of the president and chief academic officer in their respective college?
3. How do CBOs perceive their status in the hierarchy of their college?
4. How do the CBOs feel their roles and place in their college have changed over the course of their tenure in the position?

**Background and Terminology**

Developing an insight into the managerial roles of the community college CBO requires a familiarity with the background and context of the group being studied and key terms used in this study. Defining these terms initially will hopefully provide some sense of that familiarity and context. The two major areas referenced throughout the proposal that require initial explanation involve the NCCCS and its colleges and the CBO position and its duties.

**Key Terms**

Explanations of the following terms may be useful in the context of this study.

**Chief business officer (CBO):** This position, a senior officer of the college, reports to the president of the community college and is assigned responsibility for the business, financial, and administrative functions of the college. The chief business officer is usually a peer to the chief academic officer and chief of student services (CSS).

**Chief academic officer (CAO):** This position, also a senior college officer, reports to the community college president and is responsible for credit instructional programs that lead to degrees, diplomas or certificates. In some colleges this position is also responsible for continuing education programs as well.

**Full time equivalent (FTE):** The standard measurement, along with unduplicated headcount, of college enrollment. In the NCCCS, one FTE is calculated to be 512 contact hours per academic year.
Managerial roles: Mintzberg defines managerial roles as an “organized set of behaviors belonging to an identifiable office or position” (1973, p.54). The twelve roles in Baker’s model, based on the ten roles in Mintzberg’s taxonomy, are broad subcategories that encompass the activities that all managers perform. Each role represents a specific set of actions and behavior required of the manager.

Managerial categories: The twelve managerial roles in Baker’s model are grouped into three categories: leadership roles, informational roles and decisional roles. The roles in each category are connected to each other, with each category linked interdependently to the other two. This model is derived from Mintzberg’s work and Baker’s research on community college leadership and will be elaborated upon in Chapter Three.

Capital projects coordinator: The State Construction Office (SCO), a department in the North Carolina Department of Administration, has formal oversight and approval on all construction projects costing $300,000 or more. Each college designates a capital projects coordinator, responsible for representing the college in construction matters and making decisions related to projects.

Service area: Established and maintained by the NCCCSO, service area assignments set specific geographic areas for all colleges, usually defined by county, that identify where colleges can establish programs and offer courses (NCCCSO, 2001).

The North Carolina Community College System

The NCCCS is relatively unique in comparison to other state systems in its organizational structure, governance, the varied sizes of its colleges, and its strong emphasis on economic development (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Each of these contextual factors are thought to effect the role of the CBO. The NCCCS, unlike some state
community college systems, is separate from both the state university system and the department of public instruction, being governed by the State Board of Community Colleges. While the North Carolina Community College System Office (NCCCSO), the central administrative authority under the State Board, allocates state resources and administers system-wide rules and regulations, each of the 58 community colleges has a high degree of local autonomy in setting its own respective policies and procedures.

Proportionately appointed by the governor, county commissioners, and local school boards, a board of trustees governs each college, establishing and approving all local policies at the college level. The college president reports to this local board and is responsible for all college operations and functions, with the CBO and other senior officers reporting to him or her.

This NCCCS’s organizational structure, combining state-level administration with local autonomy, has generated 58 different and distinctive colleges within a single system. They range in enrollment from 200 credit FTE to well over 8,000; they are both rural and urban, and offer programs designed to meet the adult educational needs of the respective service area. Some colleges are multi-campus, meaning they have college-owned facilities aside from the main campus on which instruction is offered.

A goal of the system from its inception in 1960s has been accessibility for all citizens of the state (Wiggs, 1989). The establishment and location of the 58 colleges, designed to meet this goal, resulted in a system of colleges with a wide range of sizes. The NCCCS is rare among other large state systems for its relatively high percentage of small colleges, those with 1,000 or fewer students (MGT of America, 1997). In the 2000-2001 academic year 11 colleges reported fewer than 1,000 credit FTE, while six colleges
exceeded 3,500 FTE (NCCCSO, 2001). The remaining 41 colleges, ranging in size from 1,000 to 3,500 FTE make up 70% of the system.

In terms of its educational mission, the colleges in the NCCCS are comprehensive, offering college transfer and a wide selection of technical degree, certificate, and diploma programs. It differs from many other state systems in having placed “economic development as the primary thrust” of its mission, identifying workforce preparedness and vocational-technical education as the system’s major focus (Boone, 1997, p. 3).

This variety of size, location, and programming has affected the organizational structure of the colleges, with some colleges having extensive middle management, while others have flatter organizations with larger spans of control for senior administrators. Since there are relationships between managerial roles and both organizational size and structure (Mintzberg, 1979), these variations would imply that CBOs in differing types and sizes of colleges might have different types of managerial roles.

The Duties and Functions of the Community College CBO

Before studying the perceived roles of the position, it would seem appropriate to offer some definition of a community college CBO in North Carolina. However, due to the colleges’ variety of size and organizational structure, the position varies in exact duties, title, and in its hierarchical status in the organization. Whether titled dean, vice-president, business manager, or even director, each of the 58 North Carolina community colleges has an individual designated as that college’s CBO, who is responsible for managing the resources and related support services of their respective college.
The different titles assigned to the CBO position may cause confusion over the reporting status of the position. Unlike the CAO, who is almost always clearly titled as either dean or vice president, the CBO has different titles that often do not correlate with their peers in other colleges. With some colleges using titles such as business manager, chief financial officer, and director of financial services, the roles of these CBO’s in their institutions and their degree of responsibility is often unclear. A sample of 250 community colleges listed in the 2001 National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) directory revealed 18 unique titles for the position, with 48 colleges using vice president of administrative services, making it the most common title nationally.

Some states, such as Virginia, used the same title at each of their community colleges. North Carolina’s community colleges, on the other hand, use titles including executive vice president, business manager, director, with vice president of administrative services the most frequent title, found at 16 of the 58 colleges (Association of Community College Business Officials, 2001). This position’s closest corporate counterpart is the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and in some cases that designation is also applied to the community college CBO (Vandament, 1989). More than a matter of mere prestige or esteem, the title and rank of the CBO in the organization is significant in understanding the roles played by the position. “A manager’s level in the authority hierarchy of the organization appears to one of the most important situational influences on the manager’s activity patterns,” (Yukl, 1994, p.36).

The CBO is typically responsible for the following areas of responsibility in the community college: finance and budgeting, facilities, information technology, human
resources, and auxiliary services (Calver & Vogler, 1985; Vandament, 1989; Weitman, 1997; West, 2000). There are variations on these areas of responsibilities, since no two CBO positions are entirely duplicated. Table 1.1 shows a summary of these areas of responsibilities.
Table 1.1
Summary of the Typical CBO’s Areas of Responsibilities and Functions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Responsibility</th>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Accounts payable and purchasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Accounts receivables</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>General ledger accounting</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cash management and investment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Budget</td>
<td>Budget planning and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Budget management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Master planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>planning</td>
<td>Design review and oversight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and administration</td>
<td>Construction management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilities operations</td>
<td>Housekeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and maintenance</td>
<td>Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safety and security</td>
<td>Grounds keeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Security systems and staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emergency management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td>Computer system</td>
<td>Networking and e-mail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>Telephony/Distance education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Policy and procedure development</td>
<td>Policy and procedure development and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and management</td>
<td>Employment/salary and benefit administration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from College and University Administration, edited by C.M. Grills, 2000, Washington DC, National Association of College and University Business Officers.
The areas described are the most representative of the typical CBO’s responsibilities (West, 2000). The CBO is sometimes responsible for other less typical functions, such as institutional planning, marketing, or public information (Weitman, 1997). In each of the CBO’s areas of responsibility, he or she has managerial duties, as well as the performance of many of the functions themselves.

The financial operations of the college have been previously identified as a high priority to the community college CBO (Calver & Vogler, 1985; Miller, Hotes, & Terry, 1983). This broad area of responsibility includes accounting and budget management. While staff with the required training and expertise is necessary to carry out these technical and detailed functions, the CBO is ultimately responsible for and held accountable for them. Given the importance placed on an institution’s financial stability and status by accrediting agencies, state authorities and the college stakeholders, financial management is critical in meeting the college’s mission. Functions found in this area of responsibility include accounting for the general ledger, accounts payable and purchasing, cash management and investments, and accounts receivables.

Developing and managing the budget are key duties that usually require a large percentage of the CBO’s time (Meisinger, 1994). This involves understanding the ongoing operations and needs of the instructional and student support divisions and departments of the college, as well as the various fund sources and allocations. The managerial duties of this function revolve around oversight, review and approval. The CBO typically authorizes major expenditures and approves or recommends changes in the budget needed to accommodate the college’s needs, which may be done with the assistance of a budget officer or controller.
After finance, the area of responsibility most closely associated with the CBO in the community college involves facilities (Foresi, 1974; Weitman, 1997). College facilities often referred to as the physical plant, include three primary components. Construction planning and administration, facilities operations and maintenance, and safety and security are functions that all employees and students are dependent upon, and are high priorities to the community college CBO (Miller et al., 1983). In North Carolina, 45 of the 58 community college CBOs serve as capital project coordinators, personally managing construction and renovation projects (State Construction Office, 2002).

Information technology, with its rapid advances and unpredictable nature, is a challenging component of the CBO’s responsibilities. The two primary functions in this area of responsibility are the campus administrative computer system and telecommunications (Jonas, Katz, Martinson, & Plympton, 1996). These functions provide and support the networked computerized communication and information system that staff and faculty rely upon.

The human resources department, which typically reports to the CBO, provides three principal services to the college. Coordination of employee selection and hiring, development and management of personnel policies and procedures, and salary, benefit and payroll administration make up the functions of human resources. Since employee salaries are the college’s largest single expense, much attention is given by the CBO to the college salary plan or schedule and benefits package, which must be regularly reviewed and revised to remain relevant and competitive (Lennington, 1996).

In each of these areas of responsibility, the CBO must not only manage employees and make decisions, he or she advises the president and the other senior
administrators of the college, often providing expertise and business acumen in setting strategy and making decisions (Weitman, 1997; West, 2000). These functions seem consistent with Wattenbarger’s (1972) view that the community college CBO’s primary responsibility was to provide the services needed to support and ensure an effective, efficient instructional program.

The management roles and skills required by CBO’s to fulfill these functions, however, have not been fully researched or identified. My role as both researcher and former member of the group being studied has strongly influenced the topic selection, so obviously it has affected my choices in methodology, research design, and data collection methods. In order to express the perceptions of this group and utilize my status as a former member of this group, this will be a qualitative study using grounded theory as the genre, allowing for the issues to be inductively investigated.

**Significance**

The value of this study’s contributions lay in the findings’ potential application at the college level and in the future understanding of the college operations and leadership roles, specifically of the community college CBO. By posing new questions, the study can initiate further research on the group that expands the body of knowledge. Improvements in practice and advancements in theory can be anticipated as a result of the findings of this study.

**Potential Significance for Practice**

Understanding the perceived roles and organizational status of the CBOs will be of value to other community college leaders in internal communication, decision-making, institutional planning and goal setting. This knowledge would better align the assignment
of responsibilities and duties to properly corresponding managerial roles, which would provide for improved decision making. Role conflict, as Floyd (2000) points out, is a significant barrier in organizations conducting successful strategic renewal and planning. As other members of the organization better understand the roles of the CBO, lines of communication may be improved and misunderstandings may be avoided. The basis for this understanding lies in recognizing and assessing the CBOs’ perceived roles and status.

Training and professional development efforts would be strengthened through improved knowledge of the CBO’s roles, allowing for identification and refinement of the skills needed to play the roles, and to fulfill the functions of the position more effectively. Understanding the prerequisite skills needed to play the identified roles would also allow for improved development and selection of future CBOs.

Potential Significance for Research

This study will hopefully lead towards further research on community college CBOs. By constructing a thorough analysis on the managerial roles of this position, this study can begin to fill a void in community college leadership literature. Mintzberg (1973) suggested that future studies of managerial roles focus on roles played by managers in different types of jobs and in various settings in order to develop new and improved descriptions of managerial behavior.

Limitations of the Study

The conceptual framework and research questions have bound the study, keeping it focused, yet simultaneously limiting the method and topic of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Glesne (1999) points out that the researcher is responsible for identifying those recognized limitations, to improve trustworthiness and assist in the
reader’s understanding. The recognized limitations of this study deal with the topic, the sample size, and the lack of existing literature. Each of these limitations, ironically, is an intrinsic part of the study that makes it unique. The conceptual framework, referenced in the introduction and expanded in Chapter Two, both bounds and limits the study by focusing the research on one area of the management and leadership discipline. By limiting the study to managerial roles the study is prevented from meandering into the myriad of topics in this field.

The number of participants, their location, and the quantity and amount of time spent in interviews were constraints balanced by the quality of the data gathered. Having chosen a small select sample that meets a logical criteria providing a cross section of different levels of CBO experience and college size, breadth is sacrificed for depth and richness. The goals of this study are narrow, focusing on one important aspect of one group of leaders in a single state’s community colleges. Hopefully, the readers of this study will find that these expressed goals have been met, while realizing that their understanding of the community college CBO has expanded.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The lack of research on the managerial roles and organizational status of community college CBOs has an obvious impact on the focus of the entire study and, most particularly, the literature review. The review of literature is critical in connecting the research to the existing body of knowledge through the development of the conceptual framework. As Marshall and Rossman point out, an effective review of the relevant literature “builds a logical framework for the research and sets it within a tradition of inquiry and a context of related studies” (1999, p.43). This study’s review of the literature is focused on the research and writings concerning managerial and leadership roles, principally the respective taxonomies and theories of Mintzberg and Baker. By reviewing the literature connected to my study I hope to demonstrate my knowledge of the topic and the related research, as well as identify where this study can expand the existing body of knowledge.

Having a deep awareness of the previous research and scholarly thinking on the topics of managerial roles allows for the findings of this study to be grounded not only in the perceptions of the participants, but connected to established concepts and theories, enhancing this study’s validity and credibility. The theoretical component of this study’s conceptual framework is derived from the literature, intertwining and linking my findings to the literature.

Conceptual Framework

The cornerstone of a qualitative research project is its conceptual framework. This framework serves as compass and a boundary and acts as the linchpin connecting the other elements of the study together. The conceptual framework sets the method,
theoretical context, and boundaries of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). An appropriately constructed framework should fit the topic and the purpose of the research, requiring the researcher to choose carefully the components, much as a carpenter selects the beams for the frame of a well-built house.

This is an exploratory study, with a methodology centered on grounded theory. Lacking existing research or theory on the behavior of community college CBOs, this methodology seems appropriate and necessary. Glaser and Strauss (1967), the developers of grounded theory, suggest that theory inductively generated from data can answer questions and achieve goals in social research, as opposed to deductively applying and verifying existing theory.

The conceptual framework in this study will be an amalgam of two components, one theoretical and one experiential. The theoretical component of the framework is built around the managerial role theory of Baker (2000), which was derived from Mintzberg’s taxonomy of managerial roles. The experiential component of the study is based on my own professional experience as a CBO in a North Carolina community college. The conceptual framework used in this study combines these two elements, using the existing theory as the basis for the development of the categories developed in the findings, which form a direct connection to the established theory. My own professional experience was applied in forming the research questions and served as a lens to examine and analyze the data in formulating the study’s findings and ultimate conclusions. Figure 2.1 graphically illustrates the conceptual framework used in this study.
Bensimon, Neuman, and Birnbaum describe how “leadership in higher education can be examined from the perspective of leadership theories and organizational frames” (1989, p.1). In attempting to describe the managerial roles and institutional roles of the community college CBOs, a theoretical component of the framework is needed to provide boundaries and focus for the research and its questions.

Mintzberg’s taxonomy of ten managerial roles, derived from research on corporate leaders, has been the basis for other research into managerial roles over the last three decades and has been replicated in numerous different setting (Baker, 2000). Mintzberg (1973) proposed that managers played 10 discrete, interconnected, and observable roles, which he categorized into three groups: interpersonal, informational,
and decisional. The interpersonal roles are labeled as figurehead, leader, liaison; the informational roles are labeled as monitor, disseminator, and spokesman; and the roles associated with decisional behavior are labeled as entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator. Mintzberg’s model shows a relationship between managerial roles and organizational size and structure that is particularly relevant to this study, given the variety of size in community colleges (Mintzberg, 1973; Mintzberg, 1979).

After researching community college leaders, Baker refined this taxonomy to a total of 12 discrete managerial roles (Athens, 2000). Baker (2000), using the results of research conducted on community college leaders, developed a managerial roles model based on three broad categories similar to Mintzberg’s: leadership roles, informational roles, and decisional roles. Leadership roles are identified as visionary, task giver, motivator, ambassador, and liaison. The informational roles include monitor, disseminator, and advocate. The decisional roles are described as the change agent, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator. Baker’s work is especially relevant to this study because of its source, having been derived from the same environment and type of organizations as the group studied here. Through the Leadership Competency Assessment Instrument (LCAI), Baker’s taxonomy has been validated as an effective tool to assess community college leaders’ perceived competency in the identified roles (Athens, 2000).

While its origins in Mintzberg’s managerial role model are recognized as the starting point in the conceptual framework as displayed in Figure 2.1, the Baker taxonomy is the theoretical basis for the conceptual framework, since its basis in
community college leadership corresponds to this proposed study. These roles are the starting point for understanding the CBO’s managerial roles, providing the theoretical concepts of my conceptual framework.

Mintzberg’s and Baker’s respective theories, however, are not to be tested or verified in this study. They provide a set of boundaries in collecting data, insuring that the questions and study remain focused on the purpose and related research questions. The categories established in the Baker model provided the platform for examining the managerial roles of the CBOs in this study. The variables found to affect managerial roles, as identified by Mintzberg (1973) and Baker (2000), were important factors in setting the criteria for the selection of participants. Without these boundaries, new data could steer the study off course and cause it to lose focus.

In addition to the theoretical component, I will utilize my own professional experience as a CBO as the second dimension of the conceptual framework, as seen in Figure 2.1. Understanding the primary functions, speaking the jargon of the position, and having had a common frame of reference allow me to explore the managerial roles of the position in a deeper and richer way than would be allowed through use of the theory alone. My experience will provide an underpinning to the theory, linking it to the group and the position. Without my experience, I would need to first gain insight into the CBO’s duties and responsibilities before attempting to understand the roles the CBOs play in carrying out their functions. While I did not expect all CBOs to perform the exact same duties or play the same roles as I did in that position, my experience did provide both a vantage point and a touchstone, a lens used to discern the trivial from the significant, as well as establish some level of initial credibility with the respondents.
By bounding and shaping the frame and focus of the study with both theory and experience, it is my intent to give the data collection and analysis a richness of meaning that could not be afforded by either single element alone. Through constant comparison, the data has been analyzed, developing categories and themes that provided the basis of a conceptual construct that answers the questions of the study and sets the stage for additional research.

Glaser and Strauss describe the balance between new and established theory. “A discovered, grounded theory will tend to combine mostly concepts and hypotheses that have emerged from the data with existing ones that are clearly useful” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.27). Using the conceptual framework described in this chapter as both guide and lens throughout the study, an analysis that describes the leadership roles of this group has been developed.

**Mintzberg’s Managerial Roles**

The basis for the theoretical framework of this study is Baker’s taxonomy of managerial roles as defined in the LCAI used to assess the competency of leaders. However, Baker’s model is directly based on the earlier work of Henry Mintzberg (Athens, 2000). Mintzberg, through interviewing and observing executives over an extended period of time, developed a model based on a total of ten managerial roles, which he grouped into three categories. This model has been used as a framework for studying the behavior of managers in higher education for almost 30 years (Dill, 1984; Grover & Jeong, 1993; Mech, 1997; Moskowitz, 1986).

