Leadership preparation programs should “produce leaders” (Milstein, 1992, p. 10) with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to lead others to effect real change that reflects mutual purposes. Successful leadership development programs focus on the self-transformation of participants into competent, effective leaders. This approach realizes the necessity of changing both the professional culture, comprised of the language, perspectives and skills of the developing leaders, as well as their conceptual, personal and educational orientations (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004). Transformative learning requires the adoption of new frames of reference that form the foundation for intuitively and habitually evaluating problems and dilemmas and analyzing the possible effectiveness of a variety of solutions (Cranton, 2002).

Virtually every human activity is conducted within an organization, whether it is family, business, government, religion, or education. The organization’s members use frames, also called mental windows, to make sense of activities, relationships, and occurrences to establish a baseline against which members form expectations and hypotheses. Frames become navigational tools for organizational members. Like a mechanic’s tools, different perspectives are needed at different times to effectively solve various problems. Bolman and Deal (2003) describe these organizational perspectives in terms of four major frames (i.e., structural, human resources, political, symbolic). Organizations may be viewed from any one or all four of these frames at any given time. A working knowledge of these four frames allows leaders to deal with problems that arise when imbalances occur and work within these frames to create a cooperative organization.

Developing new habits of analyzing issues and choosing appropriate means of dealing with those issues can be stimulated by assignments requiring individuals to examine a critical life experience (Cranton, 2002). Such an assignment was required by students in the UK/KCTCS Community College Leadership EdD program. The written assignment required each student to conduct a personal case analysis of a single organizational event or situation she considered significant or challenging in her current practice. The real-life situation was to be one that posed an obstacle, conflict, or dilemma for that individual or the unit in which she was currently assigned. The case selected for analysis was to be something about which that individual: (a) had control or influence, (b) could have altered if he or she had been more knowledgeable or skilled, or (c) had limited control or influence but felt a need to resolve. Once the case was described (changing the names of those involved to protect identities), the author analyzed the situation in terms of all four frames of the organization (e.g., structure, people, politics, symbols). The writing assignment served three purposes: (a) an opportunity to work with and integrate the four frame model proposed by Bolman and Deal (2003) as a tool for diagnosis and action, (b) an opportunity to analyze a real-life work situation through new perspectives, and (c) an opportunity for reflection on professional practice.

This paper shares summaries of the personal case analyses by five members of the doctoral cohort. The five authors work at community and technical colleges that were transformed a decade ago through consolidation of all two-year colleges into one statewide system. Each of us was promoted into a position of leadership on our college campus, with limited or no leadership training, just prior to or

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shortly after beginning our doctoral studies. The reflective nature of the personal case analyses was a powerful tool in developing our leadership skills. Each case summary presents the scenario and our most important lesson learned through reflective writing.

**The Case of the Lenient Evaluation**

I had recently been assigned to the position of division chair and was carrying out my first series of annual evaluations for faculty and staff. The college was in the midst of litigations over a faculty member who had been denied tenure despite fairly good evaluation ratings up to that point. The college’s administration was emphasizing the need for standardized, consistent evaluations to prevent future lawsuits. With that in mind, I contemplated the evaluation rating of a faculty member who had come to the division from the technical side of campus. Mr. Jay was a mature faculty member, only a couple of years away from retirement. He had been with the technical college for nearly 30 years prior to consolidation and was a member of a tight clique that had stubbornly opposed the consolidation. Although student evaluations of his classroom instruction gave evidence to his strong abilities as a teacher, he adamantly and belligerently refused to perform any other requirements of his faculty position, including advising students and participating in college committee work. In addition, he would write defiant electronic mail messages (emails) and disrupt division meetings with long, heated narratives of complaints against the new administration. In my mind, Mr. Jay was not meeting the bare requirements of his job description and his emails and comments were bold acts of subordination. I felt that he deserved the evaluation rating of a Needs Improvement (NI), which would prevent him from receiving a raise and would result in a documented list of behaviors requiring improvement over the next year.

Mr. Jay’s evaluation, with my recommendation for an NI rating, was passed on to the college president, Dr. Capire. Much to my dismay, the college president decided to grant Mr. Jay the next highest rating, Fully Meets Job Requirements (M), allowing him to avoid any form of reprimand. I was informed by the dean of academic affairs that the president “didn’t think it was worth the battle” to support my evaluation. I was livid and perplexed.

**Structural Frame**

As division chair, it is my task to fairly and without bias evaluate each division faculty member based on the defined standards. On this basis, Mr. Jay deserved an NI rating. He was only fulfilling two of the five areas of responsibility required of teaching faculty. In addition, his emails to his division chair and the dean of academic affairs were rude and adversarial.

