

Spring 6-10-2016

# Harnessing Emotions: The Critical Role of Emotional Intelligence for Community College Leaders

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Running Head: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERS

Harnessing Emotions: The Critical Role of Emotional Intelligence for  
Community College Leaders

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the  
Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership

University of Washington Tacoma

2016

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree: University of Washington Tacoma Education Program

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### **Abstract**

More than ten million students are enrolled each year in public two-year colleges in the United States. Community colleges are faced with unprecedented accountability for student progression and completion. In Washington State, the work of academic and student services deans is critical to the success of public two-year colleges. Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model of emotional intelligence and the related work of Goleman (1998), and Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) suggest that the development of emotional intelligence has the potential to positively impact the effectiveness of these community college leaders. This study asks broadly, what are the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of Washington State community college deans about emotional intelligence? Forty-five percent (45%) of Washington State academic and student services deans participated in this study. Both quantitative and qualitative survey approaches were used to investigate frequency and level of importance placed on four domains of emotional intelligence: perceiving, facilitating, understanding, and managing emotions. Results indicate that deans place significant importance on each of the four ability domains, but the importance they place on each domain is not parallel to the frequency with which they demonstrate behaviors in each domain. Implications for future research and practice, as well as potential limitations, are discussed.



## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Over ten million students are enrolled each year in public, two-year colleges in the United States (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013). These colleges, often referred to as community colleges, serve as open access institutions where students of all ages and backgrounds have the opportunity to enroll in higher education. The success of community college students in their academic endeavors has significant implications for the United States economy; in 2012, former community college students contributed an estimated \$806.4 billion in added income to the national economy (EMSI, 2014). The completion of an associate degree leads to an average annual income increase of 31.2% when compared to having earned only a high school diploma (Zaback, Carlson, & Crellin, 2012). When a bachelor's degree is earned, annual income increases by 71.2% (Zaback et al., 2012).

Students who hold at least an associate degree fare better during economic downturns and are less likely to rely on community supports. Data from the most recent United States' recession that began in 2007 indicated that people with less than an associate degree lost 5.6 million jobs during the recession and that their employment numbers did not rebound during the economic recovery (Carnevale, Jayasundera, & Cheah, 2012). In contrast, those who held an associate degree lost 1.75 million jobs during the recession and regained 1.6 million jobs during the recovery. Those with bachelor's degrees fared even better, gaining 187,000 jobs during the recession and an additional 2 million during the recovery (Carnevale et al., 2012). This means that although the overall net change in jobs from December 2007 through February 2012 was negative 3%, losses were not evenly distributed across educational levels. Individuals with less

than an associate degree lost 10%, while those with an associate degree rebounded to even (0% net change) and those with a bachelor's degree saw a net increase of 5% in employment.

The level of economic stability related to degree attainment underscores the need to provide educational opportunities for all students. For many students, especially first generation students and students of color, community colleges may be their first opportunity toward the completion of a degree and a future of economic prosperity.

Building and leading community colleges that support the success of these students and future economic contributors is largely the work of academic and student services deans. Deans generally report directly to vice presidents of institutions and oversee significant operational units. Although college presidents and vice presidents set the vision of the institution, deans are responsible for leading faculty and staff on a day-to-day basis in operationalizing that institutional vision (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006). Daily contact with program managers, front line staff, and their vice presidents, makes the dean's role a focal point within the organizational structure.

Deans' roles are comprehensive; deans lead hiring committees, supervise faculty and staff, and implement initiatives that impact student success. Deans' responsibilities include complex analyses of data and trends in order to lead efforts surrounding student retention, progression, and completion. With the ultimate goal of assisting students to earn a credential, transfer to four-year degree program, or gain successful employment, deans must continually scan the environment for potential hurdles and be cognizant of how campus climate may impact these goals. Deans are the primary leaders charged with organizing and engaging staff in institutional change. In the current climate of higher education, where change is constant and

rapid, it is critical that leaders who serve as deans are able to build positive, trusting relationships with faculty, staff, and students as they strive to fulfill the mission of the organization.

When Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) studied institutional practices at colleges with above average rates of student retention and completion, they identified a number of characteristics that institutional leaders, including deans, had in common. Most significantly, leaders at these successful colleges embraced an improvement-oriented ethos, built meaningful, productive relationships across disciplines, cultivated an environment that encouraged the expression of a variety of diverse perspectives, and framed institutional challenges as opportunities (Kuh et al., 2005). Each of these characteristics is indicative of leaders who demonstrate high levels of emotional intelligence.

According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), "Emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (p. 22). This means that individuals with high levels of emotional intelligence understand how their emotions impact their actions as well as reactions in both themselves and others. They understand how others are influenced and affected both positively and negatively by interactions, and they know how to manage their own emotions and influence the emotions of others. Emotional intelligence has become a significant indicator in identifying potentially effective leaders and an important consideration in developing effective leadership skills (Palmer, Walls, Burgess, & Stough, 2001).