Prior to the Mintzberg model, the most prevalent view in describing managerial work developed from the work of Luther Gulick, who expanded Fayol’s five basic
managerial functions, planning, organizing, coordinating, commanding and controlling into the famous acronym POSCORB (Mintzberg, 1973). POSCORB stood for planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting. This model was highly influential in management research and writing, and became a factor in shaping Drucker’s work on the role of planning in management (Drucker, 1974; Yukl, 1994).

Drucker (1954), focusing primarily on the leader and decisional duties managers performed, described as non-managerial much of what Mintzberg delineates as specific managerial activity. Merton (1957) felt that every position is associated with certain roles and functions that reflect expectations about the position’s contributions to operational tasks and objectives. Beal, Bohlen, and Raudabaugh (1962), in examining group behavior and dynamics, developed an extensive taxonomy of “group task roles” (p.103), many of which correlate to the broader, less specific roles found in Mintzberg’s model.

Unlike the previous research, Mintzberg (1973) focused entirely on executives and other managers, developing an understanding of their managerial roles through interviews and long-term observation. While many of the same concepts from earlier research are found in Mintzberg’s taxonomy, his model presents the concepts of managerial roles in a more holistic, integrated model than previously developed.

Interpersonal roles, informational roles, and decisional roles are the three primary groups in the taxonomy (Mintzberg, 1973). These are not segmented or isolated roles disconnected from one another. Mintzberg (1973, p.96) described the ten roles in these groups forming a “gestalt or integrated whole,” in which one role cannot be removed without losing coherency in the group of roles. All managers perform each role to some degree, with emphasis and priority placed on some roles above others based on
situational variables. Figure 2.2 shows the relationship between the three categories and the ten managerial roles in Mintzberg’s model.

Figure 2.2

Mintzberg’s Managerial Roles


In Mintzberg’s model, the interpersonal roles are derived from formal authority and position, with informational roles developed from the use of the interpersonal roles, and decisional roles built from informational roles. While all of the ten managerial roles
apply to any manager or administrator to some degree, their relative importance varies
dependent on the type of position, the size and structure of the organization, and the
values and personality of the manager (Mintzberg, 1973; Mintzberg, 1979). While these
roles are “largely predetermined by the nature of the managerial position, managers have
some flexibility in the way each role is interpreted and enacted” (Yukl, 1994, p.29).
Examining each of the groups and the specific roles in depth will describe more fully
Mintzberg’s theory on manager behavior.

Interpersonal Roles

The interpersonal roles, comprised of the figurehead, leader, and liaison roles, are
the most basic of the ten managerial roles. Mintzberg (1973) delineated these roles based
on their direct link to the position’s status and authority, and the involvement of each role
in the development of interpersonal relationships, with minimal information processing
or decision-making.

The figurehead role involves the symbolic or ceremonial activities the manager
performs in representing his organization. While not essential to the managing function,
these activities require the manager’s attention and often cannot be effectively delegated.
The higher the level of the manager in the organization, the more significant the
figurehead becomes in terms of time and effort (Mintzberg, 1973).

Among the most important of all the ten roles is the leader role, in which the
manager provides guidance and motivation to subordinates (Yukl, 1994). One of the most
studied of the managerial roles, leader includes activities such as selecting and
dismissing, praising, and criticizing employees (Athens, 2000). Mintzberg (1973)
stressed two key aspects of the leader role: first, its key purpose being to integrate the
employees’ needs and the goals of the organization, secondly, its application of the potential power derived from formal authority.

While the leader role deals with members of the organization, the liaison role deals with the network of relationships with those outside the organization (Yukl, 1994). The manager builds and maintains these horizontal relationships with other managers, through conferences, civic groups, and social events. In this way, the manager begins the process of linking the organization to the external environment, a process expanded and deepened through the informational roles (Macintosh & Williams, 1992).

Informational Roles

Monitor, disseminator, and spokesman are the three informational roles of the manager, derived from the formal authority of the manager and connected to the interpersonal roles (Baker, 2000). The manager has access to information, from both internal and external sources, often not available to subordinates. The liaison role connects the informational and the interpersonal roles, since information from external sources can be gathered as the liaison. The volume and importance of the information depends on the level of the manager and the size of the organization.

In the monitor role, the manager is a seeker of internal and external information in order to identify problems and opportunities in the organization, and better understand his or her functions (Mintzberg, 1973). Prior to Mintzberg’s model, other researchers described two similar roles in examining the internal dynamics of groups, “the information seeker and the opinion seeker” (Beal, Bohlen, & Raudabaugh, 1962, p.104), distinguishing between fact-based and value-based information. Gathering, filtering and processing this information is performed through formal means, such as reports,
meetings, and memos, and more informal means such as chats, tours, and notes (Yukl, 1994). This information is then shared through the disseminator and spokesman roles, with the transition between roles often seamless and fluid.

As a disseminator, the manager shares the information gathered in the monitor role with other members of the organization. The manager usually filters and translates the information in the process of sharing it with subordinates, though the original is sometimes passed along. Mintzberg (1973) saw this information as either of two specific types: factual information that could be tested for validity, or value information which indicated management’s preference on an issue to employees, often expressed as advice. Beal, Bohlen, and Raudabaugh (1962) had previously extended this role into the fact-based “information giver” (p.104) and the value-based “opinion giver” (p.104).

In the other information sharing role, spokesman, the manager transmits factual and value information to groups or individuals outside of the organization. These external parties are either stakeholders or the general public, each of which requires different types, amounts and degrees of information (Mintzberg, 1973). The two activities most closely associated with this role are public relations and lobbying. Lower level managers usually have fewer opportunities to play this role than executives.

Decisional Roles

The last four managerial roles in Mintzberg’s model, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator are categorized as decisional roles. Mintzberg (1973) described the activities in these roles as “probably the most crucial part of the manager’s work” (p.77). These roles involve setting strategy and making decisions at all
levels of the organization. They can be linked to the informational roles, for it is with that gathered and shared information that the manager makes decisions.

In the entrepreneur role, the manager acts as an agent of change, designing and implementing change to take advantage of opportunities or prevent problems, which Mintzberg (1973) called “improvement projects” (p. 79), that had been identified in the monitor role, reinforcing the linkage between the informational and decisional roles. At some point in the process the manager may delegate some aspect of the responsibility, while continuing to supervise the overall project.

While the entrepreneur initiated controlled change proactively, the disturbance handler must be reactive, responding to unforeseen conditions beyond his or her control. In resolving unexpected problems or crises, the manager often sets precedent and establishes procedure. When disturbances occur, this role, as Yukl (1994) points out, generally takes priority over activities in the other more predictable or less time-constrained roles.

The role of resource allocator involves the activities of making choices in the distribution of finite organizational resources, thereby deciding which functions receive funding, time, staffing, or space. By authorizing actions, the manager allocates resources and implements decisions, using the information gathered and shared from the informational roles, and in effect sets the direction of the organization. A commitment of resources usually indicates the strategy and goals established by the organization. However, decisions are also made when resources are withheld or decreased (Macintosh & Williams, 1992).
The final managerial role in Mintzberg’s model is the negotiator, in which the manager represents the organization in non-routine deals or arrangements with other organizations. Examples include extensive contracts with suppliers or buyers, collective bargaining agreements, and property acquisitions (Yukl, 1994). The manager’s authority to represent and make decisions for the firm must be clear and as negotiator, the manager must be willing to compromise within established boundaries.

In Mintzberg’s model, the manager monitors the internal and external environment, designs the work of the organization, initiates change when needed, and resolves disruptions to the work or the organization. By utilizing and sharing necessary information, some of which is gathered from his network of contacts, the manager leads the subordinates towards the common objectives of the organization. Additional duties include representing the organization in ceremonial or symbolic activities, as well as in negotiations with other organizations or individuals (Mech, 1997).

Managers do not perform these roles without purpose, Mintzberg (1973) stresses. These roles are carried so that the manager’s organization serves its basic purpose, efficiently producing goods or services. The effective manager designs and maintains stable operations and through planning and action adapts the organization to dynamic environments in serving this basic purpose. These activities require the manager to play several of the roles identified, such as the informational roles needed to link the organization to the external environment to communicate inside the organization itself.

Mintzberg (1973) found that much of this communication took place through meetings, correspondence, and telephone calls that consumed 53% of a manager’s day. Of the managers Mintzberg studied, 56% of their communication was with subordinates.
that involved informational, interpersonal and decisional roles. 35% of the manager’s total time was spent at their desks, often performing technical or specific duties Drucker would have likely classified as non-managerial. However, since these duties are directly related to the level of the manager and the nature of the work, Mintzberg recognized them as managerial behaviors. Managers in accounting, engineering, and planning were found to perform solitary tasks that required high volumes of paperwork and required expertise and authorization only found in managerial personnel. Line supervisors, on the other hand, were found to work more with employees, less on paperwork, and perform a wider range of managerial roles.

Mintzberg (1994) has continued to develop the model, applying the roles into three levels of activity, forming a model of three concentric, overlapping circles. These three groups, based on the three basic categories of the original model, involve managing by information, which leads to managing through people, which connect to managing action. In this revised model, the first level primarily involves the informational roles, the second level relates to the interpersonal roles, and the core level deals with the decisional roles (Mintzberg, 1994). While not revising the original ten roles, Mintzberg’s more recent work is more holistic and less linear, emphasizing the interconnection between the three basic groups of roles. This revised model is significant to this study in that it indicates the dynamic, evolving nature of the study of managerial roles, while reaffirming the validity and credibility of Mintzberg’s original categories and roles.

Mintzberg’s model has been utilized and replicated frequently over the past three decades (Baker, 2000; Mech, 1997; Yukl, 1994). Alexander (Alexander, 1979), for example, assigned the ten roles into three groups: the strategic group (monitor,
entrepreneur, resource allocator), the operational group (leader, disseminator, disturbance handler), and the interface group (figurehead, liaison, negotiator, and spokesperson).

While other researchers have revised the terminology of specific roles, the model has shown to be a valid tool for describing managerial behavior.

**Baker’s Managerial Roles**

Figure 2.3

A Comparison of Mintzberg’s and Baker’s Managerial Roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mintzberg’s Managerial Roles</th>
<th>Baker’s Managerial Roles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal Roles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figurehead</td>
<td>Leadership Roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Visionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison</td>
<td>Task Giver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informational Roles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor</td>
<td>Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disseminator</td>
<td>Informational Roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokesman</td>
<td>Monitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decisional Roles</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>Advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbance Handler</td>
<td>Change Agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource Allocator</td>
<td>Disturbance Handler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiator</td>
<td>Resource Allocator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Figure 2.3, Baker’s model builds directly on the managerial roles described by Mintzberg. While Mintzberg’s model was developed from research on corporate executives, Baker’s based his modified version of the model on the managerial roles of community college presidents, providing particular significance to this study on community college business officers. Baker’s model comprises the Leadership Competencies Assessment Instrument (LCAI) that is used to measure and describe managerial behavior in higher education leaders (Baker, 1999).

In comparing Mintzberg’s and Baker’s respective models, there are distinct similarities and distinctions. Mintzberg’s interpersonal roles are renamed leadership roles by Baker, which are expanded from three roles to five. The additional roles provide a more discrete, specific description of the role Mintzberg broadly defines as leader. Baker separates this primary role into visionary, task giver, and motivator, recognizing that each is distinct managerial activity (Baker & Athens, 1999). In the visionary role, the manager thinks globally and considers future possibilities, and recognizes momentum. The task giver involves defining and structuring follower roles, providing direction, and the appropriate use of authority. As motivator, the manager establishes trust, encourages and recognizes performance, and manages organizational stress.

While these three roles are a reflection of Mintzberg’s broader interpretation of the leader role, Baker (Baker & Athens, 1999) changes the figurehead role in title only, using the more positive title of ambassador. The functions of this role are substantially the same as the figurehead role. The liaison role is shared in both models, with Baker’s description mirroring that found in Mintzberg’s model (Athens, 2000).
The informational roles are also highly similar, with the only difference found in Baker describing the spokesman role as the advocate role (Baker & Athens, 1999). Again, while the behaviors of the roles are basically identical, Baker’s title provides a seemingly more positive connotation than Mintzberg’s.

Baker (Baker & Athens, 1999) used Mintzberg’s heading, decisional roles, for the third group. Three of the four roles in this group are the same as their counterpart in Mintzberg’s model, with the title of change agent replacing Mintzberg’s title of entrepreneur. The behaviors of the respective roles in each model, however, are tightly aligned and very similar.

The only major distinction between the models involves Baker’s approach of using three specific roles to replace the single role of leader that Mintzberg described. This provides depth and expanded understanding to the roles, and allows for a more balanced set of roles. In the Mintzberg model, the leader role is clearly dominant and carries more weight than the other roles, both in terms of importance and activity. While the Baker model is clearly based on and connected to Mintzberg’s concepts and theory, it is significant to this study for its source and the refinements it adds to the Mintzberg model.

Mintzberg, and later Baker, identified these roles as the prominent behaviors of managers in all professions, that all managers regardless of field or industry have these basic roles in common. However, Mintzberg (1973) points out that much of a manager’s time and energy is concentrated in a few of these roles and that some roles are rarely played by some managers, depending on a combination of situational variables.
Variables that Affect Managerial Roles

“First, and most obviously, managers in different contexts have to emphasize different roles” (Mintzberg, 1994, p.20). Mintzberg and Baker propose that, while all managers perform all roles to some degree, the roles vary in significance, with most managers being “specialists required to perform a particular set of specialized roles” (Mintzberg, 1973, p.99). The hierarchal level of the position, functions managed, and the size and structure of the organization play significant roles in determining the time spent in the respective roles and the importance of specific roles in a position (Yukl, 1994). Mintzberg (1973) also found that individual personality, style and values contribute towards determining how a manager works and performs his or her roles, though they usually do not determine which roles the job requires. This is supported by previous researchers, such as Bass (1960, p.18), who stated, “Any theory of leadership must take into account the interaction between situation and individual.” Recognizing these situational variables provides a more realistic, precise impression of the roles of a specific position.

In terms of organizational level, Mintzberg (1973) found that managers at lower levels of organizations, such as line supervisors, are concerned more with issues that are “current and specific” (p. 112). Their focus is usually on topics related to their function, spanning relatively short time frames. At this level, the figurehead or ambassador role is minimal, while the disturbance handler and negotiator roles become more significant (Mintzberg, 1973). Chief executives and senior managers were found to stress the figurehead, liaison, spokesman, and negotiator roles. Overall, formality and complexity of roles seem to increase with the level of the manager’s position (Mintzberg, 1973). This
is particularly relevant since this study is concerned with both the CBO’s managerial roles and organizational status.

The function being managed is a variable in establishing the primary roles of the manager. Managers of specialists, such as accountants or engineers, tend to emphasize the monitor, disseminator, liaison, and negotiator roles, while placing less importance on the other interpersonal and decisional roles (Mintzberg, 1973; Watkins, 1982).

Mintzberg (1973, 1994) found that over time, managerial jobs required different roles to be emphasized. Sayles (1964) discovered a cycle of change and stability, reaffirmed by Mintzberg (1973), in which the manager first initiated change in the entrepreneur or change agent role to meet the organization’s needs, then stabilized the situation using the leader and disturbance handler roles. This cycle of change and stability would repeat as environmental changes developed, causing the manager to be adept in these roles on a regular basis.

Organizational size is another important factor in determining the emphasis of the manager’s roles. In large organizations, top managers spend more time in formal communication, stressing the figurehead, liaison and spokesman roles (Yukl, 1994). Certainly, not all managers spend equal amounts of time or energy in each of these roles, nor should they, Mintzberg (1973) pointed out. Managers in smaller organizations, often lacking middle managers, have a wider span of control, supervising more people, requiring them to emphasize the interpersonal roles (Mech, 1997). These managers must also be able to perform as “substitute operators” (Mintzberg, 1973, p.130), carrying out duties of followers when needed. This lack of staff diminishes opportunities to perform what Baker (Baker & Athens, 1999) describes as the task-giver role, in which managers
delegate duties to subordinates. Understanding how organizational size affects managerial roles is critical in this study, given the wide range of college sizes found in the NCCCS. Organizational size was also a factor in the criteria used to select the participating colleges in this study, since it was recognized from the literature (Mintzberg, 1973; Mintzberg, 1979) that managers in smaller organizations emphasized different roles than those in larger ones.

In categorizing organizational structure, Mintzberg (1979) found a connection between the prevalent roles played by managers in certain structures. In what he described as the Professional Bureaucracy, which would include colleges, hospitals and similar organizations whose core services are provided by highly skilled experts, Mintzberg (1979) found that some roles were more prevalent than in other structures.

Handling disturbances that either involved professionals or that the professionals chose to avoid or ignore was found to be a significant role for administrators in the Professional Bureaucracy. The other role found in disproportionate frequency in this structure was that of negotiator, since the administrator often negotiated disputes among professionals, being either unable or unwilling to impose solutions. While these may more appropriately describe the CAO than the CBO in the community college setting, given the CAO’s direct leadership of the faculty (Mech, 1997), this exemplifies the relationship between organizational structure and managerial roles. Mech (1997) also found that CAOs used the roles Mintzberg described as disturbance handler, leader, and disseminator more than the other more externally focused roles, with no significant differences found between CAOs at colleges of varying types or sizes.
“While some types of behavior are reported and/or expected of leaders in all situations, other leader behaviors are more specific to particular types of situations” (Bass, 1960, p.19). In determining the roles managers perform, a combination of these factors is at work, causing the manager to perform the combination of roles proportioned to meet the primary purpose of the organization within the scope of the position, while fitting and accommodating his personal attributes and personality. After refining his model for over 20 years, Mintzberg (1994) concluded that that “manager must practice a well–rounded job” (p.22) utilizing the interpersonal, the informational, and the directional roles in context of the job’s framework and agenda. This is also true with the community college CBO, and this established theory will be relied upon throughout this study to frame and bound the research.

Summary

The model developed by Baker and derived from Mintzberg, the theoretical element of my conceptual framework, formed the starting point for my research into the managerial roles and status of community college CBOs, and was a compass and guide I used throughout the development and implementation of this study. In each stage of this study, I referenced and looked to the literature and the conceptual framework.

The research questions, shown below, are directly linked to the concept of managerial roles found Baker’s model.

1. How do CBOs perceive their managerial roles?

2. How do the perceptions of the CBOs in regards to their roles and status correspond to the perceptions of the president and chief academic officer in their respective college?
3. How do CBOs perceive their status in the hierarchy of their college?

4. How do the CBOs feel their roles and place in their college have changed over the course of their tenure in the position?

The selection of the participants was not a random process, nor it was based on my subjective feelings. I relied on my knowledge of the literature and the theory supporting my conceptual framework to establish solid criteria. The theoretical component of the conceptual framework provided the basis for my initial interview questions (Appendix B), as well the outline and format for my analysis of the data I gathered. As described in Chapter Four, the categories and roles generated from my findings are spun from the responses of the participants within the context and frame formed by the theory developed by Mintzberg and refined by Baker. I relied on the conceptual framework as I conducted my analysis of the data, just as I used it to shape and direct my methodology.
Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

Before entering into a review of the design and methodology of this study, a brief review of the study and its purpose is appropriate. Qualitative research is a recursive process rather than a linear series of steps. The topic, purpose, and conceptual framework are the basis for the selection of the different elements of the project’s design and methods. For the research to be of value, the methodology and its components “must flow conceptually and logically from all that has gone before” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.53).

The purpose of this proposed study is explore the North Carolina community college chief business officers’ perceptions of their managerial roles and their status in their colleges. By capturing their perspectives in their own words, an analysis can be developed which categorizes these roles and describes their properties, defines their place in their organization, and clarifies their own subjective perceptions. Having re-stated the purpose and re-established its context, the design and methods, beginning with the rationale for choosing the sampling and selection method, will be explained.

This chapter describes the methodology used during the research, including sampling of participants, data collection and analysis, and assurances of trustworthiness and validity. Completing the chapter will be a bias statement and a description of how my findings will be presented.