Dr. Capire, as president of the college, holds ultimate authority over all decisions made at the college, including the power to over-rule any evaluation rating. The *Administrative Policies and Procedures* handbook clearly states that the college president must approve NI ratings before assignment, and thus, Dr. Capire was adhering to her rights granted by this policy in changing my recommended rating to an M.

Rules enhance morale in the workplace when they ensure at least some level of predictability and help people get their work done. Although teacher morale has been found to be higher in more tightly controlled school systems (Moeller, 1968), tight control can become a negative when it creates red tape and interferes with progress (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Adhering too rigidly to policies can alienate people (Schlechty, 2005). At times, flexibility is needed to respond to unique situations, and it is best to relax
the rules for the overall good of the organization. Dr. Capire was, undoubtedly, aware of this detrimental side of adhering too tightly to the rules when she decided to grant Mr. Jay an M evaluation rating.

**Human Resource Frame**

From the human resource perspective, Mr. Jay was not having his needs met by this recently restructured organization. Maslow (1954) categorized human needs into a hierarchy of five basic groups. Of those, Mr. Jay was displaying a loss of feelings of belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. The changes catalyzed by the consolidation process created feelings of instability and anxiety for Mr. Jay.

The dean of academic affairs knew that Mr. Jay would not perform well at advising. The intricacies and complexities of the process would have overwhelmed Mr. Jay, and students would potentially have suffered. It was a savvy move to release him from this duty and give him an additional class to teach. Good teaching skills should not be taken for granted; they are a rare gift to be embraced! Mr. Jay needed to be sincerely recognized for the admirable job he did in the classroom.

Leaders should embrace the variety of ideas and practices provided by diversity within the workforce and should recognize and appreciate both the learning opportunities and the challenges provided by the expression of different perspectives (Evans, 1996; Thomas & Ely, 2007). It is important to discover the unique qualities of each person and capitalize on that strength: “By far the most effective way to invest your time is to identify exactly how each employee is different and then, as in chess, figure out how you can best incorporate these differences into your overall plan of action” (Buckingham, 2005, p. 102). As the dean of academic affairs was aware, turning innate talents into strong performance may require reassigning roles and responsibilities so the employee’s weaknesses are irrelevant (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Buckingham, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Rath, 2007).

Dr. Capire knew Mr. Jay’s personal background, which I did not. I learned that Mr. Jay had for years been manipulated by a group of bullies from the old technical college. They would encourage him to look up data and legal procedures and weigh policies passed by the newly formed community and technical college system and the state’s legislature, searching for evidence of illegal, unfair policy-making. This had been so time-consuming and stressful, that it contributed to Mr. Jay’s divorce and nervous breakdown. He had taken a year’s medical leave, a few years prior to my becoming division chair, and continued to display signs of nervousness and irrational thinking.

My suggested assignment of an NI rating, without a pay raise, would have pushed Mr. Jay into battle mode. He had the political clout to reopen the still-fresh wounds from the merging of technical colleges with community colleges, which had been quiet contentious at many sites across the state. In addition, Mr. Jay was near retirement age and would probably (and did) work only one or two more years. It really was not worth the battle.

**Lessons Learned from Reframing**

According to Bolman and Deal (2003), any “significant change in an organization triggers two conflicting responses. The first is to keep things as they were, to replay the past. The second is to ignore the loss and rush busily into the future” (p. 380). At the time this event occurred, Mr. Jay was fighting to keep things as they were before consolidation; I was eager to establish myself as a strong division chair.
striving for excellence. Dr. Capire was the leader charged with removing obstacles as she nurtured and shaped a merged community and technical college.

Mr. Jay was acting from a combination of the human resource, political, and symbolic frames. Change created emotions of anxiety, uncertainty and insecurity, which in turn, may have left him feeling incompetent and needy as well as politically disempowered. He feared that the college would lose its symbolic mission of valuing technical programs. However, I was judging Mr. Jay’s performance from the structural perspective. As a new division chair, I viewed the NI rating as a fair, but difficult, recommendation for his performance that year. I do not like conflicts, and I did not savor the idea of confronting Mr. Jay with that rating. Nonetheless, I felt it was my duty to present this recommendation and follow written policies defining the roles of each faculty member. After all, what would happen if other faculty members decided they did not want to do advising either? I perceived that either the students would never receive advising or the entire task would fall to a few people. Morale would plummet, efficiency would be lost, and chaos would follow (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Dr. Capire perceived the problem primarily from the human resource perspective. Mr. Jay possessed the political power to hamper her attempts to design a unified community and technical college symbolizing harmony, efficiency, and excellence. By approaching Mr. Jay’s unique case from a human resource perspective, she defused a potentially explosive situation. She quietly let it be seen, by those perceptive enough to see, that this new community and technical college was going to nurture all of its faculty members. She presented herself as an authentic leader, with the practical, problem-solving wisdom and empathetic sensitivities necessary to lead this new college with courage and kindness (Collins, 2001; Evans, 1996; Gardner, 1990).