This study sought to advance the understanding of the relation between the emotional intelligence of community college deans and their effectiveness as institutional leaders. The authors examined:

1. the extent to which each domain of emotional intelligence is perceived to be an important leadership factor by deans;
2. differences, if any, that exist between academic deans and student services deans in the extent to which they perceive each domain of emotional intelligence to be an important leadership factor;
3. the frequency with which academic deans and student services deans demonstrate each domain of emotional intelligence; and
4. differences, if any, that exist between academic deans and student services deans in the frequency with which they demonstrate each domain of emotional intelligence.

In their examination, the authors sought to identify potential implications for the selection, evaluation, and professional development of community college leaders.

### **Operational Definitions**

#### **Key Terms**

- *Community College*: A two-year, public, state-supported college that offers associate degrees and/or applied degree programs.
- *Dean*: An administrator who holds authority over a specific operational unit within a college or university. For the purposes of this study, the authors focused only on *academic deans* (deans who are responsible for overseeing curricular and instructional programming within an academic division or department); and *student services deans* (deans who hold authority over co-curricular and/or non-academic units of an institution related to student support [e.g., advising, financial aid, student life]).
- *Emotional Intelligence (EI)*: the ability to perceive, facilitate, understand and manage emotions.

- *Effectiveness*: the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Community colleges are faced with unprecedented accountability for student progression and completion, making effective leadership critical (Moltz, 2009; Ewell, 2011). Educational funding models are shifting to include more performance measures as both public scrutiny of community college completion statistics and demands for reform increase (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015). The financial investment that institutions make in hiring and training leaders, including deans, is substantial; and the selection and training of leaders with the highest potential for success provides a strategic advantage in creating successful institutions (Bliss, 2004). However, many colleges have no formal systems to identify and develop new leaders, even in the face of a projected increase in retirements of college personnel (Land, 2003; Spendlove, 2007; Heuer, 2003).

Community college deans serve as leaders with day-to-day operational responsibilities and they are at the forefront of many important decisions. It is estimated that the total cost for an institution to recruit, hire, and train a new administrator, such as a dean, averages as much as 200% of the individual's annual salary when such factors as recruitment, screening, training, lost productivity costs during the vacancy, and onboarding time are taken into account (Bliss, 2004). For example, a departing dean who earns an annual salary of \$90,000 may cost the institution upwards of \$150,000 to replace. The financial impact of leader turnover is significant; however, arguably more important are the negative effects that changes in leadership may have on the broader institution's morale and productivity.

Given the increased demands placed on community colleges for accountability and measurable outcomes, the dean's role, as it impacts institutional morale and productivity, is

important (Campbell, 2006). The primary role of a dean is to lead the effective education and preparation of students. This occurs through the development and implementation of policies and procedures, the forging of partnerships, and especially through leading instruction and student services (Gaither, 2002). The acquisition of the required skills and knowledge to effectively transition into the dean's role can take months, if not years, for seasoned higher education professionals (Campbell, 2006). A community college's success is dependent on competent and collaborative leaders who can perform in this role. When leaders are unable to address personal behaviors of employees that impede and interrupt effective practice and outcomes, the institution's mission is negatively impacted.

According to Bar-On (2010), emotional intelligence supports leaders not only to *survive* the challenges that institutions face, but also to *thrive*. The concept of thriving in one's environment, over merely surviving, dates to Darwin's work related to “emotional expression and survival and adaption” (Bar-On, 2010, p.54). Because of the critical role that deans play in leading and growing community colleges and the significant financial investment entailed, it is essential for institutions to identify, select, and develop deans who are able to be effective leaders. One variable that has the potential to positively influence the selection and development of effective leaders is emotional intelligence.

### **Study Rationale**

Within the workplace, the ability to understand the powerful role emotion plays in the quality of individual performance and relationships sets apart the most effective leaders from the rest (Golman, Boyatiz, & McKee, 2002). The positive impact of emotional intelligence on occupational performance has proven significant in several related fields including business and industry, K-12 education, healthcare, and the military (Bar-On, 2010). Almost any organization,

including community colleges, can benefit from cultivating leaders who understand the significance of emotions and who inspire their followers to flourish (Golman et al., 2002).

The specific role of a community college academic or student services dean brings with it many challenges, and requires a complex skillset to manage and direct a workforce of people who exhibit myriad skills, abilities, emotions, and ideas. Deans serve as daily decision makers within institutions and are responsible for the delivery of critical and often emotionally charged communications. Deans frequently serve as primary communicators on issues of policy, curriculum, personnel, and student discipline; all topics that can elicit strong and diverse opinions and emotions. Further, in a constantly evolving and learning-centered institution, interactions between academic and student services deans, faculty, staff, and students often involve topics that are high-stakes.