Rationale for Qualitative Study and Selected Genre

In the case of this study, the nature of the problem and the supporting research questions have driven the choice of the method and, subsequently, the genre used to collect and analyze the data.
Rationale for Qualitative Research

As both researcher and practitioner, I recognized the potential in studying a group I was deeply interested in and which had received relatively little attention in the literature. As I studied the literature, I realized that almost all the studies conducted on managerial roles in higher education leadership had been quantitative studies using survey instruments based on existing theory and taxonomies. While these studies were valuable, they did not provide the depth I sought in answering what roles the CBOs play in their colleges. Most importantly, they attempted to establish a fixed reality in a unique, dynamic social group. This group is a collection of individual realities, with varying perceptions and roles. I realized that only through in-depth interviews could I begin to understand what roles, in their own words, the CBOs felt they played and how they perceived their status in the organization.

As a former member of this group, I had access and entrée through my relationships and my experience that could not be fully utilized in an anonymous survey. My previous role as a chief business officer provided me an opportunity to explore this position in a way most other researchers could not. While this has potential pitfalls that will be described in my bias statement, I believe I have balanced my roles as researcher and insider in order to gather the rich, deep data necessary to develop a meaningful analysis.

In examining a problem that has not been researched in depth heretofore, and one with no group-specific theory to explore or extrapolate, I became aware that I would need to construct an analysis from themes found in the data, relying on the theoretical
component of my conceptual framework as both interpretive lens and support structure to maintain focus.

**Grounded Theory as Genre**

Instead of deductively applying or testing existing theories, I realized my study would need to be inductive, with the analysis formed from the findings of the research, using the conceptual framework as guide and translator. Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocate grounded theory, in which theory is inductively generated from collected data. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) point out that grounded theory is a genre which can produce generalizable results in studies like the one proposed here, involving multiple and distinct settings. The use of comparative analysis is closely linked to grounded theory as a means to gather rich data. In this process, questions are derived from previous responses, building layers of detail and depth in subsequent interviews.

While the intent is to generate analysis from the data, existing theory that corresponds to the findings can be applied to the constructed analysis. Admittedly challenging to balance the new against the existing (Dey, 1999), the established theories used to construct the conceptual framework will form both the boundary and the touchstone for the study’s findings, without requiring the group members’ perceptions to be constrained by the categories they prescribe.

Glaser and Strauss identify the recursive, circular nature of grounded theory and comparative analysis. “In discovering theory, one generates conceptual categories or their properties from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.23).
More than merely names or labels, categories are comparative conceptual elements of a substantive theory that can stand by themselves (Dey, 1999). These new categories will emerge from the patterns and themes identified through the coding process. By allowing the participants’ own words to form these new categories, I will not force-fit my findings to conform to the categories in existing theory. This does not diminish the value or importance of the theories that form my conceptual framework. The accepted categories are useful and necessary as a standard and basis of comparison for the new categories identified, providing credibility and clarity. In order to establish these new categories, a system must be developed and maintained for the organization of data through the collection and analysis processes. Because it is not realistic to sample all members of the group to develop these categories, the sample of CBOs to be studied is critically important, and the method used to select them should be academically sound and grounded in an established methodology.

**Sampling Procedure**

LeCompte and Preissle (1993) differentiate between sampling and selection, in that selection is the delineation of the population being studied, while sampling is the process of identifying and engaging members of that group that will participate in the actual research. Since North Carolina community college CBOs are the group selected for this study, an appropriate strategy must be chosen to identify the sample.

As an insider conducting a dissertation-level study of a complex topic on a naturally bounded system with 58 members, I recognized that the sample would have to be small and manageable, making the option of sampling the entire selection impractical and infeasible. Depth and richness of data take precedence over breadth. I have sampled
six participants and their corresponding presidents and chief academic officers (CAOs), with the contingency of up to three others if any of the initial six had been unable to participate.

The presidents and CAOs were included to provide a measure of increased validity as a method of triangulation, expanded upon later in this chapter, as well as to answer one of the four primary research questions. These interviews are also significant in helping to understand how the relationships between the CBO and the CAO and president shape or affect the roles of the CBO and his or her place in the college. Kimbrough (1994) found that cooperation between the leaders of the business and academic affairs divisions was critical in avoiding organizational conflict and enhancing institutional effectiveness. As a direct report, the president can have substantial influence on what and how the CBO performs his duties, as well as determining the hierarchy of the college. Including the CAOs and presidents enhanced the depth of the study, without forcing the project to become unwieldy or infeasible since the number of total interviews remained manageable.

The number of respondents sampled is significant as a proportion of the population, is manageable, and is relatively representative of the population, if appropriate criteria for selection are applied. A criterion-based sampling method logically identified a sample that provides the necessary diversity to appropriately answer the research questions. The quota selection method I employed is intended to provide a subset that is representative of the group, corresponding to the relative dimensions of the population.
Longevity in the position and organizational size were two key variables identified by Mintzberg (Mintzberg, 1973; Mintzberg, 1979) as affecting the roles of managers. I selected these two variables as criteria for selection, with the intent of obtaining a subset of the population that represented the typical CBO, in order to improve credibility and generalizability. Using this method, I will take advantage of my previous status and knowledge of the group and the colleges, selecting CBO’s from six colleges within a median size range, from 1,000 to 3,500 students. This group, consisting of 41 colleges, encompasses 70% of the colleges in the system, and eliminates the atypically small or large colleges, allowing for increased generalizability.

In addition to college size, experience will be a factor for selection. Hudson (2001) found that the CBOs in North Carolina in 2001 averaged over 13 years experience in the position. Being familiar with the members of the group, I was reasonably aware of how long most North Carolina Community college CBO shad been in their positions. Of the six colleges’ CBO’s studied, two CBOs have between three and five years in the position, one has between five and ten years, and three with more than 15 years of experience as CBO. CBOs with less than three years were not considered because I had learned from my own experience that such a short tenure would not provide enough experience in the position to allow for the insight sought in this study. This cross section of different longevity levels allows for contrasts and comparisons in how tenure in the position affects the roles and organizational status of the position.

The one factor my sample does not address is the gender of the CBOs, since 14 of the 58 CBOs in the NCCCS are women (Association of Community College Business Officials, 2001) and all of the CBOs in my study are male. However, Cooper (1993) and
Mech (1990; 1997) found no significant relationship between the manager’s gender and the importance of managerial roles.

In order for the study to be manageable and doable, I narrowed the number of selectable colleges by limiting them to those within 150 miles of my home. I did this in order to conduct the data collection at each college in one day and to minimize the costs of an expensive, personally funded research project.

Access to the participants is a key issue in any qualitative study. In this case, initial contact with possible participants was very encouraging. Each CBO in the Central Region of the Association of Community College Business Officers (ACCBO), a state-wide professional organization of the community college system, agreed to participate if selected.

Maintaining the appearance of objectivity when studying participants previously acquainted with the researcher is difficult. I sought to assemble a sample of CBOs that represented a range of longevity in the position in the typical community college, focusing on longevity and college size as the primary criteria. After eliminating the colleges defined as small or large, narrowing the possible colleges to those within 150 miles of my home, and ignoring the CBOs with less than three years in the position or with vacancies in the position, the number of available colleges was reduced to 24. I also eliminated from consideration any college where I had been employed or any college with relevant staff who had previously worked for me, bringing the number of eligible colleges down to 20. Six colleges were selected from this group based on the longevity criteria I had established. While I was acquainted with four of the six CBOs selected in
the study, my personal relationships or feelings had no bearing on the selection or omission of any participant.

After initial acceptance by the CBO, CAO and their president, I sent out formal requests for participation to the respective presidents of the selected colleges as a matter of professional courtesy, asking for official permission to conduct the interviews on campus, while also extending my appreciation for theirs and their employee’s time and inconvenience. After determining the participants, a schedule was developed with input from the participants to conduct interviews and begin the data collection process.

Data Collection

The data collection strategy is paramount to a successful qualitative study, especially when using the grounded theory genre, since the comparative analysis method intertwines data collection and data analysis, (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data collection was not a singular, separate step in this study, but a recursive process, involving much more than the mere collection of data. The steps discussed in this section of the study describe the types of data sought and the steps and logistics involved in the collection of that data.

Types of Data Sought

In order to utilize the appropriate collection methods, the types of data sought must be determined. This issue corresponds to the purpose of the research and the research questions. In order to answer those questions, the perspectives and perceptions of the group needed to be ascertained and collected, with participants describing their realities in their own words. These data are subjective, based on experience, opinion, knowledge and feelings. Connected but contrasting this are the secondary, more objective
data collected from relevant documents, used to triangulate the primary data, the
responses from the CBOs. These data types have driven the choice and format of data
collection methods.

**Data Collection Process**

In order to gather deep, rich data that allow the realities of the participants to be
understood, in each case I interviewed the CBO, the president of that college, and the
CAO of that college. The face-to-face interview has several advantages in allowing the
researcher to interact and elicit responses from participants that deal with the questions
being researched (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

The primary data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews in which the
initial questions, based on the research questions, were loosely scripted and asked of all
participants. As the responses developed, the need for probing and exploratory questions
arose as expected, making each interview unique and somewhat unpredictable. It was
crucial that the informant be allowed to tell his or her own story, requiring this use of
non-directive questioning (Maso & Wester, 1996).

Prior to the initial interview, I reviewed the research process with each participant
via telephone and e-mail, going over the goals of the study, the Institutional Research
Board (IRB) consent forms (Appendix D) required, the confidentiality procedures, and
any questions or concerns they may have had. Each respondent and college was given a
pseudonym and all data has been color-coded based on codes known only by me. All
recordings will be destroyed 6 months after submission of this finished report. The tapes,
along with the transcripts and my field notes, will serve as the basis of the audit trail for
corroborating the data I have collected and analyzed.
An introductory letter (Appendix A) was sent to each participant containing a list of the initial questions (Appendix B), a questionnaire to gather demographic data (Appendix C), the IRB consent forms (Appendix D), a request for college organizational charts, and job descriptions of the CBO and direct reports. Notification of the initial questions and description of the process was intended to increase the initial openness of the responses and eliminate much of the “warm-up” usually required in in-depth interviews.

Having already provided demographic information through the questionnaire and having been apprised of the basic questions and purpose of the study, participants were prepared and the 60 to 90 minutes planned for the first interview was used efficiently, with all the interviews staying within that time range. Given the deep, personal nature of these questions and the insight required to answer them, this advance notice was intended to prepare the informants and improve the quality of the responses. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participant’s permission and professionally transcribed verbatim. I took only limited notes, so that I could focus entirely on the informant and the conversation and not distract him with my actions. In order to retain continuity between interviews and to maintain an efficient process, it was planned to conduct the interviews with the CBO, CAO and president in one trip to their college. Telephone interviews would have been conducted as a backup to face-to-face interviews in the event of scheduling conflicts or if requested by the respondents.

I intended to interview the CBO initially, followed by the CAO, and then the president, though this order was altered in some cases in order to accommodate the participants and conduct all three interviews in one visit to the respective colleges. The
questions for the CAO and president were loosely scripted, but were shaped in part by the responses of the CBO. The use of the constant comparison method allowed me to adapt the interview questions to include new questions brought up in responses from previous interviews. The intent of these interviews was not to confirm or validate the individual reality of the CBO, but to present separate, relevant realities of the same situation from different viewpoints in the same organization. The comparison and contrast between these opinions added depth and meaning to the singular reality of the CBO.

The documents provided by the participants served to determine relationships between the subjects’ respective managerial roles and their college’s organizational structure, the number and type of subordinates, and specific duties. I have drawn themes from these relationships, using the documents as secondary sources to build a deeper analysis and provide an element of triangulation. The process of determining these themes is detailed in the description of the data analysis, which will describe how data collection and data analysis are interwoven and interdependent in grounded theory.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis is not a separate and distinct process from data collection in qualitative research. Instead the two processes are interconnected, interrelated, and virtually inseparable. As data are being collected, the analysis is on going; concluding long after all data are recorded. Marshall and Rossman (1999, p.152) identify six phases of the analysis process: organizing the data, generating themes and patterns, coding the data, developing theory, examining alternate explanations, and writing the report. Utilizing these phases creates a strategy reliant on the research questions, literature, and
conceptual framework. The methodological foundation of the study, in this case grounded theory, is the backbone of this analysis strategy.

**Organization of Data**

There are several elements in the data organization strategy used in this study. They involve the data collected, my analyses of the data, and the coding system used in both rounds of interviews. Since the constant comparison method is employed to generate questions for upcoming interviews, organized and accessible data and analyses are necessary.

By cataloging and labeling all interview tapes, transcriptions, and documents my time and energy was applied more efficiently, allowing for a more focused, less diffused study with little wasted time looking for materials. Several qualitative experts (Glesne, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 1999) recommend the use of memos or a field log, to capture perspectives and thoughts on the data. These memos also effectively served as an organizing tool, linking my reactions and on-going analysis back to the source data.

As stated in the data collection section, each participant was given a pseudonym, and all data was organized by subject and labeled by the pseudonym. As coding was conducted and themes determined, codes and themes were cross-indexed with a color-coding scheme. The three interviews for each college were then coded and indexed together.

Organizing the data is not a static, clerical function. While organizing and assembling the data, the first appearance of patterns and themes was soon found, after only a few interviews. These themes, while not obvious or apparent, are connectors between the data and the findings of the study.
Themes and Patterns

As the data was collected and compiled, they were re-examined, with some patterns obvious and some resembling a puzzle made of pieces of differing sizes and shapes. While conducting interviews, reading documents, listening to tapes of interviews, and reviewing the transcripts, I looked for themes and patterns that showed contrasts, comparisons, or points of connection between the subjects.

These themes were used to ask deeper questions and eventually to generate the findings of the research. They were modified, revised, and refined slightly during the interviews and after as the focus shifts to the conclusion of the analysis and the development of the findings. Putting this puzzle together and finding these patterns, is “the heart of analysis” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.237).

Coding and Constant Comparison Analysis

The data analysis method closely linked to grounded theory, and also devised by Glaser and Strauss, is constant comparison (Dey, 1999). The classic use of constant comparison involves analyzing each interview, identifying themes, and modifying the questions for the next interview based on that analysis. In using a adaptation of this method as described in this proposal’s data collection section, I modified the questions for the respective CAOs and presidents based on the responses of their CBO. This methodology exemplifies the continual interplay between data collection and analysis.

After the interviews of the CBO, CAO, and president of each college, I expanded on the on-going analysis being conducted from my organization and my memos. Drawing on this analysis, and after reviewing the data, I next coded all the interviews and documents for common concepts and ideas, recognizing differences in syntax among the
participants. As a former community college CBO, I had an advantage in being familiar with the jargon and technical concepts used in this position. This familiarity helped to eliminate many translation and interpretation issues; however, some college-specific terms and issues still required additional explanation or insight.

While my role as a former group member provided me access and an improved understanding of the terminology and more subtle meanings of expressions, I worked to maintain sufficient distance to allow for critical analysis of the self-evident (Maso & Wester, 1996). I have attempted to balance my roles, maintaining my primacy as researcher as I identify the common themes and patterns from the data.

I next coded for management and organizational roles using the theoretical base of my conceptual framework as the source of the initial categories. The results of the coding were combined with the themes I recognized or perceived during the data collection and review so that the taxonomy of initial themes and patterns can be assembled. Each set of three interviews was coded immediately after the interviews were held, with themes and patterns identified, rather attempting to analyze them all at one time after all interviews were held.

The codes, themes, and patterns identified at this point were reviewed and organized, with the research problem, its questions, and the conceptual framework acting as the compass to insure the findings are relevant and appropriate to the study’s purpose. I expect these themes and patterns to be the basis of my findings.

**Developing Findings from the Analysis**

In this study, I am attempting to relate practice to theory and, in effect, develop new findings that attempt to answer the research questions. As the data became narrower
and more focused, patterns and themes became clearer. As these themes and patterns emerged, they will merged, forming the elements of an amalgam, a new construct that linked together the existing theory with the new data in order to answer the questions of the problem statement. Theory is not developed at the end of the process as the result of a linear stream of activities; rather, as I have realized through this study, it begins as the data are first collected, are recursively re-examined and built, layer-by-layer, through the collection and analysis efforts.

LeCompte and Preissle, (1993) describe analysis as a four-step process. The first step, perceiving, involves both the conscious and unconscious decisions made by researchers in reviewing, observing, and understanding data by establishing analytic units. These units, in this case the managerial roles and categories linked to the conceptual framework, were identified early in the research, as part of the organization and coding process.

The second step, consisting of comparing, contrasting, aggregating, and ordering the data, is a continuous process in the constant comparison method. From the first interview, I have attempted to emically determine categories and classifications of the CBO’s management roles based on the data, yet connected to the conceptual framework. I then, in the third step, unified these relationships into a taxonomy that integrates them into a single construct, a conceptual model.

The fourth element of analysis is speculation, in which I developed the implications for research and practice based on the conceptual model and its underlying themes. More than a simple guess, this conceptual model is the result of the inductive funnel, a cumulative product of the study’s literature, data, analysis, and defensible
inference on the part of the researcher. While my is goal is not to produce what Glaser and Strauss (1967) called “all-inclusive grand theory,” it is more substantial and meaningful than the “minor working hypotheses” they describe as preludes to grounded theory (p.33-34).

As a former member of the group being studied, I have been cautious to avoid inference in an attempt to maintain objectivity. As the instrument of the research, I could not remove my experiences from the study, but my focus has been on the participants and not myself. This balancing act, as described in the limitations of the study, requires a conscious and constant effort to maintain. Being aware of my roles and keeping this equilibrium has been a critical factor in developing a study that is hopefully reliable and valid in the eyes of the practitioner and the scholar.

Research Integrity Issues

A challenge for the qualitative researcher is to show his or her research, based on the multiple realities of unique individuals, to be valid and trustworthy. In qualitative research, a truth relative to the realities of a specific group of people is sought, requiring a perspective differing from the singular reality of the quantitative researcher. An analysis of a qualitative study’s trustworthiness is really an assessment of the various components of the study. If the elements of the study fit cohesively and logically, grounded in accepted frameworks and methodologies, the research is more likely to be seen as valid and trustworthy by the informed, critical reader (Glesne, 1999).

The key issues I have responded to in this regard are reliability, validity, and triangulation. In this section of the study, the research of this study will be viewed in the context of each of these issues.
Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the degree to which a study could be replicated, providing similar results when using the same methods as a previous study. Obviously, replication of findings in studies of unique, multiple realities as found in this proposed study is challenging if not impossible to the qualitative researcher. However, the use of appropriately robust and well-conceived conceptual frameworks and methodologies, combined with a disciplined, structured research instrument (the researcher) can enhance both the internal and external reliability of a study.

External reliability is concerned with the replicability of the data collected. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) identified five major problems as critical to the enhancement of external reliability. Analyzing my study through these issues will indicate its likely degree of replicability based on the collected data.

My position, knowledge, and relationships with the participants decrease the opportunity for accurate replication by researchers lacking these prerequisite characteristics. The same issues that were assets in gaining access and initiating the research are liabilities towards replication by other researchers, creating this study’s single weakness in terms of external reliability. While I am conscious of this limitation in reliability, I believe it is offset by the strengths my experience provides to the overall quality of the research and my interest level in the purpose of the study. Any deficiencies in reliability caused by my status as a former community college CBO will be, I believe, offset by the other elements of reliability in this study.
The concern here is that informants are so unique that the study cannot be duplicated effectively. Replication is only possible if the participants are similar to those in previous studies.

Having used a set of clearly established criteria for selecting the participants and carefully describing them in my proposed study, the replication of the sample can be accomplished with little difficulty. While individual realities of different respondents will likely differ in detail, the opportunity for generalizability should not be lessened significantly. Given the bounded nature of the population and the specific criteria, this study will be externally reliable in terms of informant selection and composition.

The final three elements of external reliability can be described in unison since each provides a fairly high degree of reliability to the study due to ease of duplication and the connection to the conceptual framework, data collection strategy, and methodology.