I gave Mr. Jay two more evaluations, both times awarding him the “Fully Meets Job Requirements” rating. He continued to teach well, but he never advised a single student nor did he serve on any committees. He continued to write the occasional biting email, but in general he calmed down and retained very good relationships with his students. Dr. Capire had made the right decision.

The Case of Perceived Favoritism

On June 30, 2007, the vice president of student affairs retired, and I was appointed as Interim Vice President of Student Affairs in charge of a diverse department that was operating in silos. Widespread favoritism from the former autocratic Caucasian dean toward African-American employees was apparent particularly in the areas of recruitment and admissions. This area employed two African-American female admission counselors; Ann served as director of admissions and recruitment, and Susan a recruiter. Additionally, the department had one Caucasian male recruiter, one African-American female administrative assistant, one African-American female clerical support position, and two African-American female student workers. Two admission data entry personnel were Caucasian females and had previously filed three informal complaints with the vice president about reverse discrimination. No action was taken on these complaints. Upon my appointment, the male recruiter requested a transfer, the African-American clerical support person quit, and the two female data entry personnel asked for a resolution to their previous complaints.

The college president decided to move the admissions area back into the registrar and records department, thereby reducing Ann’s title to director of recruitment, but with the same pay band. This move occurred because enrollment had dropped and processes involving admissions and records were not operating effectively. From this point, my charge was to reorganize by moving offices and people as
needed to meet the goals of a cross-functional student affairs department. The change of Ann’s job title and duties was followed by movement of personnel and their offices, departments and responsibilities and consequently created a perception of Caucasian favoritism by the African-American employees. However, I viewed the changes as creating a more efficient and fairer assignment of duties. I should have considered the empowerment given the African-American employees by the former vice president (e.g., Ann’s previous title) and how something as simple as a decrease in office size had a deeper meaning for the African-American employee than it did for me. It never occurred to me to view frames and their context in the reorganization of the student affairs department.

Following is further analysis of this case as viewed through the political and symbolic frames described by Bolman and Deal (2003). Applying the frames helped me better understand and appreciate what happened within my organization.

**Political Frame**

Leaders who rely on coercive power and authority have subordinates rather than followers (Gardner, 1990). Power is defined as “the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things they would not otherwise do” (Pfeffer, 1992, p.30). The vice president had power by authority, but lacked the political skills necessary to adequately move the department forward. She formed an alliance with the African-American employees and rewarded them with perks such as time off, extended lunch periods, merit bonuses, and promotions to higher pay bands. In return, they falsely reported enrollment numbers that made the vice president appear very successful in her job performance. This frame regards organizations as political arenas with a variety of interests operating under specific core assumptions.

Two assumptions recognized in this case are the diversity among the members of the recruitment and admissions department and the differences in the members’ beliefs and values. According to the political frame, these differences become more visible with a diverse group as opposed to a group that is more homogeneous and thus potentially easier to manage. However, the vice president did not embrace those differences, and instead, used them for her self-interest. Tensions due to differences in race and cultural beliefs were present. While she over controlled one group, the other group was isolated.

People admire leaders who are honest, fair, and have the ability to recognize and manage cultural differences against a variety of others (Evans, 19967). The vice president failed to manage diversity because her agenda was personal and did not reflect a commitment to the organization or the staff she supervised. The absence of collaboration, open communication, and a shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) lead to a dysfunctional unit. Because the vice president lacked integrity and savvy, two components of authentic leadership, she lacked the ability to inspire trust and confidence (Evans, 1996). Because she did not have the skills to promote a positive culture, she operated in a commanding and controlling manner. Political dynamics are inevitable in any organization. Effective leaders will use their power as an asset to inspire the best in their staff instead of the worst.

**Symbolic Frame**

The symbolic frame can be explained by observing the basic assumptions around which an organizational culture is built (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Culture is learned and passed on in an organization, and a leader can create, manage or destroy culture (Schein, 1996). To reshape or reinforce
culture, a leader will examine the existing one, strengthen the components that are beneficial, and reshape it into a different or new culture as necessary (Deal & Peterson, 2007).