Faculty, staff, and students scrutinize deans' decisions and interactions daily through multiple communication media. Therefore, it is essential that deans model effective, emotionally intelligent communications and behaviors that lead others, often those on the front lines of service, to positive outcomes. Church (2009) shares that "having conversations that are potentially emotionally charged that lead to successful outcomes requires a skill set embedded in the emotional domain" (p. 14). That is to say, leaders who are able to successfully manage the emotional components of difficult conversations are more likely to arrive at positive solutions.

It is therefore critical for leaders, particularly deans who interact with faculty, staff, and students on a daily basis, to manage, interpret, and understand their own emotional influences in a positive, meaningful manner. Deans often hold a special weight in key decisions affecting their constituents. As such, these leaders "manage meaning for a group, offering a way to interpret or

make sense of, and to react emotionally to, a given situation” (Golman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002, p xii).

### **Theoretical Foundation of the Study**

Although a number of historical sources reference elements of emotional competence (Gardner, 1983; Payne, 1985), Salovey and Mayer first established the term *emotional intelligence* in 1990. Initially the term was described as the pairing of two mental processes: thinking and feeling. As the construct developed, Mayer and Salovey (1997) further defined emotional intelligence as the capacity to acknowledge and reason about emotions. That is, the ability of an individual to reflectively regulate emotions, promote emotional and intellectual growth, accurately perceive emotions, access and generate emotions, and to understand emotions and emotional knowledge through interpretation. As the construct continued to develop, the role that emotions played in enhancing thinking began to be included in the definition of emotional intelligence as well (Salovey, Caruso, & Mayer, 2004).

Since Salovey and Mayer’s (1990) initial conceptualization of the theory, the emotional intelligence field, both within popular culture and the scientific community, has become inundated with a wide variety of assessments and stratifications of the construct into varying categories (Kerr, Garvin, Heaton, & Boyle, 2006). Daniel Goleman, a leading pioneer of emotional intelligence, further popularized emotional intelligence through his books *Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 1995), *Working With Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, 1998), *Primal Leadership* (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002), and *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* (Goleman, 2006). The work of Goleman, and of Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, are foundational for this study.



## Goleman - Emotional Intelligence Model

Goleman's (1995) more expansive model of emotional intelligence was based upon the first formal model of emotional intelligence presented by Salovey and Mayer (1990). Goleman (1995) stressed interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence as imperative for effective leadership. He further emphasized that certain interpersonal and intrapersonal skills accounted for the relative success or failure of business leaders through their interactions with others. Goleman (1998) classified these abilities into five distinct emotional competencies: "self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills" (p. 318). Goleman (1998) provided the following definitions:

**Self-awareness** includes knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions.

Self-awareness includes:

- *emotional awareness*: recognizing one's emotions and their effects;
- *accurate self-assessment*: knowing one's strengths and limits; and
- *self-confidence*: a strong sense of one's self-worth and capabilities.

**Self-regulation** is managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources. Self-regulation includes:

- *self-control*: keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check;
- *trustworthiness*: maintaining standards of honesty and integrity;
- *conscientiousness*: taking responsibility for personal performance;
- *adaptability*: flexibility in handling change; and
- *innovation*: being comfortable with novel ideas, approaches and new information.

**Motivation** includes emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals.

Motivation includes:

- *achievement drive*: striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence;
- *commitment*: aligning with the goals of a group or organization;
- *initiative*: readiness to act on opportunities; and
- *optimism*: persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks.

**Empathy** is awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns.

Empathy includes:

- *understanding others*: sensing others' feelings and perspectives and taking an active interest in their concerns;
- *developing others*: sensing others' development needs and bolstering their ability;
- *service orientation*: anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customer needs;
- *leveraging diversity*: cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people; and
- *political awareness*: reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships.

**Social skills** are adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others.

Social skills include:

- *influence*: wielding effective tactics for persuasion;
- *communication*: listening openly and sending convincing messages;
- *conflict management*: negotiating and resolving disagreements;

- *leadership*: inspiring others and guiding individuals and groups;
  - *change catalyst*: initiating or managing change;
  - *building bonds*: nurturing instrumental relationships;
  - *collaboration and cooperation*; working with others towards shared goals;
  - and
  - *team capabilities*: creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals
- (Goleman, 1998, p. 26-27).

Together these individual proficiencies define the holistic skillset that comprises emotional intelligence, as described by Goleman.