The social situation concerns the setting and context of the data collection, which is detailed in this chapter and can be feasibly replicated. The conceptual framework and methodology have been clearly defined and based on established, accepted theory and research practice. Were these issues highly unique or idiosyncratic to my study, the degree of expected external reliability would diminish greatly.

Internal reliability deals with the agreement of multiple observers on research findings (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). If different researchers can corroborate each other’s observations, the study is seen as having a high degree of internal reliability.

Acting as a sole researcher without assistants, I have relied on audiotapes of the interviews and verbatim transcripts as evidence to faculty, reviewers, and colleagues of the value and appropriateness of my data. The tapes will be available for review for six
months after submittal of the study, at which point they will be destroyed in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Despite the negative impact my status as insider may have on the study’s reliability, the other factors described support the overall replicability of my study by other researchers.

Validity

“Establishing conventional validity depends on demonstrating that the propositions generated, refined, or tested match what occurs in human life” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p.341). Since the goal of my study is to build a deeper understanding of the CBOs’ perceived managerial roles based on multiple realities, I must understand and recognize any limitations or weaknesses my study may have in terms of validity, which is segregated in context of external of internal to the study.

Issues relating to external validity center around the study’s comparability and translatability, which involve the generalization of the study’s findings. While qualitative research in general and grounded theory in particular can be difficult to generalize, the comparability and translatability of a study affect its legitimacy and value.

In order for a study’s results to be comparable to the findings of other research, its components and composition must be found to be well defined and developed to withstand rigorous review. By using standard terminology and a conceptual framework based on an established research model, this study can be compared to similar studies conducted on the same group or on other leaders in higher education. A key to maintaining this comparability lies in my generating findings that are clearly understandable and conducive to comparison. My study is not so unique or idiosyncratic.
that it will be incomparable to other studies on this group. On the contrary, I hope it will be compared to other studies on managerial roles and leadership in the community college.

Much like comparability, translatability is concerned with the clarity, definition, and construction of the study. Rather than compare the components and findings to other studies, the study should be comprehended across discipline and in the context of other groups. Again, by using accepted and established methods, frameworks, and language, the study should be readily understood and the findings recognized as meaningful to those outside the community college arena. This issue is particularly relevant since the fields of organizational behavior and leadership studies are intrinsically related to this study.

As LeCompte and Preissle (1993) describe it, internal validity focuses not on the reader or reviewer of the study, but on the shared understandings between the researcher and the participants. This is both a strength and possible weakness in my study. My status as an insider afforded me a deep and immediate understanding of the terminology and conceptual issues expressed by the informants. During the interview process, I was highly conscious of the problems that could be created by observer effects, where I might have influenced the data unintentionally. I carefully avoided overtly leading questions and gave each respondent sufficient time to fully answer the questions, as I offered probing questions as needed. Overall, because of the components and construction of my conceptual framework and methodology, I feel my study will meet the expected levels of validity in the eyes of the participants and outside readers.
Triangulation

By using different data sources and collection techniques, the qualitative researcher can enhance the accuracy of the study, much as the navigator uses multiple points to measure distance or reach a destination (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The study proposed here will be triangulated through the use of both different data sources and the constant comparison method of data analysis.

The interviews with the CAO’s and presidents working with the CBOs who have been studied provide the first element of triangulation. These interviews provided an alternate view to part of the same reality described by the CBO. While not designed to offer confirmation, these interviews helped identify how closely the CBO’s reality compared or contrasted to the realities of a peer and superior. When the views were closely in line, as they were through the great majority of this study’s findings, then a higher degree of certainty exists that the CBO’s self views were relatively accurate and realistic, increasing the level of validity of the analysis derived from those findings. Sharp contrasts and disagreements may diminish the overall generalizability and validity of a study. In this study, the findings reflect a very slight level of contrast among the CBOs and the other respondents on a small number of issues, reinforcing the study’s validity.

Document analysis is the other triangulation method used in this study to verify and enhance the data collected in the interviews. By analyzing the organizational charts, job descriptions, and planning instruments of the respective colleges, I have added depth and clarity to the responses from the interviews. These tangible documents helped to ground the sometimes vague and nebulous concepts of organizational structure and
managerial roles, providing verification and detail to the responses of the CBOs and the other participants. I reviewed job descriptions, organizational charts, and system reports and publications for all the CBOs in this study. Without these triangulation methods, my study would be weaker, less robust, and less trustworthy.

**Bias Statement**

By conducting a qualitative study, I am the primary tool of this research. As such, I am responsible for being self-aware of any pre-conceived ideas, assumptions and biases involved in the study, and presenting them openly so the reader can take them in consideration in the context of the research. I could not remove myself from the study, since it is my interest in the purpose and the group that has fueled the study. This interest has not, however, influenced the data collected or the ultimate findings of the research. I have been especially sensitive to the effect my assumptions and biases played in this study, given the topic and the dual roles I performed. Given my previous membership, I have been particularly careful to acknowledge my biases concerning the research of this group. Any bias I have held is centered on my interest in the topic and group and my desire to expand the body of knowledge on this group. I have been highly conscious of and determined to play the researcher, not the colleague, during this study. It is this groups’ perceptions, not mine, that I have sought to present. Based on the data collected and the findings gleaned from them, I feel any bias or pre-conceived ideas I may have held did not affect the process or the outcomes of the study.

**Assumptions**

In grounded theory, the intent is to allow the data to drive, shape, and form the findings. Prior assumptions that artificially influence the findings or data would limit the
trustworthiness of the study. There are several assumptions I made in beginning this research that should be addressed, but they were connected to the conceptual framework and the related research questions and were based on existing theory.

I assumed that there is a relationship between the CBOs’ managerial roles and the position’s duties and functions.

I assumed that these managerial roles were not stagnant and that they change and evolve to some degree along with increased experience in the position.

I assumed that the CAO and president had a common understanding of the position of CBO and its roles in the college.

I assumed that CBOs understood their managerial roles to the point where they could be verbalized coherently.

Presentation of Findings

In describing the findings of my research, the research questions as framed by the conceptual framework have served as the lens through which the collected data was targeted and translated into findings. Unlike the quantitative study, qualitative research does not conform to a singular established format for displaying or relating its findings (Glesne, 1999; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The format I have constructed follows the previously described methodology used in this study. The findings were determined inductively, relying on the conceptual framework as a boundary and lens, with the research questions used to maintain focus on the study’s purpose. Data analysis, which began with the initial interviews, was conducted through constant comparison and coding for categories, themes, and patterns that developed from the data.
The interpretation and translation of the data for this study is organized and presented so both the individual perceptions and the interpreted themes and categories of the collective group can be equally and clearly understood. An overview of each college and respective respondent’s relevant background establishes a context for the analysis of the data. The responses of the subjects have been incorporated directly into the analysis, which is organized within the research questions and framed by the Baker model used in the conceptual framework.

At this point, the reader may benefit from a review of the research questions.

1. How do CBOs perceive their managerial roles?
2. How do the perceptions of the CBOs in regards to their roles and status correspond to the perceptions of the president and chief academic officer in their respective college?
3. How do CBOs perceive their status in the hierarchy of their college?
4. How do the CBOs feel their roles and place in their college have changed over the course of their tenure in the position?

The final section of this chapter will summarize these findings and linking the developed categories and themes back to the categories in the conceptual framework, setting the stage for the conclusions to be presented in Chapter Five.
Chapter Four: Interpretation of the Data

For qualitative research to be meaningful, the researcher must act as translator and interpreter, synthesizing the data, identifying the categories and themes relevant to the purpose of the study (Dey, 1999; Maso & Wester, 1996). Interpretation of data involves more than merely describing what respondents have said. Interpretation of data, as LeCompte and Preissle summarize, requires researchers to “specify what the data mean for the questions asked in the study and why particular meanings are salient” (1993, p.277). For that reason, the research questions will be the focal point of the findings of this study.

The Colleges and the Respondents

The criteria for the selection of the colleges and their respective respondents are described in Chapter Three. To reiterate the sampling procedure, the population of the 58 North Carolina community colleges was narrowed to those colleges with between 1,000 and 3,500 credit FTE, excluding the atypically large or small institutions, in order to improve the study’s generalizability. Six of the colleges were selected based on the tenure of their CBO, with three CBOs having 15 or more years of experience in the position, one having between 5 and ten years experience, and two with between three and five years in the position.

In order to maintain the respondents’ anonymity, yet still give meaning and a sense of reality to their responses, I used a simple coding method throughout the study to identify the colleges and their respective CBO, CAO, and president. Each college has been labeled by letter in order of their participation in the data collection process. The corresponding label of their college identifies the respondents, creating a simple system
that should be easily followed by the reader through the study. Any information or
description that would identify a respondent has been suppressed in order to maintain the
anonymity.

Descriptions of the colleges and the backgrounds of the respondents will provide
a reference point that provides context and meaning to the data they have provided.

Table 4.1

Comparative 2000-2001 Profiles of the Community Colleges in the Research Sample

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<td>Multi</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Multi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural or Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>102,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>211,500</td>
<td>175,000</td>
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</table>


Table 4.1 presents a summary of the background information on each college, while Table 4.2 summarizes and compares the background information for the CBOs in the research sample.
Table 4.2

Comparative Profiles of Chief Business Officers in the Research Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>CBO A</th>
<th>CBO B</th>
<th>CBO C</th>
<th>CBO D</th>
<th>CBO E</th>
<th>CBO F</th>
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<td>MBA</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsible for:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Note. Data collected from questionnaire (Appendix C) completed by CBO participants.

The analysis of the data will follow the background information for each set of respondents. Through coding and constant comparison, themes, patterns and categories will be identified in relationship to the research questions and the conceptual framework.
College A

The first college visited for interviews was a 1,700 credit FTE single campus college (NCCCS, 2001) located in the county seat of the college’s 53,000-population service area (Farmighetti, 2001). Set on the edge of the small town of 5,000, the college’s campus, consisting of eight large buildings, appeared well maintained, belying its age.

Its total budget from all sources for 2000-2001 was $14.2 million (NCCCSO, 2002). Its leadership has been relatively stable, with three presidents over the past 20 years. Organizationally, it has three vice presidents, serving as CBO, CAO, and CSS, with each reporting to the president.

Titled vice president of operations and finance, the CBO of College A is a 58 year-old white male, who has served over 15 of his 29 years of service to the college as CBO, closely matching the age and experience of the typical CBO, 51 years old with 13 years experience (Hudson, 2001). His previous positions in the college include the evening director, and later, dean of occupational education. With a master’s in business administration (MBA), CBO A’s prior experience includes military service and management in the private sector.

CBO A’s division consists of the business office, facilities and construction, human resources, auxiliary services, and information systems. The directors of those departments report directly to him. He personally serves as capital projects coordinator, treasurer of the college foundation and college personnel officer in addition to leading the functions in his division. CBO A served as interim president during the most recent presidential vacancy, and is by policy second in command and in charge of all college operations during the president’s absence.
In her first senior management position, the CAO of College A is relatively new to the position, having been a department head at a larger college for several years. Having a background in English education and a doctorate in higher education administration, she is responsible for credit instructional programs as well as institutional effectiveness and planning.

President A is in the second year of his first presidency, having served as executive vice president, CBO, and academic dean at another college in the region. His educational background is in counseling and higher education administration.

College B

Founded over 38 years ago, College B, like College A, is located in a small county seat in a rural setting. However, its enrollment is almost 50% larger than College A, with over 2,300 credit FTE in 2001 (NCCCSO, 2001), and its service area includes two counties with a combined population of 102,000 (Farmighetti, 2001). With a total 2000-2001 budget of $17.8 million (NCCCSO, 2002), College B is organized into four divisions: instruction, student services, finance and operations, and planning and information services, each headed by a vice president.

The CBO of College B, titled vice president for finance and operations, is a 54 year-old white male who has been with the college for 22 years and in his current position for four years. After a five-year career in real estate, he taught economics at the college and then progressed to the dean of academic programs, a position he held for four years before becoming CBO.

With undergraduate and masters degrees in economics, CBO B also has a doctorate in higher education administration, one of only three North Carolina CBOs
currently holding a terminal degree (ACCBO, 2001). The departments in his division
include the business office, human resources, auxiliary services, facilities, and security.
Five employees report directly to him, with nearly 30 employees in his division. In
addition to directing these areas, CBO B manages the finances of college’s foundation
and serves as capital projects coordinator.

The CAO of College B, responsible for both credit instruction and continuing
education programs, has been at the college for over 30 years and is second in command
behind the president according to the college organizational chart, but has no day-to-day
authority over the other divisions.

President B has been president of the college for four years, having held
numerous academic leadership positions in other colleges in the North Carolina system.

College C

The third college investigated is also located in the county seat of its one-county
service area. College C, with 1,500 credit FTE (NCCCSO, 2001) and a total 2000-2001
budget of $14.5 million (NCCCSO, 2002), serves just over 90,000 county residents
(Farmighetti, 2001) on its spacious, tree-lined campus. Its 11 large buildings have been
added gradually over the 38-year history of the college.

College C is organized into three divisions, consisting of academic affairs,
administrative services, and college advancement. The executive vice president leads the
academic affairs division, while the CBO leads the administrative services division.

The CBO of College C has been in his position as vice president for
administrative services for seven years, before which he was associate business manager
at another college in the system. He holds a bachelor’s degree and is a certified public
accountant (CPA), and worked as a state auditor prior to working in higher education. At 38, he is the youngest CBO interviewed for this study. CBO C’s division is organized somewhat differently than the typical business affairs unit. The functions in his division are divided between the CBO and the associate vice president for administrative services, who manages facilities, security and auxiliary services, with the CBO managing the business office and information systems. The associate vice president acts as the college capital projects coordinator, and unusually, reports directly to the president on most construction-related matters.

CAO C is in charge of credit instruction, continuing education and student services, as well as being the executive vice president of the college. Holding a doctorate, CAO C does not act as chief operating officer, but is recognized as second in command and serves as acting president in the president’s absence. He has been in the position for over nine years.

The president of College C has held that position for six years, having been president and chief academic officer at community colleges in a mid-western state.

College D

Serving a rural county with a population of 56,000 (Farmighetti, 2001), College D has a credit FTE enrollment of around 1,200 (NCCCSO, 2001). Set on the outskirts of the county’s largest city, College D’s campus is comprised of eight multi-story buildings. The smallest college included in this study, College D had a total 2000-2001 budget of $10.4 million. College D is currently constructing a new campus in the western part of the county, 25 miles from the main campus. Organizationally, there are two vice presidents: the vice president of fiscal services who serves as CBO, and the vice president
of instruction who serves as CAO. Four deans responsible for continuing education, student services, institutional advancement, and planning, along with the human resource officer, also report directly to the president.

The CBO for College D has spent his entire 31-year professional career in North Carolina community college administration. With 20 years as CBO at College D and 11 years as CBO of a neighboring college, the 52 year-old CBO D has the most CBO experience of any study participant. He holds a MBA and has completed a three-year business officer training program offered by the University of Kentucky.

Having served as interim president during the most recent presidential search, CBO D is formally acknowledged as the second in command, and as in charge of the college in the absence of the president. CBO D is responsible for the business office, facilities, information systems, auxiliary services, security, and he serves as treasurer for the college foundation and capital projects coordinator.

The CAO for College D is a former science faculty member of the college who was first promoted to dean, then to her current position, which she has held for five years.

The president of College D is the former CAO of the college, and has served in academic administrative positions in other North Carolina community colleges.

**College E**

The largest college included in the research sample with 3,400 credit FTE in 2000-2001 (NCCCSO, 2001), College E is also one the oldest, having been chartered in the late 1950s. Located in one of the ten largest cities in the state, College D is also the only non-rural college in the sample, serving two counties with a combined population of more than 211,000 (Farmighetti, 2001) through its main campus. Operating with a 2000-
2001 total budget of over $26.2 million, its 22 buildings are clustered closely together, surrounded by residential neighborhoods and busy city streets.

Like CBO D, the vice president of administrative services of College E has split his career as a chief business officer between two colleges, having spent 16 years in the position elsewhere before entering his current job 12 years ago. The 59 year-old has a bachelor’s degree in accounting and spent nine years in corporate management before joining the community college system. The departments in his division include the business office, facilities and construction, planning and budgeting, information systems, and financial aid. Each of CBO E’s departments is staffed with a director and assistant director supervising the technical staff.

Though in her current position as CAO of College E for only one year, the vice president of instruction has prior experience in academic administration, both in other colleges and in the system office. With a background and education in English instruction, she is responsible for credit instruction and continuing education programs.

President E has worked at College E for over 35 years, having led the institution for more than 12 years, prior to which he served as the CBO for almost 20 years. His experience as a business officer and president at the same institution provide him a unique perspective on the roles and organizational place of the CBO.

**College F**

Like College E, College F is one of the largest of the mid-sized colleges in the NCCCS, with 3,200 credit FTE (NCCCSO, 2001) and a $24.1 million operating budget in 2000-2001 (NCCCSO, 2002). Unlike College E, however, College F is a multi-campus college serving three counties with a total population of 211,500 residents (Farmighetti,
With a main campus and two subsidiary campuses, the college has over 30 buildings, as well as a civic center. In terms of organizational structure, the college is made up of four divisions: administrative services, instruction, student services, and institutional advancement, each led by a vice president reporting to the president.

The 55 year-old vice president of administrative services for College F took a circuitous path to the position he has held for less than four years. Holding the MBA and the CPA designation, he taught business and accounting as a full-time faculty member at College F for 12 years during the 1970s and 1980s. He left the faculty to work as the CFO of a private firm for several years before returning to the college as CBO. He is responsible for the business office, facilities and construction, auxiliary services, safety and information systems, directly supervising seven employees. According to the college organizational chart, each of these departments is managed by a director who reports to the CBO, and each director is supported by an assistant director. CBO F personally serves as the college’s capital projects coordinator, overseeing all construction projects.

The chief academic officer of College F also serves as executive vice president, and is responsible for both credit instruction and continuing education. As executive vice president, he is authorized to make necessary college-wide decisions in the president’s absence. He has been at the college for over 10 years and holds an earned doctorate.

President F has been in the NCCCS for 39 years, serving in his current position for over 20 years. He has earned a reputation among presidents and administrators as a leading expert on North Carolina community college law and finance, working closely with the system office and the state legislature on these issues. His pre-presidential experience was as a faculty member and as an instructional administrator.
Responses to the Research Questions

The analysis of the responses will be organized using the preliminary categories found in Baker’s model as a frame to answer the research questions. Each question will be presented with the interpretations of the data and direct responses interconnected to describe the perceptions of the subjects relative to the study and its purpose.

While the intent of the study is to understand the perceptions of the CBOs in their own words, established theory can be effectively connected to the findings of new research, providing the basis for a substantive cognitive model (Dey, 1999). New categories and themes, developed inductively from the interviews and corroborated through the triangulation of the data from the presidents, CAOs and document analysis, will be linked and compared to the theory in the conceptual framework.

I traveled to each college and conducted the interviews for the CBO, CAO and president on the same day. While I was prepared for cancellations or phone interviews, I was fortunate to hold them all in person on one day in the setting of their respective college. Seeing the colleges and their features helped me understand the size and scope of their operations beyond enrollment and budget figures. The setting will be referenced throughout the interpretations, as a source of information and because of its effect on the comfort of the participant, an important factor in gathering meaningful data through interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

Before commencing the interviews, I reviewed and clarified the purpose of the study and the process I would be using. With every respondent, I engaged in the casual small talk needed to establish and reinforce rapport between the interviewer and the subject (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This was obviously easier with those subjects I had
previously met or with whom I was acquainted, though of the 18 participants, I had never met nine of them prior to the interviews.