Reorganization and assignment of different duties had a symbolic meaning for the African-American employees. Ann’s title change was viewed as a demotion even though her pay remained the same. Susan was moved to a smaller office so the data entry personnel would be near other data entry employees – a situation that she viewed as status lowering since the employee who moved to her former larger office was Caucasian. I realize now the reason for the moves should have been discussed openly, something that I truly regret not doing. The office change had cultural significance for Susan because the individual assigned to her former office was a Caucasian male who was often referred to as the recruitment “master” by the two African American women in the office. This type of behavior emphasized the tension, but it was treated as a nondiscussable (Barth, 2004), further confounding the issue. I now realize that I perpetuated the problem by not targeting the real issue of underperformance of a unit within the department. According to Schein (1996), culture is a learned product evolving from a group with a significant history. I am positive that African-American culture and history were symbolic for these employees. In order to bring the cultural beliefs of both parties together and promote positive change for the organization, understanding these differences is paramount to creating successful change. As a leader, I should be cognizant and sensitive to history and culture and articulate a clear vision so that diversity is utilized to increase effectiveness, not hinder it.

Lessons Learned from Reframing

The political frame is closely associated with the events that took place during this time. The former vice president was authoritative and used her power to serve her interests. Specific alliances were formed while others were treated unfairly. Conflict occurred within the department from lack of a clear division of duties. When tensions increased, race and cultural differences were blamed. Instead of empowering a diverse group of employees, the vice president created barriers. She did not represent any of the characteristics of an exemplary leader, and she did not use her power wisely. Power in this instance was destructive, not constructive (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The frame analysis has helped me view this case from several perspectives, allowing me to recognize issues that I did not realize were at work behind the scenes at the time. I do not like conflict, but have learned it can move organizations forward when used correctly. Studying and analyzing the political frame and its relationship to this case allowed me to understand how to better use conflict constructively. As a leader, I expect problems and issues to arise. Utilizing the four frame analysis will help me choose the frame that will be the most helpful with future situations.

The Case of the Hidden Warrior

Several years ago, my college began to develop its Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as a part of the scheduled Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Reaffirmation of Accreditation. The QEP Development Team membership was representative of the college community, and the team provided excellent leadership that took the college through a QEP development process that was inclusive. This work was carried out over the course of a full year, in preparation for the SACS team visit. I was proud of my colleagues’ work on this project. Instead of viewing the process as one more hoop through which to jump in order to appease SACS, the team accepted the task as an opportunity to do something truly meaningful for our students, developing two new initiatives as a result.
Initiative two, the focus of this case study summary, addressed the creation of a new center that would focus on developmental students. This would be accomplished through targeted student orientation programs, an advising system for first-year developmental students, career exploration, and intense interventions. The crucial first step in implementing initiative two was the in-house search for a QEP director who would coordinate the new center. The timeline and budget restrictions required that the position be filled quickly from within the college. In addition, the presence of a large, experienced, tenured pool of potential applicants within the college further indicated this was an appropriate reallocation of human resources. However, the problem occurred at this stage in the process.

An unsuitable individual, Paul Boyd, applied for the position, and many faculty members were concerned that he might be successful in his application. In fact, the hiring of the wrong person for the job would have been viewed as a tragic waste of a year’s worth of effort and valuable planning. Therefore, certain faculty quietly began to take steps to ensure that an appropriate leader would be selected for the position. It is only in hindsight and as a result of reading *Reframing Organizations* (Bolman & Deal, 2003) that I have come to appreciate the methods faculty used within the context of the political and the symbolic frames.

**Political Frame**

Paul Boyd, coordinator for the Tutoring Center, had been with the college for several years. His current job title and experience suggested that he was a viable candidate for the QEP director position. However, many faculty became concerned that he would not be, and further consideration of his past performance suggested he did the minimum to meet basic job requirements and nothing more. Boyd had been shuffled among various positions at the college, and many faculty thus did not perceive him as a hardworking, true advocate for students. In addition, hiring the wrong person for the job would negatively impact the overall participation and buy-in to the new QEP approach. The QEP director’s position would require “individual commitment and motivation” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 310) in order to be successful. It became clear to me that Boyd was not among “the right people” (p. 136) for the position.

Mary Craft, in contrast to Boyd, was suitable but initially reluctant to apply for the position. She was a dedicated teacher experienced in working with developmental students, and she was a former coordinator of the Tutoring Center. Under her direction, the center hummed with student activity. It was a warm place where students enjoyed working and were comfortable asking for assistance. Craft had demonstrated her ability to create the safe, student-focused center envisioned by the QEP team.