### **Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso - The Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence**

Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's emotional intelligence model includes many of the same elements as Goleman's model, while adding a focus on ability and ways in which individuals can enhance their own emotional intelligence (Caruso, Salovey, Brackett, & Mayer, 2015). In their work, *The Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence* (Caruso et al., 2015), the authors explained how emotional intelligence predicts a set of outcomes related to health and well-being and to relationship longevity. They outlined a four-domain model of emotional intelligence that includes perceiving emotions, using emotions to facilitate thought, understanding emotions, and managing emotions in a way that enhances personal growth and social relations. Mayer et al., (2015) provided the following definitions:

**Perceiving emotions.** This domain is described as the ability to recognize how individuals and those around them are feeling. By recognizing that emotions contain valuable information about interpersonal relationships, individuals adept at perceiving emotions are attuned to emotional cues and accurately identify the meaning of those cues. Key to this ability is

a thorough understanding of one's own emotions in order to enhance awareness and understanding of others' emotions. This ability may be used to “read” another person’s mood for feedback.

**Facilitating thought.** This domain of the model is the ability to generate emotions and use them to enhance reasoning and other cognitive tasks. Characteristics of individuals adept at facilitating thought include “self-confidence, initiative and accountability, goal orientation, optimism, flexibility, and adaptability” (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004, p. 4). The model asserts that how an individual feels will influence what he or she thinks and how he or she will act. For example, when an individual is experiencing an enhanced emotional state, he or she may perceive the world one way, but if a new emotion arises, the same event may be interpreted by that same individual differently. This may manifest itself when “people in a sad or negative mood tend to focus on details and search for errors; those in a more positive mood are better at generating new ideas and moving towards solutions” (Mayer et al., 2004, p. 2). When individuals are able to recognize their own emotional state and understand the impact that that state has on their actions, they are more able to intentionally adjust their feelings and emotions to assist in solving a problem, communicating a vision, and leading others.

**Understanding emotions.** Mayer, Salovey, Brackett, and Caruso (2015) describe this domain as the ability to understand simple and complex emotions. This includes insight into an individual’s thoughts and the ability to understand the feelings of others. Both of these qualities require a breadth of emotional knowledge that leads to a better understanding of others. Characteristics of individuals rated high in understanding emotions include respectful listening, feeling their impact on others, and an orientation toward service. Effectively understanding emotions enables one to more accurately predict how people will emotionally react.

**Managing emotions.** “If emotions contain information, then ignoring this information means that we can end up making poor decisions” (Mayer et al., 2004, p. 3). This ability enables an individual to be open to his or her own feelings, learn from experience, and use the information to make important decisions and influence behavior. Additionally, managing emotions means to modulate emotions in oneself, sometimes coming back to a feeling at a later time to manage the emotion effectively. The process of reflecting on and examining emotions promotes personal understanding and growth. The ability to manage emotions enables one to integrate emotion and thought to make effective decisions.

Each of these domains of emotional intelligence has the potential to positively impact leadership effectiveness. For academic and student services deans at community colleges, proficiency in these domains may influence their ability to effectively lead and manage change and conflict within their institutions. Developing a better understanding of how these domains are already being utilized by community college deans has the potential to inform practice and success for these institutions.

### **Research Questions**

This study asked broadly: what are the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of community college deans in Washington State related to emotional intelligence? More specifically, it asked the following research questions:

**Research Question 1:** To what extent is each domain of emotional intelligence perceived to be an important leadership factor by deans?

**Research Question 2:** What differences, if any, exist between academic deans and student services deans in the extent to which they perceive each domain of emotional intelligence to be an important leadership factor?

**Research Question 3:** What is the reported frequency with which academic deans and student services deans demonstrate each domain of emotional intelligence?

**Research Question 4:** What differences, if any, exist between academic deans and student services deans in the reported frequency with which they demonstrate each domain of emotional intelligence?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Historical Perspective**

Emotional intelligence is still a relatively new construct in the field of psychology having been introduced in the early 1990s. Several authors have claimed that emotional intelligence has its roots in the humanistic perspective or, more specifically, positive psychology (Bar-On, 2010; Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2008). The field of positive psychology focuses on valued subjective experiences, such as well-being and satisfaction, and positive individual traits such as interpersonal skill and wisdom (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Theory and empirical evidence have suggested that emotional intelligence, and the leadership characteristics associated with emotional intelligence, are integral components of positive psychology (Bar-On, 2010).