Regardless of my relationships with the subjects, I followed the same method and pattern on each interview, emphasizing my role as researcher and minimizing my role as fellow administrator, even though I was continually reminded of my position and experience during the interviews. My role as an administrator in the system was important, as I had expected, in that it allowed many of the subjects to speak less formally since they did not have to explain common terms and concepts. This afforded me an opportunity to probe and explore their responses in a deeper way than might otherwise have been possible. I found all of the respondents to be supportive and engaged in the process, taking it seriously and having thought through the interview guide questions.

**Perceptions of the CBO’s Managerial Roles**

The first research question concerns the CBOs’ perceptions of their managerial roles. This question is at the heart of the study, the hub that connects and supports the other research questions. Using the initial categories from Baker’s model (Baker & Athens, 1999) for organizational purposes, the data from the interview were coded and categories identified that make up the components of the cognitive puzzle being assembled. The responses from the participants formed recognizable patterns, contrasting and comparing based on variables that allowed reasonable inferences in order to develop relational categories. These categories will form the conceptual model that will be used in answering the supporting research questions.

As Mintzberg (1973) points out, though all managers perform all of the broad
roles in his model, they are not played equally or proportionately, with factors such as position level, type of job, and organizational type size influencing which roles are dominant and which are minimal. However, this study’s nature and scope precludes it from attempting to infer or generate direct causal relationships between roles and specific variables. The intent of this question, therefore, is to understand the CBO’s taxonomy of roles, delineating the importance and significance the respondents identified with the various roles, ultimately generating a model, specific to the CBO, linked to the conceptual framework.

In categorizing the CBOs’ managerial roles, a pattern began to appear as I began coding the data. Phrases such as “just in my division…” and “only with my employees…” contrasted strongly with comments that described activities that dealt with or required interaction with other college personnel or external groups. Two primary categories of roles began to emerge from the data: institutional roles, in which the CBO performs roles that affect the entire college, divisional roles, in which the CBO deals only with the employees and activities in his or her division. This initial categorization will be applied to the analysis of the various roles, helping to cognitively sort and classify the perceptions of the respondents, gaining meaning from the data. The complete analysis of the roles will then be examined, developing a conceptual construct that expands and refines these categories into a model that will form the basis of the study’s concluding conceptual model.

The Leadership Roles.

While the CBOs used different terms to describe the roles themselves, the participants identified the influencing roles as defined by Baker as being significant
elements in their jobs. While some of these roles, such as task giver, were obvious and apparent, other roles were less explicit and more subtly incorporated into job functions, requiring probing questions and introspection on the part of the participants.

The primary influencing role of the CBOs appeared to be task giver, with visionary and motivator being subtler, less focal roles and the ambassador role being a minimal component of the position.

The CBOs in my study focused on the role Baker (2000) describes as task-giver, describing it in the context of how much work they performed and how much they delegated. They perceived this role as two distinct roles, one being that of delegator and supervisor, assigning tasks and holding employees accountable, and the other as worker performing regular duties and functions. The CBOs were clearly divided as a group in their views on these roles. CBO A and CBO D were admittedly hesitant to assign important tasks, describing delegation as one of their weaknesses. As CBO D said:

"Delegating is probably not my strong suit. I am a participant. You see these individuals that delegate a lot of things, I have never felt that I was in a large enough school that I could totally turn loose of everything and not worry."

These two respondents are both long-time CBOs with small staffs, however they recognize it is their personal preference to retain what they see as important duties. CBO F, working at a larger college, wished for a larger, more skilled staff that would make delegation more feasible. "I have more of my time directed to areas where I feel like that my expertise is necessary and then I do not have staff that would possess the same level of expertise." While personality was a factor in what they chose to delegate, staff size seemed to affect the amount of work they performed and the amount they delegated. The
presidents of College A and College D acknowledged their CBOs lack of delegation, seeing it as necessary given their experience and staffing situation. Both of these CBOs have long tenures in the position, and both fit the description President D gave of his CBO being from the “old school, playing things close to the vest.”

The other CBOs, having staffs they felt were adequately sized and trained, felt they were effective delegators up to a point, seeing it as necessary in order to be effective. “I think the guy closest to the action makes the better decisions than me sitting up here making it, and that’s why we decentralized,” said CBO E, a long-time CBO at one of the larger colleges in the study. CBO B expressed the challenge in delegating:

You’ve got to be a person who believes in other people and be able to let go and that’s hard for some of us people who are by training accountants, but you better find a way to reorganize and spend more time with people issues and learn to delegate some of the things that are time consuming detail type work that somebody else could do”

The decisions on what to delegate and what work to personally perform seemed driven both by the skills of the staff and by the duties inherent in the CBO position. Budget management, for example, was not delegated by any CBO in the study, and construction administration only delegated by one CBO. CBO C commented on an additional factor in determining what to delegate and what to retain. “I don’t delegate very much of the budget. I enjoy that. Not only do I enjoy that, I really feel like the president wants me to keep a good handle on what’s going on.” Personal preference apparently played some role in the CBOs’ determining which activities to delegate and which to keep, when delegation was feasible with the available staff. However, the
president of College D confirmed his CBO’s perception when asked which roles he did not want his CBO to delegate. “The ultimate responsibility of the budget is his, and to make sure that we are in compliance, that is what I expect him to do personally.”

While the president was a perceived factor in delegating for CBO C, this was not a major issue to the other CBOs. The presidents generally agreed with self-assessments of their CBOs as to their roles as delegators, while the CAOs seemed apprehensive and unsure of the CBOs actions within their divisions. The president’s influence in delegation may be more closely linked to job descriptions and the size and organization of the administrative staff, which could directly affect the CBO’s degree of delegation.

This brings up the second, inter-related role under the task giver heading, that of worker, or what Mintzberg (1973) described as the “specialist” (p.106). The CBOs described a large percentage of their time being spent on regular non-managerial work or assisting others in case of absence or vacancy, a role Mintzberg (1973) labeled “substitute operator” (p.107).

Mintzberg (1973, 1979) found that managers played these roles more often in smaller size organizations, which is consistent with the responses from the CBOs. CBO D, for example, developed the college’s annual financial statements rather than his controller. CBO A’s job description lists personnel officer as a specific duty. As expected, those CBOs who delegate less have more non-managerial work to perform. The other CBOs described filling in for vacant employees and developing reports and analyses. While their non-managerial work was not as significant as CBOs A and D, each of the other CBOs, with the exception of CBO E, mentioned it as a relevant part of their jobs. Based on these responses, it would seem reasonable to infer that the
delegator/worker roles are divisional roles, performed in varying proportions based on staff, personal preference, and the president.

One of the leadership roles that the CBOs seemed to perform on a more subtle level was that of visionary. While they did not see themselves as establishing the college’s vision, they did see the need to understand the college mission and its programs and services. The CBOs interviewed thought globally for the most part, seeing the college through its budget, personnel, and programs.

The planning process tended to be the issue that the CBOs most associated with the visionary role, as they work with their planning committees to develop annual and strategic plans, anticipating needs and activities for the future. CBO A relayed his role in planning. “I serve on a strategic planning committee and we usually try to start that process a little bit before the budget starts and we look at some of the strategic goals of the college.”

This process requires the CBO to plan not only for the college but for his division as well, with some CBOs placing more emphasis on their division than the college as a whole. “I am a participant in the planning process, I look at my division and how things should progress within my division,” replied CBO D when asked his role in college-wide planning. Others noted perceived differences in the visionary role from college to college. “Some of the VPs at the larger community colleges seem to be more into overall college planning and large issue kinds of things and less hands on than some of us at the medium size and small sized community colleges,” reflected CBO C.

The planning and visionary roles described by the CBOs seemed to be sewn into the cloth of their functions. A vision and plan were necessary steps in the process of
developing the budget, or determining what kind of building should be constructed next.

“I know the plan and I know the things we are trying to accomplish and it is always foremost in my mind when I start planning a budget,” said CBO F. Rather than being a role unto itself, the visionary role for the CBO represents a global view that serves as a vantage point for effectively playing their more significant and conscious roles.

Understanding the whole college is important to the CBO, yet primarily in the context of their functions.

The presidents seem to look for a more global, college-wide perspective from their CBOs, encouraging them to become more actively involved in institutional planning and understanding the other college divisions.

CBO B: Well, I think he has encouraged me to provide input not just over finance and operations but input for instructional programs, input for the planning effort, input for issues that may have to deal with student services, particularly personnel when you are dealing with personnel issues across the campus.

President B concurred, recognizing that his CBO’s prior experience as an academic leader provided him a more global view, but also stressed that “it is my philosophy for him to be that way,” acknowledging his own influence on the CBO’s roles. President E’s views represent that of the other presidents regarding the need for the CBO to have a global perspective:

Absolutely. If he is too myopic, and I’ve seen this in some other institutions where the business manager or chief financial officer is more concerned about the accounting end of things and not how we are going to deliver these programs that the community is demanding, then you’ve got real problems.
His CAO confirmed this opinion, stating CBO E “has that ability to deal with the big picture stuff very, very effectively, unlike other business officers I’ve worked with.” While some of the CBOs had this degree of vision, several had more narrow views of their colleges, focusing more on their divisions. Those with broader experience and more extensive academic backgrounds seemed to have more global perspectives, while college size did not appear to be a discernible factor in this pattern. However, other variables, such as longevity in the position or presidential influence could also affect how the CBO performs this institutional role. This distinction between longevity in the position and overall experience became increasingly clear throughout the interviews.

The role Baker (2000) defined as ambassador involves symbolizing the college to external groups. The CBOs recognized their responsibility in informally representing their colleges on a regular basis, however the formal role of embodying and symbolizing the college at official events and activities was almost always seen as a presidential role. “I do not see myself as the external person for the college in representing the college in that way” said CBO D, who continued, “I feel that the external limelight belongs to the president. If I were directed to change from that I would do so.”

However, all of the CBOs interviewed felt they represented the college informally at all times, and believed that the public saw them as connected to the college. “I represent the college everywhere I go and in everything that I do, civically and socially in almost every context,” said CBO F, whose feelings were echoed by CBO A, who felt “by virtue of being associated with the college, how we conduct ourselves in the community reflects on the college.”
While the president does ask the CBO to represent him or her at meetings or functions, this seems to occur infrequently and usually relates to the CBO’s function, such as finance or facilities. CBO B gave this common example: “The president asked me to attend the president’s association meeting because he had a conflict…He thought this particular executive meeting of the president’s association would draw on a lot of budgetary issues.” However, the CBOs did not see themselves being delegated the ceremonial roles normally played by the president as the head of the institution.

Those CBOs designated as second in command found themselves asked to represent the president more often than the other CBOs in the study, though carrying out ceremonial functions was not perceived as an important part of their jobs.

The presidents corroborated the perceptions of the CBOs, stressing the importance of the ambassador role in their own position, as President E reiterated. “Those things that might be of a financial nature or something that he might have an interest in, I might send him. I’m basically the lead person in the community.” President A’s view concisely captured the attitude of the other presidents, “I’m pretty much at every event I need to attend. I don’t miss many.” In looking at the CBOs’ job descriptions, not one mentioned community involvement or representing the college as formal duties.

With little connection to the job description and its duties and functions and being a focal part of the presidents’ jobs, the ambassador role is seen by the CBOs as a peripheral institutional role that is not relevant to their core roles and functions.

The next managerial role examined is motivator. While motivating employees through mutual trust and appreciation works hand in glove with the task giver role (Mintzberg, 1973), the CBOs as a group did not see themselves as actively motivating
their employees. Through constant comparison, I expanded the question on this role as the interviews progressed, asking it more directly and probing deeper with later respondents in order to elicit more meaningful responses.

Rather than a conscious role employed to improve efficiency or productivity, the CBOs’ view of the motivator role seemed to be more of an intrinsic attitude towards employees that permeated their relationships. “I am a firm believer you get them in and you try to keep your folks, you treat them well,” reflected CBO D’s philosophy on motivation, though he did not think of himself as an active motivator. When asked how he treated people well, he continued, “I think that you are there to respond to their questions as they relate to their job and their job performance. It is not something you give the jobs to them, you leave them and you walk away.”

The methods the CBOs described in motivating employees were the basis of their management philosophy and style, rather than a formal plan designed strictly to increase motivation. CBO E on motivation, “If you can build some pride and self-esteem in an individual in their job then they are going to work their cans off to make things happen and to be proficient in their job.” He described achieving this pride and self-esteem through collaborative decision-making and recognition of individuals and their work. CBO C was less conscious of his motivational role, “I don’t really motivate employees. I think our employees here are self-sufficient for the most part. I just treat them the way I would want to be treated.”

The presidents did not seem to place great value on the motivational role of CBOs, apparently more concerned with outcomes and performance than methods. “I’m not sure that I think of him as a motivator. I don’t see him as spending a lot of time on
thinking about how to motivate people,” was President A’s description of his CBO. The presidents associated the CBOs’ motivation of their employees being accomplished through mutual respect, communication, and personal ethics, and staff development. “We have a gentlemen in the office, so he consequently uses good human interaction skills I think in most anything he does,” said President B of his CBO. The CAOs generally had no perception of their CBOs as motivators, due to the limited opportunities to observe the CBOs and their employees interact. The motivator role for the CBOs is apparently a divisional role, since the CBOs did not indicate any activity in which they sought to motivate or inspire other college employees.

The CBOs seemed to perform the liaison role as a regular, on-going part of their jobs, serving as liaison to several outside agencies, groups, and parties, as well as being the primary liaison between his division and the rest of the college. “Over the years, I’ve had a lot of contact with the county administration, county commissioners. They know me by name and they know my affiliation with the college” said CBO A. Other respondents described being the primary contact with the college attorney, the state controller, the NCCCS finance office, and other funding and regulatory agencies.

This role was emphasized by each CBO as crucial to their effectiveness, fitting into the fabric of their everyday work, yet performed not for its own sake, but to support other activities. For example, in order to have positive audits, they maintained relationships and represented the college with the state auditor’s office. Each CBO stressed the need to build and develop these contacts, both for support and improved communication. “It really does help when you know someone, can put a face with a name, and they know who you are, especially when you may need their help,” said CBO
C. Some CBOs took this role more seriously than others, realizing that to many outside
groups they dealt with, they were the primary link to their college. “That’s a part of the
job you can’t delegate easily, when you deal with those outside agencies, especially State
Construction,” reported CBO B.

The capital projects coordinator function, performed by five of the six CBOs in
the group, is a specialized, focused liaison role to not only the State Construction Office,
but also the architects and the contractors. Three of the CBOs describe this role as the one
they enjoyed most, in part due to the creative aspect of project management. “There is
something exciting about building buildings and renovating facilities and seeing a new
building going up” said CBO B. With its perceived importance in the position and over
75% of North Carolina CBOs directly managing construction projects, construction
manager seems to be a discrete, definable role unto itself. “One of the main challenges he
has is to stay up with building regulations, working with state construction,” offered
President D.

Based on the responses from the CBOs, the liaison role seemed to be a constant
role in the job, not being subject to extreme variations due to variables such as college
size, longevity in the position, experience, or the president. Each CBO offered comments
similar to CBO B, who described being “constantly being in contact with someone from
another college, an agency, the state, or the county manager. I represent the college to a
lot of people, I guess.” Each CBO appeared to perform these duties largely to the same
extent, even in negative situations they would have preferred to avoid, such as
Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) hearings, and Department of
Labor investigations. Those CBOs with the most longevity in the position may have a
marginally higher number of personal contacts, but as the long-time CBO from College D put it, “We all have to deal with the same kind of groups and many of the same people.” This reinforces the roles of liaison and construction manager as major roles common to the CBO position regardless of college size, personal experience or presidential preference.

A review of the CBOs’ job description found one reference to interacting with outside agencies, so this seems more an implied role than an expressed formal role. The presidents recognized and valued the liaison role their CBOs performed, often seeing it as an extension of their authority, affirming the CBOs’ perception of liaison as a core role.

President F: I trust him in meeting with the county manager and dealing with construction and finance matters, the matters for the next year when we get into actual budget meeting with the commissioners. Generally I do that, but he does a lot of direct meeting with his counterparts on that level, and with the state office.

The CAOs had a limited knowledge of their CBOs’ contacts.

Both the liaison and construction liaison roles appear to be institutional roles, with the CBOs performing duties and activities unduplicated by other employees and affecting the entire college.

Informational Roles.

The roles Baker (2000) categorized as informational: advocate, monitor, and disseminator, constitute important elements of what the CBOs in this study saw as core roles of their position. The importance of the position as a collector, processor, analyst, and dispenser of information became evident through the interviews with the CBOs and
was reinforced by their presidents and CAOs. The first of these roles to be examined is the disseminator role.

The disseminator role, in which the manager sends out information, collected from both external and internal sources (Baker, 2000), to other employees of the college, is a role in which the CBOs in the study strongly identified themselves. They seemed to separate the role as defined by Baker into two distinct roles, based on the type of information disseminated. Mintzberg (1973) recognized the difference between fact-based information and value-based information. For the CBO, fact-based information would include rules, regulations, and statistics, while value-based information is based on opinions, judgments, or beliefs that may be grounded in fact, yet remain normative.

The CBOs I interviewed saw the communication of factual information as the communication clearinghouse role as one CBO put it, but they saw the communication of value based information as the advisor role. When asked about communicating information, each seemed to segregate the two activities. While admittedly the two roles overlap at times, they made a clear delineation between that information they saw as concrete and finite, and that which was an expression of their individual judgment or opinion. Based on the type of information and its use, these were seen as two distinct roles by almost all of the CBOs.

The CBOs described the clearinghouse role as requiring them to be knowledgeable of rules, regulations, law, and the status of constantly evolving issues in their bailiwick, such as the budget. CBO B provided the label for this role, “I’m a very central clearinghouse, so to speak, for trying to determine what it is the employees and
even the senior staff and others need to know about those issues that involve the budget, benefits or the legislature.”

The CBOs disperse the information through a variety of methods and displayed a wide range of practices as to who received what information. All of the CBOs are members of their respective college’s executive management team, led by the president, which held regularly scheduled meetings where relevant information was shared, as CBO F described, “The primary meeting format for information and dissemination would be our administrative staff meeting.” President F supported the need to share information, emphasizing his own influence, saying CBO F “embraces my philosophy of helping everybody know how we earn our money, what we spend, what for, and involving people in the decisions.” CAO F, however, felt that information was not completely shared, rating his CBO’s performance in this area, “between a B and a B+. I think that he really knows what is happening, but I think he is a busy guy and that he has his own filter of who in the college needs to know what.”

Personal style and the college culture seemed to drive to whom the information was distributed, with some CBOs actively sharing information they felt could be helpful, while others were more selective in what was disseminated. “I think he does a good job communicating what he feels he should communicate. I think he is from the old school that believes with finance, you keep it close to the chest,” was President D’s view of his CBO clearinghouse role. Others were more open with information, such as CBO E, “I get stuff from Raleigh and sometimes it is probably applicable to a lot of them. I’ll just send it to all the directors. I figure that too much information can’t hurt them but too little can.” CBO C echoed this attitude, “I’m the chief fiscal officer and resource for all
financial information, so if someone has a question related to the finances of the college, then, I’ll give it to them. We don’t hide anything.” The CAOs, however, were divided as a group on the manner in which the CBO distributed information, with some feeling less informed than preferred, yet none felt that necessary information was held back intentionally, only that it was being “filtered,” as CAO F said.

The role of advisor quickly separated itself from the clearinghouse role as the CBOs described how they handled information. Again using constant comparison, I modified the interview questions in order to delineate the roles Mintzberg (1973) and Baker (2000) had combined into one.

The CBOs’ saw themselves as advisors primarily to the president, but also to the other vice presidents, and even faculty and staff at times. “I think probably in the sense that the business manager serves not only as the chief financial officer for the college, but probably in many respects is an advisor to the president, is an advisor to the board,” reflected CBO A, who was the only CBO interviewed who mentioned a direct advisory relationship with the board of trustees. In most cases, the CBO’s and president’s office were in the same building, sometimes even in the same suite of offices, making communication more personal and convenient. CAO B described her experienced, senior CBO as “very much like a mentor,” providing her with training and assistance on her budget.