Beatrix Heelis was a tenured faculty member with many years experience working with the college’s developmental students. She was a natural at what she does, and students were drawn to her. She was well respected by her colleagues and recognized as an exceptional teacher, advisor, mentor, and student advocate. She was a team player who gave her best to new college initiatives, and served as a role model because she exemplified the best of the human resource and symbolic elements in her dealings with students. What is interesting about Heelis, this “quiet, humble... gracious... self-effacing” (Collins, 2001, p. 37) colleague, was her emergence as the leader of the faculty initiative to hire Craft as QEP director instead of Boyd. She worked unobtrusively behind the scenes but with a will to succeed. I understand now that I had always viewed this individual primarily through a human resource frame. Reflecting upon this case allowed me to view this seemingly gentle individual in a new way—the political frame—as her hidden warrior emerged when needed.
The key to successfully resolving the hiring problem was Heelis’ approach that allowed faculty to work within the process but also to subvert it. The solution to the problem was surprisingly simple. Heelis actively talked with and encouraged faculty, including Craft, to consider applying for the director’s position. Several faculty members allowed themselves to be nominated by Heelis even though they were not interested in holding the position. Ultimately, Heelis’ machinations worked, and Boyd withdrew his name in the face of stiff competition. On the final day to add or remove a name from the list, other colleagues withdrew their names, leaving only Craft on the list. Craft was immediately offered the position, which she accepted. While there were clear winners in this case, the technique Heelis used allowed Boyd to save face by voluntarily removing his name before the search committee’s elimination process began. This also speaks to the importance of trust (Evans, 1996) on the part of the faculty members willing to follow Heelis’ lead. Of course, some may describe her approach as Machiavellian. She played a political game and won, but the real winners in this situation were our students.

I admire what Heelis accomplished, but I was also surprised at her ability to make this power play because the lens through which I was primarily and unknowingly viewing her, the symbolic frame, was limiting my perspective. Bolman and Deal (2003) discuss various sources of power for the leader. It is significant to note that a major source of Heelis’ power came from her colleague’s view of her -- through the symbolic lens. Their recognition and admiration of her strengths in these areas are what gave her the political power to achieve her goal.

Symbolic Frame

Symbolic leaders are those who “demonstrate their commitment and courage by plunging into the fray” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 361). In other words, they lead by example, and Heelis exemplifies this quality through her many years of service to students. Her efforts to address student needs frequently extend beyond the classroom; however, she never takes credit for her success (Collins, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1992). Instead, she is a role model in her consistent caring and encouragement of students and her willingness to guide and empower other classroom teachers to assist students. As a result, she sees her “successes ... through other people” (Sergiovanni, p. 75).

In many ways, Heelis is the college’s visionary and storyteller through the “persuasive and hopeful image of the future” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 361) she articulates so well (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). She always has stories to share with her students and her colleagues. Many are wonderfully funny and irreverent, and some are heartrending, but all capture various aspects of human nature, the good and the bad. Her ability to share stories draws an audience and unites people. As in the tradition of bards of the past, while providing entertainment, her stories also serve to preserve the history and teach the values of a culture. Because leaders cannot “impose significance,” those that lead must allow others to “create it together” and allow significance to emerge “from working with others, doing something worth doing, making the world better” (Bolman & Deal, 2001, p. 200). The storytelling ritual is an important symbol that allows us to work together and learn together about organizational success stories. These are valued by faculty and encourage others to continue their efforts in order to have their own student success stories to share.

Lessons Learned from Reframing

As a classroom instructor, Heelis’ position is typically not regarded as a leadership role. Nonetheless, she assumed that role in response to a need. “Leaders make things happen, but things also make leaders happen” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 338). Like exemplary leaders who are hard to find because they
prefer to work quietly behind the scenes (Collins, 2001), Heelis’ various leadership qualities might have gone unnoticed. When a situation arose that needed her talents and skills, Heelis stepped forward to lead her colleagues in coping with the problem. Faculty could have remained apathetic to the problem, assuming that nothing could be done. If no one else had applied for the position, Boyd would have become the director of a critically important unit, perhaps doing incredible damage to the college. At best, many who may have cared about the position probably would not have done anything more than complain. Certainly, the search committee could have recommended reopening the search, but this probably would not have been productive given that it was internal. Instead, Heelis’ technique recommends the value of a quiet and steadfast action, rather than grumbling and ineffective complaints.

I made an error in limiting my view of Heelis to the symbolic frame. This kept me from recognizing her potential in other areas, a mistake that I will attempt to avoid in the future.

**The Case of the Sour Chef**

Two years into the consolidation of a community college and technical college, it was decided to move the Culinary Arts Department (CA) to the Business and Computer Related Technologies Division (BCRT). Over the years, CA had been a somewhat successful program, but it lacked the faculty and facilities to truly be referred to as a culinary arts program. For these reasons the program could not seek accreditation from the American Culinary Federation. The program was more of a cafeteria management and cooking school. Equipment was outdated and students looked unprofessional. In the spring of 2004, an Associate in Applied Science degree in Culinary Arts was implemented.