Humanistic psychology, a tenet of positive psychology, is a perspective on the human condition focused on realizing one's own potential, enlightenment, pursuit of knowledge, and contributions to society (Schneider, Pierson, & Bugental, 2014; DeCarvalho, 1991; Patton, 1990). Marie Jahoda and Abraham Maslow are considered to be the most influential contributors to this movement since the early 1930s. According to Giorgi (2013), the humanistic perspective is encapsulated in five primary principles: human beings (1) supersede the sum of their parts; (2) hold their existence in a uniquely human context; (3) are aware of being aware (conscious); (4)

have free will; and (5) are intentional about goals and personal achievement. Most significantly, positive psychology emphasizes that emotional intelligence provides the ability to *thrive* in one's environment, a skill often required for long-term leadership (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Bar-On (2010) suggested “that emotional intelligence has a positive and significant impact on performance, happiness, well-being, and the quest for a more meaningful life, all of which are key areas of interest in positive psychology” (p. 59). There are several overlapping areas among emotional intelligence, positive psychology, and leadership. These areas include empathy, self-acceptance, managing emotions, optimism, determination, and effective decision making (Salovey, Caruso, & Mayer, 2004).

Human performance requires individuals to be able to self-manage stress, maintain perspective, manage emotions, and problem solve - all tenets of emotional intelligence and positive psychology (Salovey et al., 2004). Furthermore, both emotional intelligence and positive psychology posit that individuals want to live positive and meaningful lives which contribute to society (Salovey, Mayer, Caruso, & Yoo, 2002).

### **Emotional Intelligence and Job Performance**

Traditionally, job performance has been conceptualized as the degree to which an individual executes his or her role as measured against standards set by the organization (Nayyar, 1994). High performance ratings and employee satisfaction are often positively correlated (Judge, Thoreson, Bono, & Patton, 2001). Consequently, factors that contribute to high levels of satisfaction are often investigated for their potential to lead to higher levels of job performance.

In many work settings, a sense of community promotes productivity (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Developing strong relationships in the workplace is often key to understanding coworkers and developing collaborative working relationships (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2001). Multiple studies indicate that high levels of emotional intelligence positively impact employee relations and job performance (Bar-On, Handley, & Fund, 2006; Mayer et al., 2001; Goleman et al., 2002; Suifan, Abdallah, & Sweis, 2015). Suifan, Abdallah, and Sweis (2015) studied the effect of a leader's emotional intelligence on employees' work outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and customer service behavior). Their research indicated that all emotional intelligence dimensions positively and significantly affect employees' work outcomes.

Wong and Laws (2002) found that the leader's emotional intelligence affected employee job satisfaction and positive work behavior outside of an employee's required job description, such as helping coworkers with tasks and minimizing interpersonal conflicts. Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall and Salovey (2006) found that emotional intelligence was related to performance measures and positive work outcomes.

Sims, Sims and Veres (1999) asserted that emotional intelligence, specifically controlling one's own emotions and perceiving another's emotional state, is a critical skill for employee success. This skill is particularly important to working effectively in teams where listening, patience, persuasion, restraint, and sympathy are essential in politically navigating one's career (Sims et al., 1999).

### **Leadership and Emotional Intelligence**

According to George (2000), "leadership ranks among the most researched and debated topics in the organizational sciences" (p. 1028). To understand how to make an organization



successful, one must understand the successful characteristics of leadership. Goleman (1995; 1998; 2006) asserted that the key to a leader's effectiveness is his or her emotional intelligence. There is substantial evidence associating leadership and emotional intelligence (Goleman et al., 2002; Bar-On et al., 2006; Bar-On, 2010; Slaski & Cartwright, 2002). Individuals rated as having a high level of emotional intelligence are predicted to be more effective leaders of people and organizations (Goleman et al., 2002). Palmer, Walls, Burgess, and Stough (2001) further found that emotional intelligence was correlated with transformational leadership; that is the ability to promote growth within others.

Deans, like many organizational leaders, are often tasked with implementing a vision, motivating others to enact a vision, and integrating thinking with feeling. Goleman et al., (2002) found that these leadership skills and abilities can be learned and developed through intentional professional development. Goleman et al., (2002) stated that “Great leaders, the research shows, are made as they gradually acquire, in the course of their lives and careers, the competencies that make them so effective. These competencies can be learned by any leader at any point” (p. 101).

### **The Ability Model of Emotional Intelligence**

Since the early 1990's, emotional intelligence has garnered much attention and debate. Due to increased awareness, a variety of theoretical models and assessments related to emotional intelligence and its application have emerged. However, one theoretical model and corresponding assessment warrants specific mention. After the publication of Goleman's (1995) work *Emotional Intelligence*, Mayer and Salovey (1997) identified four distinct branches of emotional cognition (perceiving, managing, understanding, and facilitating). Shortly thereafter, Petrides and Furnham (2000) made significant distinctions regarding what emotional intelligence is, and what it is not. Specifically, the authors were among the first to describe the difference

between Goleman's (1995) *trait* emotional intelligence and Mayer and Salovey's (1997) *ability* emotional intelligence. In their view, ability based intelligence extends beyond basic personality characteristics. Unlike a *trait* model, which is static, the *ability model* argues that emotional intelligence is malleable and can be developed and refined over time, leading to enhanced cognitive and technical proficiency (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Herpertz, Schütz, & Nezlek, 2016).

Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability-based model of emotional intelligence views emotions as a source of information that assist in navigating social environments to realize successful outcomes (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2001; MacCann, Joseph, Newman, & Roberts, 2014). Mayer and Salovey's ability model provides both theory and an assessment. The assessment, called the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT), "uses a variety of interesting and creative tasks to measure a person's capacity for reasoning with emotional information by directly testing their ability" (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). Results are calculated through identifying an individual's current ability in each of the four ability domains.

Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model of emotional intelligence has garnered evidence to support its application in a variety of settings. Varying environments include K-12 education, healthcare, the military, and business. For example, in a recent study with 300 teachers, Nizielski, Hallum, Schütz, and Lopes (2013) found that the ability to perceive emotions plays an important role in preventing professional burnout. In healthcare, Nelson and Welsh (2015) found that designing and implementing patient care plans based on the ability model strengthened nurse-to-patient bonds. In the United States Air Force, Bar-On, Handley, and Fund (2006) found that high levels of emotional intelligence positively impacted performance, particularly in highly stressful and dangerous situations. In business settings, Collins (2001)

found that the understanding branch of emotional intelligence accurately predicted self-ratings of leaders by their subordinates.

The ability based model has demonstrated strong customer service and employee retention links; skills that are often utilized by deans. Cage, Daus, and Saul (2004) demonstrated that the *facilitating emotions* branch was significantly associated with customer service performance ratings, while the *managing emotions* was significantly associated with sales performance, and *understanding emotions* was significantly related with employee job satisfaction.

Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model has demonstrated convergent, discriminant, and incremental validity (Brackett & Mayer, 2003); however, the model is not without critics. Current measures of the ability model are described by some as suffering from several limitations, including conformity, knowledge and performance differences, and personality and intelligence variables (Antonakis & Dietz, 2011; Brody, 2004; Landy, 2005; Roberts, Zeidner, & Matthews, 2001). Mayer and Salovey's (1997) ability model is central to the theoretical foundation for this study. Additionally, the four branches of the ability model (perceiving, understanding, facilitating, and managing) were key to the organization and construction of the survey instrument.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Research Method and Design**

Survey research was chosen as the methodology for this mixed-methods research design. Survey research is appropriate given that surveys are generally designed to obtain information related to the subjective feelings of individuals and to ascertain facts about frequencies of behaviors (Fowler, 2013). An electronic survey was the primary instrument for this study. This

method was selected as it allowed for the sampling of a large population of community college academic and student services deans, including those that were located in geographically remote areas.

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to investigate perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of community college deans in Washington State related to emotional intelligence. Quantitative data collected included demographic information and responses to survey items designed to assess the *frequency* with which specific behaviors related to emotional intelligence were manifested by the respondents and the *importance* that participants placed on specific components of emotional intelligence related to their effectiveness as leaders. Qualitative data were collected through three open-ended questions designed to better understand the perceptions of individuals about the value of emotional intelligence as related to leadership effectiveness.

### **Sample**

Academic and student services deans at all thirty-four community and technical colleges in Washington State were identified as potential study participants. All academic and student services deans at each of these colleges were invited via an email to participate in this study through the completion of an electronic survey. At each respective institution, approximately two to nine deans were identified, leading to an overall potential sample size of 187 deans.

Deans were identified by obtaining names and business email addresses for academic and student services deans at the 34 Washington State community and technical colleges from online institutional directories. When contact information was not available on institutional websites, Human Resources departments at each respective institution were contacted to identify the names, titles, and email addresses of academic and student services deans. Contact information

for deans at all 34 institutions was obtained. Each of the 187 deans was invited to participate in the survey via email.

The survey was made available to participants from January 18, 2016 through January 29, 2016. Three emails were returned as undeliverable, reducing the target population to 184. Eighty-five (85) individuals completed the electronic survey. Two participants were removed after a review of the data indicated that they neither served in an academic or student services dean role. In total, the responses of 83 participants were included in the data analysis.

### **Measures and Procedures**

This study's survey was divided into five sections and included 41 items in total: 13 demographic items, 1 forced ranking item, 24 Likert items, and 3 open-ended items with short to long text response options (Appendix B). The first section of the survey asked participants to respond to the 13 demographic items. Demographic items asked for respondents' gender, age, race/ethnicity, level of education and academic discipline, current role as dean, years of experience, and number of direct and indirect reports.