On several occasions during my interviews, the CBO with whom I was meeting met briefly with his president, with the president seeking both factual information and opinions from the CBO. Obviously, these roles often overlap when advice is requested, since the opinion can be most effective when supported by facts. However, the
clearinghouse role seems to be restricted primarily to the facts alone and void of opinion, other than the subjective filters used to screen the relevant from the trivial.

These roles differ in other ways as well. While every CBO I met was continually expected to act as clearing house for information, rules, and regulations, the advisor role did not appear to be a consistent role among the CBOs interviewed. Those CBOs with greater longevity in their positions stressed the importance of the advisor role to a greater extent than those with less experience. The CAOs interviewed stressed the advisor role their CBOs performed. CAO A, being new to the college, relies heavily on the advice of her seasoned CBO, “I pretty much go to him with my questions and ways to work through dilemmas.” In addition to longevity, the preference and experience of the president and the other administrators could alter the scope of the advisor role. The advisor role would appear to fit in the institutional role category, while the clearinghouse role seems to be both a divisional and institutional role.

In order to be effective in either the advisor or the clearinghouse role, the CBO must have access to internal and external information that can be processed and disseminated. In the monitor role, the CBO maintains sources of information, both internal and external, to better understand the college and its environment.

Monitor is a role obviously performed by the CBO, due to the large volume of information that he must access and process through the course of a regular day. This information is analyzed and used in the course of his duties, transferred in some format to other college employees, or disregarded.

The internal sources of information for the CBO include regular meetings of the president’s management team, input from direct reports, computer generated financial
information, and informal communications through the college “grapevine.” Externally, the information sources include contacts made through the liaison role and NCCCS documentation and correspondence. Fellow CBOs in the NCCCS seemed to be a major source of external information to some of the respondents, such as CBO C, who found “the more I realized, the stuff in the magazines and journals hardly ever applied to my roles as a community college business officer in North Carolina. I think most of what I learn comes from my peers.” Not all the CBOs totally dismissed these outside sources of information though they did admit they found its usefulness limited due to the relative uniqueness of the North Carolina system. CBO A offered, “I have NACUBO information, I’ve got a number of legal newsletters that we subscribe to on a regular basis and I read those, but not all of it applies here.”

The CBOs as a group seemed to place value on monitoring the factual information directly related to their functions, focusing on financial data, budget reports, expenditures, and comparative data from other colleges. In order to act as an effective clearinghouse, the CBOs recognized the need to maintain a stream of current, accurate information. Monitoring their own divisional activities was a high priority based on the job descriptions provided.

The presidents also saw the monitor role focused more internally than externally, describing their CBOs’ use of the role in understanding the status of their colleges. President B described his CBO “as a person who absorbs as much information as he can and does that through good communication skills, listening, asking the right kind of questions, probing where he needs to probe.” The collection of information by the CBOs
seemed to be somewhat taken for granted by the presidents, seen as on-going, low-level activity.

Each CBO described being inundated with new information through e-mail, correspondence, as well as institutional and system reports and analyses, making screening and filtering irrelevant information a necessary task. The monitor role, integral to the function of the more prominent liaison and disseminator roles, were perceived as significant institutional and divisional roles to the CBO. Placing this role in both initial categories emphasizes the point that roles are sometimes performed differently on these two levels.

The advocate role, Baker’s (2000) retitled category for the role Mintzberg (1973) described as spokesman, involves communicating with various members of the public and the community in order to represent and promote the interests of the college. This role often is linked with the ambassador role previously discussed.

The CBOs interviewed seemed to hold a fairly narrow view of this role, with their focus on being the advocate for their division rather than for the college as a whole. They described the institutional advocate role as being predominantly played by their president, often blurring with the ambassador role. If delegated by the president, it was the public information officer, or vice president of institutional advancement who spoke for the college and communicated with the media. Except for clarification of facts or financial information as CBO A and CBO B pointed out, the CBOs were rarely contacted by the media or had opportunities to speak for the college.
The CBOs did often work in support of their presidents in the performance of the advocate role, stressing the need to provide accurate and complete information when the presidents dealt with county commissioners or legislators on the colleges’ behalf.

The CBOs seemed to perceive themselves as advocates of a different sort, promoting the interests and the positive image of their divisions and their employees. While not superceding the best interests of the college or its mission, some of the CBOs felt a responsibility to “represent my employees and what we do,” as CBO B described, especially in senior management meetings. CBO E felt even stronger about his role as divisional advocate, saying “I look at pretty much what’s good for the college, I figure is good for my employees in my division.” A review of the CBOs’ job descriptions supports their perceptions of a very limited advocate role, with no job description alluding to any responsibility as college spokesman or advocate.

The presidents had a slightly different perception of the advocate role, seeing it as minimal to the position of CBO, yet expecting all vice presidents “to be the chief advocates for the college’s position on issues to the rest of the college,” as President B said. The CAOs’ and presidents’ views corroborate the overall perceptions of the CBOs, that the advocate role is marginal to the position of CBO and can be described as a divisional role in the context of this study.

Decisional Roles.

The decisional roles, making up the third and final group in Baker’s (2000) model, consists of the change agent, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator. As with the influencing and informational roles, the CBOs interviewed placed greater weight on some roles than others, and with some roles’ importance varying based
on the situation. Resource allocator and disturbance handler seemed to be primary roles, with change agent varying in significance and negotiator appearing to be a minor role.

Of all the questions asked of the CBOs during the six sets of interviews, one received responses that were striking in their consistency and single voice. When asked what single function they performed the most, each CBO responded similarly to CBO E, describing “the biggest component of my job I think is just budgeting and financial control.” CBO B echoed this, “I spend more time on that than anything else, either preparing budgets for the new year or managing the current budget.” The management and development of the college budget not only were the CBOs’ primary focus, but the role also was interwoven into other roles, with the budget being a lens the colleges’ operations were seen through.

Resource allocator is not an entirely accurate term for this role, however, since it implies that the CBO solely makes the decision to provide or not to provide money, space, or personnel. Resource manager seems more appropriate given the input from the CBOs. Though budgeting processes varied from broad based and inclusive to being conducted primarily by the administration, the CBO seemed to play the same basic role in the process, that of lead collaborator, keeping the budgeting process on track and effective. CBO D described himself as “a participant in the planning process. We identify goals we are going to address and then we try to budget accordingly.”

While the CBOs were involved in the process of allocating resources through the institutional budgeting process, their focus is more directed toward managing and accounting for their colleges’ resources and assets, as well as controlling the resources,
as CBO B alludes to:

Probably, my most important role is chief budget officer. There are a lot of roles I play here but that’s the one I don’t delegate much. Somebody’s got to have the hold on the purse strings and I am not about to give that up.

This control was accomplished in part through approval of expenditures and budget transfers. CBO A held a similar position on budget management, stating he “may spend more time dealing with budget issues that really belong in somebody else’s area than perhaps I should but, that is sort of the way the position has evolved.” This attitude is reinforced by the CBOs’ resistance to delegate budget management, described in the section on the task-giver role.

However, not all of the CBOs saw themselves as having total, centralized control over the budget. The CBOs at the largest colleges in the study delegated more budget authority to other vice presidents and deans, though they retained final approval for significant changes. As CBO E said, “I get referred to as the man with the purse strings, but that’s not totally true. Employees pretty much learn that they go to their dean instead of directly to me.”

Whether budget management is centralized or decentralized seems to be matter of college culture and presidential preference, rather than a conscious decision on the CBO’s part. CBO C felt he spent “the majority of my time probably working on the current year’s budget and planning for the next year’s budget. I think that’s what I spend most of my time and that’s what the president wants me to do.” Whether centralized or not, budget management was clearly the most important role to the CBOs. This was formalized in the CBOs’ job descriptions that showed responsibility for budgeting and
approving expenditures. The CBOs’ feelings about this role were also clearly shared by their presidents and CAOs, such as CAO B who called his CBO “controller of the finances of the college.”

The presidents seemed to understand the role their CBOs performed in resource management and control, but also saw their senior management teams and themselves as resource allocators, drawing a distinction between the two roles. President A said his “senior management team talks about priorities, talks about putting resources toward those priorities, so, it is done collaboratively.” When asked about managing the budget, however, this collaboration disappeared, “I think it is almost a 100% reliance on him and I know I am talking to a finance person. I truly think he is the best in the state.”

Regardless of personal philosophy, prior experience, or organizational structure, each president looked to his CBO to oversee the budgeting process and to be ultimately responsible for the college budgets. President E, a former CBO himself, described his CBO as “the person on this campus who is in charge of the budgeting and financial planning of this campus.” President D summarized the deeper meaning of the budget to the college, “Budgets tell people what you believe in, where you spent your money”. Having responsibility for such an important college function clearly identifies budget management as one of the community college CBO’s key institutional roles.

The second decisional role in Baker’s (2000) model, the negotiator role involves non-standardized decision-making, in which the manager must represent his organization or division and seek an outcome that is of the greatest possible benefit. This role is closely connected to the budget management role, since the CBO would be expected to negotiate the use of financial, physical, and personnel resources both internally and with
external groups. The CBOs in this study, however, had divergent views on the degree to which they performed the negotiator role.

Externally, the CBOs described negotiating major purchases and service contracts with vendors and contractors. In the construction liaison role particularly, the CBOs negotiated with contractors and architects on services and solutions to construction issues. While three of the CBOs’ job descriptions included responsibility for negotiating non-academic college contracts, most of the CBOs did not perceive this a significant role in and of itself, but rather an infrequent function of the job, as CBO C explained, “Externally, there’s some negotiation with contracts and things like that. I wouldn’t see it as a major part of the job. There is just not many of those cases not for us anyway.”

Though uncommon, negotiations with outside groups were a more important responsibility to two of the CBOs interviewed. CBO B described his negotiations with computer and telephone companies in developing an integrated telecommunications system, and CBO D and his president commented on their extensive negotiations with county officials, contractors and architects in resolving a construction project. CAO B concurred with his CBO, seeing him negotiate “probably more so outside the college dealing with different vendors that supply services to the college. As far as inside the college, I don’t think it is a matter or negotiating.”

The CBOs as a group did not see themselves actively negotiating institutional resource or budget issues, but rather facilitating the process. Though not seen as major job function, when pressed to think of themselves as negotiators, they identified occasions when they represented their divisions and their employees rather than the college. Covering the switchboard, staffing registration and setting up college events
were examples given of the CBOs negotiating with other divisions to reach decisions on internal, college-wide issues.

The presidents and CAOs also had varying perceptions of their CBOs as negotiators. President D saw it as major element in the budget process, “Since we have budgets, the art of developing a budget is negotiation. With his relationship with the other five senior staff members, it is an on-going negotiation.” CAO C described “a lot of that sort of give and take of negotiation that goes on” during the budget discussions led by the CBO, even though CBO C did not feel he was an active negotiator. President A, however, had this view of his CBO, “Negotiator on campus? I don’t think of him as a negotiator. I think of him as a problem solver. I don’t know if I think of it as negotiating. I very much think I am a negotiator.”

While the CBOs and their presidents and CAOs did not agree totally on the negotiator role, it does seem to be a lower priority role in comparison to the more primary, frequently played roles discussed. Though rarely performed by the CBOs, the negotiations the CBO conduct do impact the entire college, making the negotiator role a peripheral institutional role.

While the negotiator role had the CBO working with others to make decisions most advantageous to his college or division, the disturbance handler role involves the identification and implementation of solutions to problems or conflict between others involved in the college. A basic term developed during the interviews to describe this role: problem-solver.

The CBOs in this study described performing these roles on three levels: with employees in their division, with employees from other divisions, and as a member of the
senior management team. In their own divisions, these disputes and conflicts usually involved personnel matter between department heads, though most of the CBOs admitted this rarely occurred. Being seen as a primary source of information on rules, regulations and policies, the CBOs described being contacted by faculty and other college employees to answer disputed questions or resolve contentious issues, usually in cooperation with the other respective vice president.

CBO F found that, “many of these things that are brought to me relate to money and they are looking for me to solve that problem for them. I think that is probably the majority of the cases.” Finally, the CBOs gave examples of developing solutions and mediating issues between senior administrators and even with the president, playing a mediator rather than an arbiter. These situations usually involved unique situations or decisions in the planning and budgeting process, though the CBOs that mentioned these cases were quick to stress their infrequency. The CAOs supported this perception, often describing creative “win-win” solutions as CAO B said, that their CBOs had developed, though none saw their CBOs as active mediators or referees between disputing parties.

The word “compromise” was used by three presidents in describing how their CBO resolves conflict and solves problems, with President A calling his CBO a “conduit of compromise.” While they felt this was a role their CBO performed, most of the presidents expected all senior administrators to resolve conflict. President F felt that “every vice president I have got and probably every department head too have had those situations. Hopefully, they can be resolved right in that division.”

Problem solver, a phrase the CBOs used in describing their perception of the disturbance handler role, was perceived by them to be an integral part of their job, with
outcomes resulting from its performance potentially impacting the whole college as well as their divisions.

The final role in the conceptual framework is change agent, which represented one of the more difficult roles to assess and analyze. The magnitude and type of change, as well as the attitudes and expectations of the presidents and the CAOs, seemed to shape the CBOs’ perceptions of the role.

As a group, the CBOs did not seem comfortable with the change agent label, yet when asked to describe changes or improvements they had initiated, numerous responses were offered. It became clear that while they rejected the instability and “out of the box” attitudes they associated with “change agents,” they were not all defenders of the status quo. Some of the business officers, particularly those with long tenures in the position at the same college, did seem satisfied with what they had developed and hesitant to make major changes in a system they felt worked well. CBO D, the elder statesman in the group in terms of longevity and a self described conservative, accepted the perception that he resisted change, “Am I somewhat within the box? Absolutely. The world is changing everyday. Do I enjoy or employ all of those changes? Absolutely not.”

While these CBOs did not totally embrace change, they felt most changes were thrust on them from outside forces, requiring them to adapt regardless of preference. Even the more progressive CBOs, such as CBO B, recognized these forced changes from new technology, the NCCCSO, federal government, and other agencies, and found “if you are going to adapt to those things, you’ve got to be comfortable with making changes.”
Those CBOs that did describe initiating changes spoke of incremental improvements, usually involving job redesign or reorganization within their division, rather than initiating college-wide changes. The same knowledge and effective use of rules, regulations, and policies that made the CBOs an important advisor created a reliance upon structure and guidelines.

The CBOs did not seem to be looked to for new ideas or identifying new opportunities. According to all the parties interviewed, the CAOs seemed to be seen as the colleges’ primary agent of change, a view the CAOs supported. Several presidents even stated they did not expect their CBO to perform the role, seeing it as incongruent with the other primary roles of the position, though the CBO was expected to make the necessary changes on a divisional level to maintain effective and efficient operations. This role cannot be undervalued though, since only it is one only the CBO can perform.

The presidents seemed to see themselves and their CAOs as the initiators of institutional change, with the CBO grounding the proposed changes, checking for feasibility and cost. The CBOs focused on initiating incremental change in their own departments, rather than for the college as a whole. CAO F agreed with this perception of his CBO, saying change agent “is not a major role for him other than processes that occur right in the business office.” The CBOs did not seem unhappy or stifled by their focused, divisional roles as change agents, seeing themselves as making necessary operational adjustments, rather than setting institutional change in motion.

Summary of the CBOs’ Perceptions on their Managerial Roles

As I began coding the data, even before all the interviews were completed, I recognized a pattern in the roles the CBOs were describing. The themes of “my division”
as opposed to “the whole college” were continually reinforced, as the CBOs portrayed the duality of their jobs, with one aspect being manager of a collection of departments, and the other representing the roles they played for the entire college, roles often assigned singularly them by virtue of the position.

It became evident that as I analyzed the data that this duality of division and institution was a defining element of the CBO position, an element I had taken for granted in my own professional experience. I realized that many of these roles, such as liaison and monitor, were also themselves dichotomous, with the CBOs making marked distinctions regarding whether a role was played for the division or for the college. Problem solver and clearinghouse also seemed to fit this dual category, since the CBO differentiated how they defined each role depending on its organizational context.

Simply categorizing these roles as divisional or institutional seemed inadequate given the varying degrees of weight and importance placed on the different roles by the CBOs. Given their disconnection to some roles, such as the institutionally oriented ambassador, some basic hierarchy of roles needed to be developed in order to build a complete taxonomy of roles that represented more than a static list, but a layered, holistic construct that reflects the CBOs’ reality.

By sub-categorizing the divisional and institutional roles into core and peripheral groups, the value and meaning placed on the roles by the CBOs became clearer. The core roles are those the CBOs described as central to their functions and most associated with the position. CBO C provided the label for this category, “I think there is a core of things that we all deal with”. The peripheral roles are performed less frequently and, carry less significance to the CBOs and, are seen by the CBO as background activities that support
more important roles. While these two sub-categories clarify the CBOs perceived roles to a point, they do not account for the variation found in some roles caused by factors such as professional experience, longevity in the position, and organizational size, among others previously mentioned. This required a third sub-category, *variable* roles, whose significance or performance may differ depending on the CBO’s situation. CBO F’s summary of his managerial roles supports these three sub-categories:

> I think that probably a majority of the job and the roles you have to play in the system are necessary functions that have to be done, and whoever is in this position is expected to do those things. I think the president and other variables certainly have a major input on how those roles are carried out and what other associated roles may grow from those.

The president was mentioned by every CBO as an influential variable, with the more experienced CBOs noting the difference in their jobs under different presidents. The presidents realized this influence, as President D pointed out “the agenda of the president is going to have a significant impact on the duties and responsibilities of the financial officer.”

Longevity in the position and overall experience crystallized as two distinct variables that often overlapped each other. CBOs with longer lengths of service in the position seemed to play the advisor role to a greater degree, while total experience including other positions broadened the visionary role.

In presenting this taxonomy and conceptual model of the community college CBO’s roles, it would seem necessary to point out its relationship to the theory found in the study’s conceptual framework. Table 4.3 shows Baker’s (Baker & Athens, 1999)
A taxonomy of roles and compares them to the closely related roles connected to the CBO position fund in this study.

Table 4.3

Comparison of Baker’s Managerial Roles and Related CBO Roles

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<th>Baker’s Management Model</th>
<th>Proposed Roles</th>
<th>Proposed Categories</th>
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<td>Visionary</td>
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<td><strong>Informational Roles</strong></td>
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<td>Disseminator</td>
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<td>Clearing house</td>
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<td><strong>Decisional Roles</strong></td>
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<td>Change Agent</td>
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<td>Resource Allocator</td>
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The connection between the two groups of roles is apparent, with the modifications of new roles based on the CBOs’ own words and interpreted perceptions. I believe the distinctions between this taxonomy and that found in the conceptual framework are significant and help to explain to some degree the managerial behavior of the community college chief business officer. With categories derived from an analysis of the data, these roles are the elements of the conceptual model that will be presented as part of the study’s conclusions in Chapter Five.

Comparing the CBOs’ Perceptions of their Roles to the Presidents’ and CAOs’

While there were some variations in perceptions between the three groups, I was struck in many cases by the comparatively similar responses of the presidents and CAOs relative to their respective CBOs. While there were minor discrepancies in perception in almost every college, overall the president and CAO validated the reality presented by their CBO. The CAOs and presidents prioritized the roles of their CBOs into a hierarchy closely matching that of the CBOs’ ranked roles, though the dynamics of status and experience seemed to affect the perceptions of the CAOs.

Leadership Roles.

The presidents and CAOs of the CBOs A and D, who were self-described poor delegators, concurred with their CBOs’ perceptions, recognizing this as an area that could be improved upon, yet also explaining it with the same reasons as their CBOs. In the other cases, the presidents agreed with their CBOs’ view of the role, while the CAO usually did not feel close enough to the CBO and his employees to offer an opinion.