The vision of the new college president was for CA to receive American Culinary Federation accreditation and become a top culinary arts program in the state. The college foundation and several community donors provided significant funding to the CA program. In order to move the program to the next level, it was decided to hire someone with a culinary degree to fill a vacant program coordinator position. During the summer of 2004, the college hired Chef Brad. Chef Brad came from a private culinary institution with experience in running a café and catering major events as well as being a master chef. The college president and academic dean were very instrumental in hiring Chef Brad.

**Political Frame**

Shortly after his arrival, Chef Brad met with the college president and academic dean to discuss their vision of where the CA program needed to go and to offer suggestions on program improvements. No one can say for certain what was discussed in this meeting or what specific directions were given to Chef Brad because no documentation was created for future reference. However, it appeared that Chef Brad had been given approval to do whatever he wanted and funding was not an issue given the support of various donors and the college foundation.

Given his experience and credentials, everyone expected Chef Brad to be professional in and out of the classroom, to establish partnerships with those who had so generously given monetary donations to move the program forward, and to establish good working relationships with other college personnel. Chef Brad did establish partnerships, but with a group of disgruntled former technical college faculty who fed him incorrect information and encouraged him in many negative practices. Chef Brad openly criticized the other CA faculty and college administration in front of students. During his first performance review and prior to moving CA to the BCRT division, Chef Brad was given the top rating
based upon the implementation of the Associate of Applied Science degree and the good publicity the CA program had received.

During his second year at the College, Chef Brad’s behavior did not change. He continued to follow his own rules which resulted in student and faculty complaints and poorly organized catering events. CA funding came from three different sources with many purchases charged to a credit card without following proper procedures. Chef Brad was constantly over budget and asking for additional funds. Because his division chair retired and CA was moved to a new division, Chef Brad’s second evaluation was done by the associate academic dean. While she noted areas of improvement, Chef Brad again received the top rating. The associate dean did consult with me prior to completing his evaluation and asked that I address certain items when he created his next performance goals.

Less than two weeks after his second review, CA was officially moved to the BCRT division, and I was bombarded with student complaints. Students complained about Chef Brad’s remarks, attitude, and favoritism to other students. The business dean wanted to know how I would deal with the budget and credit card issues. Chef Brad served on the CA system curriculum committee and fellow committee members were complaining about his arrogance and unwillingness to be a team player. A critical event soon occurred. Chef Brad held a wine tasting in the private dining room on campus and instructed all students to participate. According to the students, when one student mentioned the legal drinking age, Chef Brad told them wine tasting was a requirement of the course, so they would fail if they did not participate. The day after the wine tasting my phone rang nonstop with both students and parents calling to inform me of what had happened. According to college policy, alcohol is not allowed on campus except for cooking purposes in a CA program, and it is definitely not to be consumed by minors or anyone else. I knew we had to deal with this issue. I believed Chef Brad needed to be reprimanded and given a written warning. However, the academic dean did not agree. She wanted me to speak with Chef Brad about the importance of following policy, but she did not want the president to find out what had happened. I followed her instructions and no official reprimand was recorded with the Human Resource Department.

Not receiving an official written reprimand simply gave Chef Brad the green light to do whatever he wanted. From that point on, whenever I tried to address an issue, my comments went unheeded. By late fall 2006, the college had restructured and a new academic dean was appointed. Performance reviews for the 2006-2007 academic year would be completed by the new academic dean and me. As a result, Chef Brad had not been reviewed by the same person for the past three years. Once again, Chef Brad had applied for the top rating. I did not support this rating and neither did the new academic dean. Given the lack of consistency in reviewers of his performance, Chef Brad was given the top rating again, but both the new academic dean and I noted areas of improvement for the upcoming year. We carefully documented specific areas of improvement and outlined an improvement plan.

Things continued to get worse. Chef Brad was aware of the college’s and community’s focus on the CA program and believed that with his impressive credentials and experience, he was in a golden position. Therefore, he continued to violate credit card policies, spoke in a derogatory manner about other CA faculty in front of students, and threatened to remove students from the program for questioning his direction of projects. Chef Brad stopped attending division and faculty meetings, sent harassing emails, and even bragged that nothing would be done to him. He had been awarded the top evaluation rating every year he had been at the college, he had complete control over the CA budget, and a blind eye had been turned from his failure to comply with campus policies. His indiscretions had been kept from the president. All these actions reinforced his arrogance and his feelings of power.
Structural Frame

When someone mentions the words structure and organization together, the first thing that pops into my mind is an organizational chart depicting the top-down flow and lateral coordination of tasks. The organizational restructuring of the college during the critical period of consolidation sent mixed messages to those involved in this case.