The second section asked participants to rank abilities within the four domains of emotional intelligence taken from Mayer & Salovey's (1997) ability model of emotional intelligence, in order of perceived importance as related to their effective leadership as community college deans. These abilities were (1) the ability to recognize how individuals and those around them are feeling, (2) the ability to generate emotions in self and others, (3) the ability to understand simple and complex emotions, and (4) the ability to manage emotions.

The third section of the survey included 12 items utilizing a five-point Likert scale (1 = Never; 2 = Rarely; 3 = Sometimes; 4 = Often; 5 = Almost Always) to assess the *frequency* with which participants engaged in activities related to each of the four ability domains of emotional

intelligence. Three Likert scale items were aligned to each of the four ability domains of emotional intelligence for a total of 12 Likert items across domains. See Figure 3.1.

The fourth section of the survey asked 12 questions and utilized a five point Likert scale (1 = Not important; 2 = Slightly Important; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Moderately Important; 5 = Very Important) to identify the measure of *importance* that participants placed on each of the four ability domains of emotional intelligence relative to their leadership role as community college deans. Three Likert scale items were aligned to each of the four domains of emotional intelligence for a total of 12 Likert items across domains. See Figure 3.1.

The final section asked participants to respond to three open-ended questions related to their own experiences with emotional intelligence in the workplace and to provide their opinions about the relationship between emotional intelligence and effective leadership. All Likert items and the forced ranking item were based on the four ability domains of emotional intelligence as described by Mayer and Salovey (1997) and Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000).

<b>Emotional Intelligence Domain</b>	<b>Sample Frequency Questions</b>	<b>Sample Importance Questions</b>
Perceiving Emotions	How often do you rely on your “gut feeling” to help you make decisions?	How important is it that you understand how your behavior or words affect others?
Facilitating Thought	How often do you make a conscious effort to change your emotional state?	How important is understanding your own emotional state?
Understanding Emotions	How often do you use your emotional skills to help you “figure people out?”	How important is it to understand the feelings of others?
Managing Emotions	How often does your decision making include both thinking and feeling?	How important is planning the tone of a conversation?

*Figure 3.1.* Sample Survey Questions for Each Emotional Intelligence Domain

## Chapter 4

### Data Analysis and Discussion

#### Overview

Data were gathered via a confidential electronic survey that included demographic, ranking, Likert, and open-ended items. In total, the survey contained 41 items; 13 demographic items, 25 quantitative items (one ranking item, 24 Likert items) based on the four domains of emotional intelligence described by Mayer and Salovey (1997) and Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2000), and three qualitative items with short to long text response options. Collected participant demographics included age, gender, ethnicity, highest degree attained, number of years in current role, overall years in the role of dean, number of direct reports, and number of indirect reports.

Participant responses to the ranking item were converted to numerical values on a scale of 1-4 (1 = Least Important and 4 = Most Important). Participant responses to the Likert scale items were converted to numerical values in order to enable statistical comparisons. For the items related to *frequency*, responses were converted to a scale of 1-5 (1 = Never and 5 = Almost Always). Items related to *importance* were also converted to a scale of 1-5, (1 = Not Important and 5 = Very Important). Qualitative data were sorted into themes employing an inductive, theme-based analysis (Charmaz, 2006).

Demographic and quantitative data were uploaded into SPSS to compile descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequency, percentage, mean, median, mode, minimum value, maximum value, and standard deviation for all quantitative survey items.

Inferential statistics included tests of normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) on subgroups of data to determine if participant responses were normally distributed; i.e., that regardless of whether participants served in the role of academic dean or student services dean, they were

likely to answer questions in the same way. These tests showed that the data were normally distributed across both roles and domains (see Appendix C). That is to say that the distribution of scores for both groups of the independent variable (in this case, academic or student services dean) have the same shape. For research questions one and three, measures of frequency, percentages, and means were utilized.

Research questions two and four required comparing the subgroups of academic deans and student services deans. Because the variables being compared were non-parametric, Mann-Whitney U-Tests (Wilcoxon Rank Sum) were utilized to compare the means of the two groups. Quantitative data were put into tables and organized as to each research question. Procedures for quantitative analysis of each research question are further described below.

Finally, qualitative survey responses were analyzed to identify patterns and themes and to determine how these patterns and themes informed the research questions. Four questions guided the analysis:

1. What common themes or patterns emerged from items in the data?
2. Where are there deviations from these patterns?
3. Do the emergent patterns support findings of the quantitative analyses that have been conducted?
4. What interesting stories emerged from the data?

In addition to organizing responses by themes, responses were organized into categories related to each of the four domains of emotional intelligence (i.e., managing emotions, facilitating thought, understanding emotions, perceiving emotions) and other categories as they emerged (e.g., discipline, campus culture). Information gained from the analyses of both the



quantitative and qualitative items was compared to gain a greater understanding of the overall meaning of the data.