A difference in perception was found in how some of the CBOs and their presidents viewed the visionary role, with the presidents having an expectation of a
global, institutional perspective some of the CBOs with less academic experience, such as CBO C, did no project. However, the majority of the presidents and CAOS had limited expectations for the CBO as visionary, and their views of their CBO in planning matched the role their CBO’s self-image.

With no exceptions, there was consensus among the presidents, CAO, and the CBOs on their limited role as ambassador for their colleges. There was agreement that the CBO, like the CAO and other vice presidents, was responsible for informally representing the college in the community at all times.

With the president and especially the CAO only vaguely aware of their CBO’s interaction with their employees, it was difficult for them to offer an informed opinion of their CBO as motivator. The presidents of Colleges B and F recognized and corroborated the motivational behavior their CBOs felt they utilized. The other CAOs and presidents concurred with their CBOs’ perceptions that they were not active motivators.

While the presidents seemed to appreciate the value of the CBOs’ liaison role more than did the CAOs, I found no discrepancy in the perceptions of the three groups regarding this role. In many cases the president and CAO even named groups and agencies with which the CBO was the primary college contact. Each set of college leaders shared similar perceptions of this role.

**Informational Roles.**

The presidents took much of the clearinghouse role of their CBOs for granted, since they received much of the same information, so there was little concern of the part of those presidents, like President D, whose CBO “played it close to the vest”. While the CAOs recognized that the clearinghouse role was an important aspect of the CBO
position, the more senior CAOs, such as CAO F and CAO B were less satisfied than others at the quantity and quality of information they received. Status and experience seemed to shape the CAOs’ perceptions of several of these roles, including the clearinghouse role, but also the advisor role, and the problem solver role.

The advisor role was found to vary, with the CBOs with the most longevity in the position performing it more often. This variation was also verified by the comments of the CAOs and presidents, though the cause of this variation may be equally related to the CAOs’ and presidents’ experience. The more experienced CAOs and presidents did not emphasize the advisor role to the same extent as those inexperienced in the position. President A, new to the position described his senior CBO as “a Rock of Gibraltar” for his indispensable advice and council, while long time presidents at Colleges E and F downplayed the advisory role of their CBO. CAOs B, C, and F, all recently placed in their positions, focused on their CBOs as advisor, while the other CAOs in the study placed value in their CBOs’ advice, but did not see them as councilors or mentors.

Basing their opinions on the information disseminated by their CBOs and the feedback they received at cabinet meetings, there was little differentiation between the presidents and CAOs’ perceptions and CBOs’ of the CBO as monitor.

The advocate role, however, was perceived somewhat differently by some of the CBOs and their presidents. Two of the presidents stressed that the CBO should advocate the college’s (meaning the president’s) position on issues to the college community. The CBOs as a group did not perceive an inherent responsibility to openly advocate for the college or the president unless requested, focusing on their role as advocate for their divisions, a role the presidents expected from all vice presidents.
As resource manager, the CBOs’ perceived control of the budget was accurately understood by their presidents and CAOs at the college level, with concurrence as to the level of control and authority their CBO had over college resources. Those CBOs who had more control (the more experienced, senior CBOs) were seen as such by their presidents and CAOs. The less experienced CAOs expressed a reliance on their CBO for budget training and support. The CAOs with more experience, such as CAO C, saw their CBO managing the resources “of the college that we want to shepherd and spend in the best possible manner and at the same time for the benefit of our student, faculty, or publics that we serve.”

Decisional Roles.

The budget was a point of some discrepancy in the views of the three groups on the CBO as negotiator. The presidents and CAOs agreed with their CBOs’ perceptions of the CBO negotiating with external groups. However, there was disagreement from four CAOs and three presidents as to whether their CBOs acted as an internal negotiator, particularly during budget discussions, a role none of the CBOs felt they played. In comparing the three groups’ views on the CBOs’ roles, this discrepancy appears to be the widest and most significant.

The problem solver role also displayed discrepant views, though not as glaring as the negotiator role. Like the advisor role, the three senior CAOS seemed to look to their CBOs as less of a problem solver than their more junior counterparts at the other colleges. While everyone agreed with the CBOs that this was an important, constant role of their CBO, there was variation as to the breadth and width of issues the CBOs in which the CBOs should be involved. The presidents’ responses matched their respective CBO in
regard to this role.

The presidents also agreed with their CBOs on the role of change agent, seeing the CBO as initiating change in his division, but not the institution. The level of resistance to change expressed by each CBO was matched by the attitude of that president, indicating each was comfortable and understood the attitude of the other on this role. The more senior CAOs expressed a stronger perception of themselves as institutional change agents, yet agreed with their CBO’s view of the role.

Summary

In analyzing the responses and the comparison between the groups, it seems that the group dynamic formed by the experience level of the president, the CAO, and the CBO play combine to shape and refine not so much which roles are played by the CBO, but the priority a role may take or the way a role may be performed. Less experienced CBOs still act as advisors, but on to a lesser extent than the seasoned CBO with a new president or CAO.

While the CAOs as a group seemed to lack a complete understanding of their CBOs divisional roles, the presidents’ perceptions of their CBOs’ roles matched, for the most part, the CBOs’ own individual views on their roles. The presidents recognized that a core set of roles exist for the position, yet understood that they have tremendous influence on the CBOs’ roles, a perception shared by the CBOs. This corroboration helps add validity and meaning to the realities expressed by the CBOs, showing that their perceptions are relatively reliable.
The Status of the CBO

Longevity and experience were factors in how the CBOs was perceived by their CAOs and presidents, and are also driving forces in the status of the CBO in the college hierarchy. I have realized a distinction between longevity in a position and total professional experience. Longevity as CBO at a specific college may not provide the same depth of experience that a combination of jobs at different places could provide. Conversely, extended service in the position seems to provide certain benefits, such as enhanced credibility and status, not brought about through other types of experience. The formal status of the CBOs in the colleges in this study appears to be delineated based strongly on the CBO’s longevity in the position.

Each of the six colleges in this study has designated another administrator to be second in command to the president and responsible for college operations in the absence of the president. For three of those colleges, that responsibility is formally delegated to the executive vice president, also responsible for instruction as CAO. The other three colleges, A, B, and F have designated the CBO to serve as second in the leadership hierarchy and act for the president when he is off campus. A pattern quickly appeared that explained this mixed status for the CBO. CBO A described his status as “unique because of my longevity here but, sometimes, I almost get the feeling as if though I’m acting more as a executive vice president than I am a business manager.”

This initial allusion to the relationship between longevity and status for the CBO proved almost prescient, given the response of the other CBOs and presidents. CBO D recognized that his longevity at his college as CBO was the main reason he was number two in the institution, not that it was inherent in the position. CBO F, also a long-time
business officer, concurred with the CBOs A and D that his status arose from his tenure in the position and with the college. When asked if the CBO would retain its status after he retired, CBO D admitted, “Probably not. I think that would probably change and it would become the instructional VP.” His president supported this perception, “It is a combination that he has been here that long and he holds that position. The VP of instruction is going to be the same way once the VP of finance leaves and her seniority grows.” This supports the premise that the CBO position in and of itself should be expected to be lower in the hierarchy of the college than the CAO position, experience and longevity notwithstanding.

This describes the status of the other three CBOs in the study, who found themselves grouped with the CSS and other senior administrators behind the CAO serving as executive vice president. The concept of the management team was reinforced by nearly all the respondents, with those CBOs working with executive vice presidents not directly reporting to them, but for the most part having a peer relationship.

According to CBO F, “the three VP’s, we work well together and there is rarely a decision made in any of our divisions that the other two are not at least invited to give input and used as a sounding board.” CBO C described his situation in a similar vein:

The executive VP sits in for the president when he is not here but no he doesn’t ask me to do anything. We never really had issues or someone saying they had more superiority, we don’t have any of that. We really have a good team.

The presidents in the study realized that the CAO was normally the second in command, with Colleges B, C, and F formalizing this and indicating in their title as well as their job description. It was interesting that for the other three colleges where the CBO
served in this capacity, the responsibility was reflected in the job description, but not the title. Though often referred to as “business manager” by some presidents and even some of the more experienced CBOs, each of the CBOs in this studied were vice presidents, as were their fellow senior administrators in their colleges. Titles were not perceived as overly significant to the CBOs, with the only concern expressed being equity with other senior administrators. As President C said, “the organizational structure sends a message and title sends a message to the rest of the campus about the visibility and the importance it has to that role.”

The presidents with the executive vice president/CAOs arrangement, each with backgrounds in instructional leadership, seemed satisfied with their organizational structures based on the individuals involved. President B described his CBO’s status, “Formally, he is number three and the reason for that is it was structured that way when I came here and as long as the same parties are in those seats, I don’t have a reason to change that.”

The CBOs with the enhanced status, recognizing their longevity as its source, felt comfortable in the position, but held no aspirations for the presidency, despite CBO A and CBO D having served as interim presidents during their most recent presidential searches. All three voiced support and consideration for their less experienced CAOs, who they realized would be second in command upon their retirements in the next six or seven years.

The status of the community college CBO appears to closely linked to both the roles of the position and the experience and longevity of the individual CBO. In terms of informal status, the CBOs’ place in the college is secured through the core roles of the
position, primarily resource manager, liaison, and clearinghouse, with experience and longevity strengthening the position’s status through the advisor role. From a formal standpoint, the CBO is inherently the third position in the college behind the CAO, ranking as a peer to the other senior administrators. The experienced CBO must be prepared to move into the number two role should there be a new CAO, realizing this status is based on his or her individual performance and dedication, rather than the CBO position itself.

**Perceived Changes in the CBO Roles and Status**

Examining the changes in the CBO roles and status is difficult given the varied lengths of experience among the CBOs in this study. With vantage points ranging from over 30 years to less than four, the CBOs described the position and its roles changing in a variety of ways. Based on the findings on managerial roles, some aspects of the position have remained relatively constant over the last 15 or 20 years. Calver and Vogler (1985) found that CBOs viewed their fiscal and financial duties as most important, with budgeting the role CBOs most often perform personally. My findings show that these perceptions are still valid among current CBOs.

Three broad themes related to role change developed from the data: technology, operations, and organizational structure and culture. In each of these areas, the CBOs described major adjustments and modifications to their jobs and their roles.

**Technology.**

On-going developments in technology have dramatically changed the CBO’s jobs in two basic ways: improved, faster communications and new responsibilities in managing information systems and networking. While senior CBOs felt the greatest
impact from these changes, even those in the position a relatively short time had noticed the effect of technology on the position.

E-mail, the Internet, and wireless phones have made the CBO more available to employees and the president, increasing communication options and response time. The expectations for making decisions and sharing information have also increased, with the delays found in traditional communications methods still vivid. Rather than relying on memos and mail service, the faculty and staff can now receive almost instant communication, which can be accessed from almost anywhere. These new communication devices deluge the CBO in a flood of information, compounding the roles of liaison, monitor, and clearinghouse, increasing access to information, yet complicating the screening and filtering process. Delegation was seen as improved through this technology, with e-mail and wireless phones allowing for instant, detailed instructions to be sent to employees. While the newer CBOs were more excited about using technology, the long-time business officers realized the need for applied technology in their college. “It has not been smooth, but I have certainly accepted it and I encourage it and I support all those issues that go with it,” said CBO D of his recent adoption of new technologies.

Four of the six CBOs studied here are responsible for their college’s information systems department, thrust directly into the rapidly changing world of networking, computer and software support, and systems administration. These CBOs described how managing this function changed their roles as resource managers, problem solvers, and delegators, and visionaries, as CBA described. “I guess an advantage is that it kind of forces you to have to have a broader view or better perspective of various functions.” Since none of the CBOs in this study had any training or education in this field, they have
learned on the job and delegated heavily to their information systems managers. In addition to money and space, computers and software now have to be allocated and managed. While technology had allowed improvements in processes and improved many jobs, the CBOs saw it as having increased their responsibility and expanded their roles.

**Operations.**

The two aspects of their divisional operations that have changed the most, other than information systems, are finance and budget, and facilities. While newer CBOs recognized tighter control from the NCCCSO, it was more striking to the long time CBOs who remembered a time when there were fewer rules and regulations and colleges had more flexibility in fulfilling their mission. CBO A described the impact of these changes, “I think the job is more demanding. I think there is more pressure and that has to do with the budget situation over the last few years. Some of it has to do with increasing compliance with regulations.” Presidents saw this as well, as President F related, “I am in my thirty-ninth year with the community college system, and over the years there has been tighter and tighter restraints. It is just more challenging in making sure that you keep your nose clean.”

While much of this external regulation comes from the NCCCSO, the CBOs also mentioned the tightening efforts of the other state agencies and the federal government. Even the newer CBOs, such as CBO F, felt these changes, “It is just getting more complex because of requirements that are being pushed down to this level from the state level.” These changes limited the CBOs’ opportunities as change agents, and expanded their roles as liaison and clearinghouse. The advisor role, which they described as
increasing with experience, was also magnified with the CBOs interpreting the increasing number of rules and regulations.

The construction liaison role has also grown in the last 10 to 12 years, according to the more experienced CBOs. A combination of additional bond money for new construction and older buildings requiring renovations has brought the construction liaison role to the forefront of the CBOs’ activities.

**Organizational Structure and Culture.**

The long-time CBOs stressed the internal organizational changes that had affected their positions. Along with new presidents and the adjustments they bring, the CBOs mentioned the move to more open, collaborative decision-making, reorganization of staff duties, and an overall broadening of a once narrowly defined position.

Each CBO that had undergone presidential turnover mentioned the effect the change in leadership had on his roles, underlining the connection between the two positions. Each new president had a slightly different philosophy, agenda or set of expectations regarding the CBO, requiring the business officer to adjust his roles accordingly. The role of the president cannot be under appreciated, as President B pointed out in describing his retraction of human resources and information technology from his CBO and his focus on the college’s appearance and foundation.

New presidents, as CBO D pointed out, have a learning curve that requires a high level of initial assistance and training from the CBO, emphasizing the advisor role. The same holds true for the other administrators as well, as the CAOS working with experienced CBOs indicated. These CBOs realized their status had also been elevated as less experienced CAOs came on board.
The application of modern management methods and inclusive decision making required the CBOs to adapt, allowing access to information and involving faculty and staff in decisions once made in private.

CAO F appreciated this change:

It has definitely become a lot more open and participatory over the years. I have been in the community college business about 22 years now and especially in the first ten years, money issues were strictly between the business officer and the president. I mean it was nobody else’s business.

Not all CBOs have relished this development, as CBO D made clear. “The biggest change has been more participation by other individuals within the institution, taking ownership of the process, whether it’s good or bad. I think it’s good to a certain level, then I think it’s not so productive.” CBO E, however, took advantage of this change in style and reorganized their division, decentralizing and delegating authority to subordinates, de-emphasizing the worker role of the CBO. Many of the core roles of the position, such as resource manager and problem solver, have remained constant focal points for the CBO over the years. Yet as CBO B and his president indicated, the CBO position now requires a more open, broad based approach, with an inclusive leader in the position who understands the entire college and works towards meeting its mission, rather than simply guarding the resources and enforcing rules and regulations. This new perspective shows an increased emphasis on the visionary role and a more global view of the college, as well as heightened attention to the informational roles needed for broad-based planning and decision-making.
Summary of Findings

One of the many challenges found in conducting qualitative research is knowing when to stop and begin the study’s conclusion. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p.61) define “theoretical saturation” as a stopping point, meaning “no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the category.” While I never expected to reach saturation with a sample size as limited as six colleges, I do feel that I have achieved what Dey (1999, p.117) described as “theoretical sufficiency,” which refers to “the stage at which categories seem to cope adequately with new data without continual extensions and modifications.” The categories developed for the managerial role model became evident during the data collection process, with the last interviews supporting categories being conceptualized, rather than expanding or modifying them.

The process of qualitative research blurs the lines between data presentation and analysis, as this chapter has demonstrated. The results of the data involve developing categories, themes, and patterns from the data, which were integrated into this section. In the final chapter of this study, these results will be integrated to form the study’s conclusions, which will set the stage for implications and recommendations.
Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

This section of the study will connect the findings presented in Chapter Four into a set of integrated conclusions. Showing the relationship between the conceptual model of the CBOs’ managerial roles and the CBOs’ status in their colleges will provide the reader with a meaningful, holistic response to the questions posed in this study. The conceptual model formed from these substantive conclusions are the basis of the identified implications and recommendations for practice and research, which will also be presented in this chapter.

The Conceptual Model of the CBO’s Managerial Roles and Status

The central, focal issue of this study has been to gain an understanding of the community college CBOs’ managerial roles and organizational status, through an examination of their perceptions, the perceptions of their CAOs and presidents, and an analysis of the relevant related documents. As the findings detailed, Baker’s model (2000) formed the basis for a revised set of roles specific to CBO position, with categories and roles that emerged from the interview data. The findings alone offer a discordant, incohesive view of the CBO position, lacking the structure and clarity a unified conceptual model provides.

This model, based on accepted theory just as Baker’s model is connected to Mintzberg’ (1973) earlier work, is also grounded in the direct perceptions of the CBOs themselves and supported by the corroborating views of their peers and leaders, creating a conceptual construct that sets the stage for future research.
Figure 5.1

Proposed Conceptual Model of CBO Managerial Roles and Organizational Status

**Institutional Roles**
- Peripheral Institutional Roles:
  - Negotiator
  - Visionary
  - Ambassador
- Variable Institutional Roles:
  - Advisor
- Core Institutional Roles:
  - Construction Liaison
- Dual Core Roles:
  - Resource Manager
  - Liaison
  - Problem Solver
  - Monitor
  - Clearinghouse

**Divisional Roles**
- Peripheral Divisional Roles:
  - Advocate
- Variable Divisional Roles:
  - Delegator/Worker
- Core Divisional Roles:
  - Change Agent

Experience and Longevity

Status
As Figure 5.1 shows, the model is dichotomous, with roles set into two primary
categories, divisional and institutional, which the model shows as graphically
interconnected to each other. This connection also represents an interdependence between
the categories, since the CBO cannot be successful in either set of roles unless each both
the divisional and institutional roles are performed. Even when performing the divisional
roles, the purpose behind the apparently mundane and routine tasks such as cashiering or
housekeeping are directly connected to the institution and its mission, whether the CBO
is always conscious of the connection or not. In each main category, three sub-categories
delineate the roles based on the perceived weights an importance placed on the roles by
the CBOs: peripheral, variable, and core.

The peripheral roles, while marginal to the activities of the CBO the majority of
the time, include roles that must be performed, yet are identified by the CBOs as not
central to the position. These roles and their activities, however, should not be completely
dismissed, since they must be performed on occasion to some degree (Mintzberg, 1973).
While the CBOs as a group did not see themselves as negotiators, it was a role found in
several job descriptions and expected of them by their presidents. Their lack of emphasis
for this role does not eliminate it, since they must on occasion negotiate with outside
groups on their colleges’ behalf.

The concept of the CBO having a set of core roles inherent to the position is
reinforced by the continuity in the CBOs’ descriptions of the position’s primary functions
and priorities. I found, just as Calver and Vogler (1985) did 17 years ago, that the CBOs
of today see financial management as their main function, and that budget management
was the role least delegated. My findings expand on the earlier research (Foresi, 1974;
Glaze, 1962; Wattenbarger, 1972), recognizing the CBOs’ emphasis on roles played both for the division and the college.

The dual core roles, played by the CBO as both institutional and divisional roles, reinforce the bond between the two categories, even as the same role is performed differently in each context. For example, the CBO acts as liaison to outside agencies and groups on behalf of his or her college, yet also is liaison to the rest of the college representing the needs and interests of the division. While each of these dual core roles could possibly have been separated and conceptualized as two distinct roles, that model seemed cumbersome and confusing, in addition to minimizing these roles’ importance.

While all the roles vary to some extent depending on the circumstances, the variable roles were those that seemed to range widely, from core to peripheral based on the factors affecting the CBO. The factors identified in the interviews included staff size and skill, college size, and most significantly, longevity and experience, and the president.