People in positions of authority did not use their power to enforce policies and procedures. Chef Brad should have been reprimanded immediately when overspending issues came to light. His abusive behaviors towards students and other faculty should have been addressed immediately. He should have been officially reprimanded and forced to apologize following the wine tasting incident. He should not have been awarded for his unprofessional behavior by receiving the top evaluation rating. As a leader, I should have recognized that many of the problems that arose were a result of the college sending conflicting messages to Chef Brad. While Chef Brad did not have power over anyone (Sergiovanni, 1992), I did possess this power and should have used and managed it much better than I did. I should have worked with Chef Brad to help him lead the CA area by following organizational procedures and goals instead of allowing him free reign to follow his personal choices (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Lessons Learned from Reframing

Because of prior leadership training and experiences, I applied the wrong frames when dealing with this situation. I wanted everyone to get along, creating an unstoppable team. Applying the human resource frame to other program coordinators worked and I just expected this leadership approach to work for Chef Brad. Unlike other program coordinators in my division, however, Chef Brad possessed a strong-will and arrogance that necessitated the use of strong authoritative action. Once I recognized that the human resource frame would not work, I should have switched to the structural frame in efforts to address and correct his performance issues. As a leader, I should have insisted that the president be told of the wine tasting and asked for the written warning. Not wanting to harm the relationship I had with the academic dean or the president, I elected to not pursue any type of reprimand. A leader must be willing to sacrifice these relationships for the good of the organization or team (Quinn, 1996). I did not make that sacrifice, but I have learned my lesson and will do so in the future.

The Case of the New Division Chair

I was serving as the acting dean of academic affairs, appointed to the position by our newly appointed acting president, Dr. Patrick Staple. It was time to conduct a search for a new chairperson for a division in the academic affairs unit. This search yielded two candidates, Thomas Wiles and Jonathan Planter. They were sent forward by the search committee which was comprised of members of the division not interested in serving as division chair. Both individuals had favorable recommendations. The chair of the search committee, Lawrence Holiday shared with Dr. Staple and me that the division could work with either candidate. Jonathan Planter was chosen to serve simply because his schedule was more flexible and would allow him to step into the position with less disruption. He served a year of his three-year term and decided that he wanted to return to the classroom (i.e., he planned to resign as division chair). The phone call was made just as the semester was ending and faculty members were leaving for the summer. In an effort to get faculty input, I sent electronic mail (email) messages to all the faculty members in that division to inform them of the situation and tried to ascertain interest in the position. This informal search yielded three names; I contacted the three faculty members and discovered that only one was interested in the position, Thomas Wiles. I shared this information with Dr. Staple who
I received an email message from an upset Lawrence Holiday stating that he vehemently opposed the appointment of Thomas Wiles. He asked why the new administration denied faculty the opportunity to provide input into this decision. He continued to say that faculty were left out of the process and were not given an opportunity to voice their thoughts because administration did not follow policy. Lawrence Holiday went on to say that administration had silenced faculty and appointed Thomas Wiles because we wanted him in the position in an effort to carry out our plans. Shortly thereafter, I began receiving emails from various members of the division stating the same thing, using the same words as Lawrence Holiday had. The division had clearly built a coalition, and no one was accepting Thomas Wiles leadership. Just when I thought things could not get worse, I received an email from Judy Hinkle, a senior faculty member at our largest extended campus site stating that faculty from that site felt they were not well represented, and thus wanted the division chair to be selected from their campus. We now had a divide over who should lead as division chair and a call to start the process over.

The semester was about to begin. All faculty were back on campus, and thus, a division meeting was scheduled in an effort to listen to faculty concerns in an open forum and try to determine a solution. I had communicated with various members individually via electronic mail, telephone calls and face-to-face meetings, in an effort to apologize and explain my motives. My efforts were to no avail. I decided to listen, truly listen to what each faculty member had to say. This time, I heard not only what the problem was, but why it was a problem.

I met with Thomas Wiles separately to get his thoughts about this situation. He had been asked not to attend the division meeting primarily because I wanted the others to be able to speak freely. Thomas shared that he wanted the division chair position because he felt that he could do the job well and make an impact. He had very definite ideas about practices that needed to be explored in order to make improvements. For example, he wanted the opportunity to visit each of his faculty member’s classrooms and observe. I soon learned that this was one of the reasons why faculty members were upset. It was perceived that this was an action that administration wanted, and thus the reason behind Thomas Wiles’ appointment. I became concerned that the controversy would jeopardize Thomas’ ability to lead, should his appointment stand. He was disappointed that there was so much controversy, but was not worried about being stifled. He stated that if given the chance, he would show his colleagues the type of leader he is; if they decided that they wanted someone else to lead, he would support that decision. His behavior and attitude during this whole ordeal taught me a great deal. I allowed myself to become frustrated and upset by the behavior of others. I began to take it personally. The harder I worked to resolve the matter, the greater the conflict seemed to escalate. It was not personal. I simply needed to step back and look at it through a different lens as suggested by Bolman and Deal (2001).