Experience and longevity appeared to be significant distinct variables that effected not only the roles but the status of the CBO. Though interconnected, these two variables are not interchangeable synonyms. Experience encompasses all of the professional knowledge, skill, and reputation amassed through both the CBO position and other relevant jobs. Longevity indicates length of service as CBO in the organization, bringing increased cachet, credibility, and institutional and positional memory as the tenure in the position grows (Bass, 1960; Yukl, 1994). While the visionary role expanded for the CBOs with broader, more expansive professional experience, the advisor role grew along with the tenure of the CBO. There also appeared to be a relationship between
longevity in the position and status in the organization, as indicated graphically in Figure 5.1, with the CBO increasing in stature with increased years in the position relative to the other senior administrators. The relationship between longevity and status is well recognized in previous research. “A career in an office provides the executive with additional knowledge, control of channels of communication, as well as the decision–making authority” (Bass, 1960, p.402). This is not to say that longevity alone is wholly responsible for the enhanced stature of long-time CBOs, who would have to displayed competence in their positions to retain them successfully. Longevity and experience, in fact, join together to form a conceptual lynchpin, linking the managerial roles to the CBO’s status.

The president is another highly significant variable that affects both the roles and status of the CBO. Throughout the findings, the CBOs relayed examples of their roles being affected by their president, in some cases changing at the presidents’ discretion. While core roles remained relatively constant, both the CBOs and presidents described how new presidents arriving with different agendas and philosophies had altered the CBO’s position. This is supported by Vaughan’s (1986) finding that presidents felt their two most primary roles in dealing with their direct reports were to act as motivator and secondly, as the conveyor of the college goals and mission.

The presidents included in this study also provided rich and meaningful contrasts and comparisons to the perceptions of their CBOs, both individually and as a group. The presidents’ contributions, consistently matching their CBOs’ for the most part, indicated that the CBOs view of their position was relatively realistic, increasing the apparent validity and generalizability of the study. Their differences in perception were
uncommon, as in the case of the visionary role, but did reinforce the very different perspectives the two positions provide.

The CAOs in the study, however, while not offer overtly contrasting responses to their CBOs, provided a less consistently clear vision of the CBO. This seems due mainly to the striking division of experience that created two sets of relationships in this study, with three colleges having a less experienced CBO and an experienced CAO serving next in command to the president, and three colleges with exactly the opposite situation. Three of the CAOS were highly deferential to their more senior CBOs and relatively unfamiliar with the roles of the position, though CAOs B, C, and E were both knowledgeable and forthright, offering valuable insight into the position and their perceptions of its development over time.

While both the presidents and CAOs lacked direct familiarity with many of the divisional roles of the CBO, there was no direct contradiction of the CBOs’ responses, with the only contrast being in terms of degrees, such as CBO F giving his CBO a “B or B+” for sharing information. The disagreement over the negotiator role was the most severe of any role, with widely contrasting views from the three groups as to the CBOs’ role as an internal negotiator. Having been in the CBO position, I am familiar with the negotiations that surround budget discussion and major college decisions. I can only conclude that the CBOs did not define their role in those functions as negotiating since they were not “working out deals” as CBO C said, even though the process and actions they were engaged in appeared to be negotiations to some of the presidents and CAOs.

The other element besides the presidents and CAOS used in triangulating the data were the college documents, such as the CBO job descriptions and college organizational
charts each CBO provided. While not confirming the subjective perceptions of the CBOs, these documents did verify many of the factual components of the data, especially dealing with job duties, chain of command, status, and staff size and composition. These documents are referenced throughout the findings and provided an invaluable source of verification, which I feel, along with the response from the presidents and CAOs, strengthens the study’s validity.

The model presented in Figure 5.1 is an attempt to conceptualize the perceptions of the CBOs, as validated through their presidents, CAOs, and the document analysis. Based on the descriptions of how the CBO position has evolved over the years, it seems this model is not static, but dynamic and changing to meet the demands of the position and the emerging mission of the community college. The visionary role for example, could develop into a variable or core role as the model is tested, especially given the presidents’ comments on the need for a broad perspective and understanding of the entire college. The recognition that the managerial roles of the CBO and the position itself have changed and are evolving leads into the implications of this study, both for practice and for additional research on the subject.

Implications for Practice and Research

Given the importance of the community college CBO position and the issues identified in the findings and conclusions of this study, there would seem to be substantial opportunities for future research and implications for the positions and the community college. In addition to these implications, I will offer recommendations drawn from the data and my own analysis.
Opportunities for Research

I have utilized the tools and terminology Glaser and Strauss (1967) described as part of the grounded theory process. Rather than developing a new or revised theory, however, I offer a proposed conceptual model that is more developed and refined than a simple working hypothesis, and is grounded in both established theory and the perceptions of a specific groups. This conceptual model provides a foundation for future research, provoking additional inquiry to test and improve its validity and generalizability, as well as opening the door to research into related issues on community college administration.

As a platform for future research, the most obvious opportunity would be expanding this study, qualitatively examining a larger number of CBOs in a wider variety of colleges. Using the findings and the conceptual model developed from this study as a starting point, professional researchers could verify whether or not the perceptions found in the group of CBOs studied here represented the entire population of community college CBOs.

Another approach to expand and build on this study would involve an entirely different methodology, the quantitative survey. The use of the LCAI with a broad sample of CBOs would establish a baseline with which the CBOs’ managerial roles could be compared to those of other community college leaders. The conceptual model developed in this study could also be tested in this way, with a survey instrument developed from the roles and categories in the conceptual model.

In addition to verifying my conceptual model, researchers should look at these questions left unanswered from this study. While the opportunities are open-ended, these
questions, derived from my experience with this study, seem highly relevant given my findings and conclusions.

1. How are community college CBOs perceived by their followers?
2. How do the roles of CBOs vary in different community college systems?
3. Is the relationship between the president and CBO different than the president’s relationships with other senior administrators?
4. What is the career path for the community college CBO?
5. How do college presidents with CBO experience differ from those with CAO backgrounds?

Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, these questions are provocative and continue the process of improving the understanding of the CBO position and community college administration.

**Recommendations for Practice**

What has this study contributed to community college administration? I believe that improving the understanding the CBOs’ roles and status would be valuable to community college presidents, senior administrators, and those aspiring to the CBO position. This understanding could improve communication and decision-making, as well as prevent role conflict and misunderstandings.

It would seem necessary that new presidents and academic administrators who may not have had significant professional experience with CBOs better understand the core roles of the position, as well as those that vary depending on the situation. With only three percent of community college presidents having experience as a CBO (Vaughan & Weisman, 1998), the president would be a more effective leader with an in-depth
understanding and realistic expectations of the position. Since a positive working relationship between the president and CBO is needed for the CBO to be effective, this understanding seems critically needed.

It is also important that the CAO share an understanding of the CBOs’ roles and status, since they must work closely together and each is reliant on the other to perform specific functions and roles. With 55 % of CAOs aspiring to the college presidency (Vaughan, 1989), and over 38 % of presidents having held the CAO position (Vaughan & Weisman, 1998), this group represents the future leadership of the community college. In order to be adequately prepared as presidents, they should have an adequate grasp of the functions and roles of the CBO position.

In each of these practical implications, members of other groups are learning about the CBO and his or her roles. However, the CBO should not be ignored as these implications are discussed. Lacking a recognized career path to the position, the new or inexperienced CBO could benefit from an understanding of the position’s typical roles and functions and how they are performed at other colleges, recognizing that variations will exist form college to college. Finally, for all CBOs, I would like to think that this study would initiate their interest into exploring their position and its condition through academic and scholarly activities. Part of the reason for the dearth of material on the CBO lies in the apparent indifference of those in the position towards investigating and writing on issues related to their field. While light has been sporadically shed on the position over the years, the current status of the position and constraints on college resources demonstrate a need for more involvement from the CBOs in examining the study of community college administration.
After conducting this study, two issues regarding the CBO position became glaringly apparent that I had ignored or not appreciated during my decade as a community college senior administrator. In identifying these issues, I will offer recommendations for practice beyond educating members of the college community about the CBO’s roles and status.

The first issue is the imminent retirement of many experienced CBOs in the North Carolina system. Over one third of presidents believe that a full quarter of their chief administrators will retire within the next five years (Shults, 2001). Averaging 51 years of age and over 13 years of experience, the North Carolina community college CBOs have been a stable group, yet are facing increasing turnover as they age and accrue years of service towards retirement. In other areas, such as student services or academic administration, this would not as great a concern due to the established career path towards the CSS and the CAO. The heir to the CSS position can often be found in the ranks of associate vice presidents and directors of enrollment management and counseling services. The path to the CAO is even clearer, with the linear steps of faculty, department chair, division head, and associate dean finally leading to dean or vice president.

There is no such well-defined career path to the CBO, with the position filled from the ranks of controllers, faculty, and managers from private industry. Understanding the roles and their prerequisite skills would improve the selection process for future CBOs, allowing search committees to better match candidates with the position. Lacking experience and familiarity, the new CBO faces a steep learning curve, at least three years
according to both CBOs C and F, each of whom had at least some previous familiarity with the NCCCS.

This learning curve, which I also experienced, leads to my recommendation for extensive, integrated professional development opportunities to identify potential CBOs and provide them the skills and knowledge needed to fulfill the roles identified in this study. Currently no formal training exists for CBOs in North Carolina, outside of regular ACCBO meetings. By focusing on the core roles of the position as identified in this study, potential CBOs could be prepared for the positions, creating a pool of candidates, in much the same way the NCCCS Future President’s Academy has prepared potential college presidents. This training is needed for newer, current CBOs as well, since it would shorten the learning curve and allow for more effective and consistent performance. Being in the business of workforce and professional development, the community colleges should be able and willing to prepare their own administrators and managers.

My other recommendation is more narrow and focused, dealing with the CBO’s status in the NCCCS. While titles do not affect roles or duties, they do affect perceived status in organizations (Mintzberg, 1979; Yukl, 1994). Though my findings show the CBO is often described as “the business manager,” this title inadequately describe the current position, especially if its peers are titled dean or vice president. In order for the CBO to be seen an equal peer to the other senior administrators in their college, their titles should be consistent, as President F said, “I think the title of those three chief individuals need to reflect that level of function. I do not like manager. To me, it has a negative connotation. I like for people to be leaders. The title ought to show that.”
Reflecting the value of the position in an accurate title will clarify the CBO’s status and prevent misperceptions of the position’s roles and functions. Since it is already the single most widely used title for the position, vice president of administrative services would be a logical recommendation. It is broad enough to cover the variety of functions for which the position is responsible, yet simple and straightforward enough to be clearly understood by all members of the college community. This title emphasizes the service provided by the division to the faculty, staff, and students in meeting the community college’s mission.

Closing Thoughts

CBO C said, “Our job ultimately is to do whatever is necessary to support quality instruction.” Interviewing the leaders included in this study and seeing their colleges was an educational experience in itself for me. Seeing firsthand how the colleges adapted in their own ways to meet the unique needs of their communities was stirring. It was also stirring and inspiring to learn how the CBOs go effectively about their business, usually in the background, providing students and faculty the resources and environment needed to learn and teach. I will close this study with a quote from my first interview, CBO A:

I see that my role along with everybody else in the division is supposed to be one of support. We are not a barrier or obstacle that you are suppose to have jump over in order to get something done. You know, what we are supposed to be about is helping people get things done.
References


Appendix A

Introductory Letter to CBOs

Dear ____________,

I deeply appreciate your participation in my doctoral dissertation study on the managerial roles of community college chief business officers. This study, being conducted through NC State University under Dr. George Vaughan, will examine the roles CBOs play in their college as they perform their duties, using Baker’s Managerial Role Model as the theoretical framework. Data for the study will be collected through interviews with six CBO’s and their respective presidents and chief academic officers, as well as analysis of pertinent documents such as organizational charts and job descriptions. I anticipate competing my study and defending my dissertation in June of 2002.

I have scheduled interviews with you and your president and CAO on ________. I anticipate your interview taking around 90 minutes, with the president’s and CAO’s taking 45-60 minutes each. I am enclosing an interview guide listing the basic questions I will be asking, as well as a consent form I am required to submit to the university. As I described in my initial overview, all data will be held in the strictest confidence, with pseudonyms used to ensure anonymity in the written report.

I look forward to meeting with you and visiting your campus. I will make every effort to minimize the disruption and inconvenience to you and your staff. Thank you again for your support and time, and I hope that I can soon return this favor to you and your college.

Sincerely,

Dale McInnis

Vice President of Administrative Services
South Piedmont Community College

131 Brookwood Lane
Ellerbe, NC 28338
Introductory Letter to the Presidents

Dear ____________,

I deeply appreciate the gracious participation of you and your senior administrators in my doctoral dissertation study on the managerial roles of community college chief business officers. This study, being conducted through NC State University under Dr. George Vaughan, will examine the roles CBOs play in their college as they perform their duties, using Baker’s Managerial Role Model as the theoretical framework. Data for the study will be collected through interviews with six CBO’s and their respective presidents and chief academic officers, as well as analysis of pertinent documents such as organizational charts and job descriptions. I anticipate completing my study and defending my dissertation in June of 2002.

I have scheduled interviews with you and your two vice presidents on __________. I anticipate the interview with the CBO taking around 90 minutes, and with your interview and your CAO’s taking 45-60 minutes each. I am enclosing an interview guide listing the basic questions I will be asking, as well as a consent form I am required to submit to the university. All data will be held in the strictest confidence, with pseudonyms used to ensure anonymity in the written report.

I look forward to meeting with you and visiting your campus. I will make every effort to minimize the disruption and inconvenience to you and your staff. Thank you again for your support and time, and I hope that I can soon return this favor to you and your college.

Sincerely,

Dale McInnis

Vice President of Administrative Services
South Piedmont Community College

131 Brookwood Lane
Ellerbe, NC 28338
Introductory Letter to CAOs

Dear ____________,

I deeply appreciate your participation in my doctoral dissertation study on the managerial roles of community college chief business officers. This study, being conducted through NC State University under Dr. George Vaughan, will examine the roles CBOs play in their college as they perform their duties, using Baker’s Managerial Role Model as the theoretical framework. Data for the study will be collected through interviews with six CBO’s and their respective presidents and chief academic officers, as well as analysis of pertinent documents such as organizational charts and job descriptions. I anticipate completing my study and defending my dissertation in June of 2002.

I have scheduled interviews with you and your president and CBO on ___________. I anticipate your interview to take around 45-60 minutes. I am enclosing an interview guide listing the basic questions I will be asking, as well as a consent form I am required to submit to the university. All data will be held in the strictest confidence, with pseudonyms used to ensure anonymity in the written report.

I look forward to meeting with you and visiting your campus. I will make every effort to minimize the disruption and inconvenience to your schedule. Thank you again for your support and time, and I hope that I can soon return this favor to you and your college.

Sincerely,

Dale McInnis

Vice President of Administrative Services
South Piedmont Community College

131 Brookwood Lane
Ellerbe, NC 28338
Appendix B

Initial Interview Questions for CBOs

1. What do you spend the majority of your time doing?
2. How do you collect and share information for your employees, your peers and your president?
3. Do you consider yourself an effective delegator? Why or why not?
4. Describe your decision making process. Do you involve others?
5. Are you called upon to solve problems or handle disturbances?
6. What is your favorite duty or function? Why?
7. Which roles do you least prefer having to play? Do you avoid any roles?
8. How often and in what ways do you represent the college or the president?
9. How much interaction do you have with the public or external groups?
10. Tell me about your role in planning and budgeting for the college.
11. Do you plan more for your division or for the college?
12. How do you initiate change in your college?
13. Does the president or your college peers affect the roles you play? How?
14. How have your roles changed during their tenure in your position?
15. How do you see your roles changing in the future as your college evolves and changes?
16. How do your managerial roles compare to other administrators in your college?
17. Do you think other Chief Business Officers have different managerial roles?
18. What is your most important role in the college?
19. Where do you fit in the hierarchy of the college?
Initial Interview Questions for Presidents

1. How does your CBO influence others, both on his staff and throughout the college? What methods does he use?

2. Does your CBO represent you or the college at events or meetings?

3. Describe how your CBO communicates with others. In what ways does he share or collect information? Is this limited to college staff or does he interact with external groups on behalf of the college?

4. What is your CBO’s role in planning and budgeting?

5. Is your CBO an effective delegator?

6. Would you describe your CBO as a change agent? Why or why not?

7. How does your CBO respond to problems or crises? Do others look to him for help? Does he involve others in resolving conflict?

8. Would describe your CBO as a negotiator? If so, describe how he has negotiated either internally or with external groups on behalf of the college.

9. How is your CBO perceived by others in the college? What is his place in the hierarchy of the organization?
Initial Interview Questions for CAO’s

1. How does your CBO influence others, both on his staff and throughout the college? What methods does he use?

2. Does your CBO involve himself with areas of the college beyond his division?

3. Describe how effectively your CBO communicates with others. In what ways does he share or collect information? Is this limited to college staff or does he interact with external groups on behalf of the college?

4. What is your CBO’s role in planning and budgeting?

5. Would you describe your CBO as a change agent? Why or why not?

6. How does your CBO respond to problems or crises? Do others look to him for help? Does he involve others in resolving conflict?

7. Would describe your CBO as a negotiator? If so, describe how he has negotiated either internally or with external groups on behalf of the college.

8. How does the faculty perceive your CBO?
Appendix C

CBO Background Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer the following questions as fully as possible. You may complete it as a Word document and e-mail it to me or print it and mail in the enclosed stamped envelope. Please return within 3 days of receipt.

Code number (from page one): __________

Demographic:

1. Age ______
2. Sex ______
3. Race ______

Education:

1. Highest degree earned __________________________
2. Field of Study __________________________
3. Current CPA: __________________________
4. Other Professional Certifications: __________________________

Experience:

1. Number of years in current position: ________________
2. Number of years as CBO at other colleges: ________________
3. Number of total years in community colleges: ________________
4. Most previous position other than CBO: ________________

Position:

1. Number of employees reporting directly to you: ________________

2. Check areas you are responsible for:

   1. Accounting [ ]
   2. Budget [ ]
   3. Facilities [ ]
   4. Planning [ ]
   5. Human Resources [ ]
   6. Information Systems [ ]
   7. Other (be specific) ________________
Appendix D

North Carolina State University
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Managerial Roles of North Carolina Community College Chief Business Officers

Principal Investigator: William Dale McInnis  Faculty Sponsor: Dr. George B. Vaughan

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to study the managerial roles of community college business officers (CBO). Using existing theory as the framework, interviews and document analysis will be conducted to determine perceptions of the managerial roles CBOs play in performing their duties. Interviews will also be held with the college president and chief academic officer to contrast and compare their perceptions of the CBO’s managerial roles with the CBO’s own perceptions.

INFORMATION
Upon your agreement to participate the study will be conducted in the following steps:
1. A questionnaire to gather demographic and background information will be sent to CBO’s for completion. Interviews with CBO’s, presidents and chief academic officers will be scheduled at a convenient time and location. Interview questions will be mailed prior to the interview. The interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. No names will be used during the study. Codes and pseudonyms will be used in analysis and the written report. In addition to interviews, I will be requesting documents relating to the topic, including planning calendars, organizational charts, and job descriptions.

2. The interviews are expected to require 60-90 minutes each.

RISKS
No risks are anticipated for any participant.

BENEFITS
While subjects will not be directly compensated for participation, this study is expected to expand the body of knowledge on the topic and indicate a need for additional research on the topic.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

CONTACT
If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, William D. McInnis, at 131 Brookwood Lane, Ellerbe, NC 28338, or 704-272-7635. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Matthew Zingraff, Chair of the NCSU IRB for the Use of Human Subjects in Research Committee, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-1834) or Mr. Matthew Ronning, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Research Administration, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/513-2148)

PARTICIPATION
Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed your data will be returned to you or destroyed.

CONSENT
I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Subject's signature __________________________________________ Date __________________

Investigator's signature ____________________________ Date __________________