Dr. Staple met with the division members and proposed a solution that temporarily satisfied everyone. His appointment of Thomas Wiles as division chair would remain for one year. At the end of that year, we would follow not only policy, but common practice in selecting a new division chair.
Human Resources Frame

The human resources frame views an organization like an extended family, striving to bring out individual strengths and meet personal needs in order to develop a healthy, productive organization. This perspective is built on the assumption that organizations need ideas, energy and talent from its employees who, in turn, receive compensation, opportunities and fulfilling careers. Organizations exist to meet human needs, and as long as both parties have their needs met, both benefit (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Dr. Staple and I were viewing the appointment of Thomas Wiles as division chair as the perfect solution to this vacancy. The division members had accepted him as a viable candidate the previous year. He demonstrated the desire, ability, and resolve to be an insightful leader able to effect positive change.

Symbolic Frame

The symbolic frame views an organization as a culture with rituals, ceremonies, and myths through which an emotional aura or mystic is created that inspires cooperation of the members. The symbolic perspective holds that the most important thing is not what happens, but what it means. Symbols create predictability, direction and serve as foundations of hope and faith. Culture is both a product and a process, and the cohesive force that pulls the organization together. Symbols define the organization’s values, mission, and identity, as well as presenting an image of the future of that organization (Barth, 2004; Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Traditionally, the faculty played a large role in the process of selecting a division chair. In this case, policy was followed but practice was not. Symbolically speaking, practice is just as important as policy. The division is made up of several veteran faculty who believe that a part of their responsibility is to fight vigilantly for faculty freedom and independence. Thus, they perceived the appointment of Thomas Wiles as a ploy to circumvent the power of the faculty.

Lessons Learned from Reframing

Reviewing this case through two of the organizational frames proved helpful in revealing information that enhanced my understanding of the situation. I now realize that a great deal of emotion was evoked on both sides and that eventually a compromise was made once time was allocated for tempers to cool and wounds to heal. Much of that conflict could have been averted if the college president and I had understood the symbolic and political undercurrents that our hasty decision would have created.

Implications for Future Practice

It is necessary for aspiring and novice educational leaders to study, understand and consider how best to grapple with diverse challenges they will inevitably encounter. Hopefully, this level of preparation will enable the leader to adapt to and learn from each challenge, much like Goho and Webb’s (2003) metaphor of the clay pot: “Master potters begin with a preconceived strategy but respond to changes in their ideas as the pot unfolds and takes shape. The act of working itself increases the knowledge necessary for the next step” (p. 378). The image is applicable to every aspect of community college leadership.
Successful leaders must be able to view situations through a variety of frames, shifting as needed to respond to each new situation. Given the multiple missions of the community college (Dougherty, 2001), community college leaders need to be trained to use collaborative leadership styles (Romero, 2004). When working collaboratively, it is especially important to possess the knowledge and skills to view the actions and responses of others from multiple perspectives.

The case study reflections exemplify our common experiences of having had blinders removed. As a result of our doctoral studies (e.g. pilot studies, readings, shared experiences), each of us has become more aware and appreciative of the subtle impact individuals have on an organization. New leaders tend to function with the naive assumption that others approach situations from a similar frame, without questioning motives or looking for other agendas. Armed with the ability to reframe situations, it is fascinating to sit in a meeting and watch an event unfold while recognizing the underlying agenda, personality or leadership style of others. Readings and reflective writings about our experiences have greatly increased our level of awareness. The practical application of our course work, through activities such as analyzing the case studies through the four common organizational frameworks (Bolman & Deal, 2003) have facilitated this enhanced awareness. However, this is an area that requires constant nurturing for continued additional growth because the development of good leaders requires good lifelong learning habits (Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990). One of these habits, professional reflection, is a simple, yet powerful process in which leaders should regularly engage for renewed insights into past and current experiences. Reflective thinking is the basis for transformative learning, which requires the adoption of new frames of reference that become a habitual and intuitive perspective for analyzing dilemmas, developing alternative solutions, and choosing the best option.

This case study assignment highlighted the value of reflective thinking and its role in transforming the leadership skills of its participants. There are always choices. By examining a situation through each of the four frames, it is possible to recognize these choices and foresee potential outcomes. Likewise, it is important to recognize the perspective of other people involved in a situation. We cannot control the actions of other people; we can only control our own actions. Yet our actions may steer the direction of outcomes. As new leaders looking forward to continuing our careers in community colleges, we are grateful for this inventory of new tools. Using these principles to analyze dilemmas through each of the four frames supports our leadership roles as we select actions that will lead to the greatest successes.

References