### **Research Question 1**

The first research question asks, “To what extent is each domain of emotional intelligence perceived to be an important leadership factor by deans?” To answer this question, data from those survey items related to *importance* were analyzed. This included data obtained from section two of the survey, where participants were asked to rank the four domains of emotional intelligence from least to most important, and data obtained from section four, where participants were asked to identify how important they felt various behaviors related to the domains of emotional intelligence were to their leadership.

Data obtained from the ranking item were aggregated and means calculated for each of the four domains. In addition, the percentages of respondents that identified each domain as most important were computed. Data obtained from the Likert scale items in section four were grouped by the emotional intelligence domain to which they were aligned (i.e., managing emotions, perceiving emotions, etc.) and then converted to means for each participant. For example, a participant who responded to the three items related to the importance of the *understanding emotions* domain as neutral (3), moderately important (4), and very important (5), was assigned a mean score of 4. Each participant’s individual mean score of importance for each domain was then aggregated, and overall means were calculated for each of the four domains.

### **Research Question 2**

The second research question asks, “What differences, if any, exist between academic deans and student services deans in the extent to which they perceive each domain of emotional intelligence to be an important leadership factor?” Data from section four of the survey were

analyzed to answer this research question. As described above, each participant's individual mean rating of the *importance* of each emotional intelligence domain was aggregated and overall means were calculated for each of the four domains by role (i.e., academic deans versus student services dean). These overall means were then used in a Mann-Whitney U-Test to determine if the distributions of responses from academic deans differed significantly from the responses of student services deans. Additionally, the percentages of respondents in each group who identified a particular domain as moderately or very important were examined. This process enabled the identification of differences between groups that were not of statistical significance but were of educational significance.

### **Research Question 3**

Research question three asks, "What is the reported frequency with which academic deans and student services deans demonstrate each domain of emotional intelligence?" To answer this question, data from those survey items related to *frequency* were analyzed. This included data obtained from section three, where participants were asked to identify how frequently they engaged in behavior related to each of the domains of emotional intelligence. Data obtained from the Likert scale items in section three were grouped by the emotional intelligence domain to which they were aligned (i.e., managing emotions, perceiving emotions, etc.) and then converted to means for each participant. For example, a participant who indicated that the frequency that he or she demonstrated behaviors related to the domain of *understanding emotions* as sometimes (3), often (4), and almost always (5), was assigned a mean score of 4. Each participant's individual mean score of frequency for each domain was then aggregated, and overall means were calculated for each of the four domains.

#### **Research Question 4**

The fourth research question asks, “What differences, if any, exist between academic deans and student services deans in the reported frequency with which they demonstrate each domain of emotional intelligence?” To answer this research question, data obtained from section three of the survey were analyzed. As described in the procedure for Research Question 2, each participant’s individual mean rating of the *frequency* with which they demonstrated behaviors related to each emotional intelligence domain was aggregated and overall means were calculated for each of the four domains by role (i.e., academic deans versus student services dean). These overall means were then used in a Mann-Whitney U-Test to determine if the distributions of the responses of academic deans differed significantly from the responses of student services deans. Additionally, the percentages of respondents in each group who identified a behavior in a particular domain as occurring often or almost always were examined. This process enabled the identification of differences between groups that were not of statistical significance but were of educational significance.

### **Results**

#### **Participant Demographics**

Of the 184 Washington State community and technical college academic and student services deans invited to participate in this study, 85 completed the survey for a response rate of 46.2%. Of the 184 community and technical college deans, 77.1% (n = 142) were academic deans, while 22.7% (n = 38) were student services or equivalent deans, and less than 1.2% (n = 4) were identified as neither exclusively academic nor student services deans. Those deans who were identified as neither an exclusively academic or student services dean were included in the invitation to participate in the survey as their names and contact information were provided by

their institutions' Human Resources Department in response to a request for a list of academic and student services deans. Of the 85 deans who participated in the electronic survey, 78.3% (n = 65) self-identified as academic/instructional deans, 21.7% (n = 18) self-identified as student services or equivalent deans. Less than 1% of respondents (n = 2) identified as neither an exclusively academic nor student services dean. The data from participants not in a clear academic or student services dean role were excluded from the data analysis. This resulted in a net response rate of 45.1% (n = 83).

Participants were 41% males (n = 34) and 59% females (n = 49). Participant ages ranged from 31 years to 65+ with approximately 53% of participants in the age range of 41-55 (n = 44). Four percent (4%) of respondents identified as African American/Black, 4% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 82% as Caucasian, 4% as Hispanic and/or Latino, and 6% as more than one race. No respondents identified as Native American/American Indian.

According to the Washington State Board for Community and Technical College's (2014) report, the percentage of respondents who self-identified as female and/or person of color closely matches that which would be expected based on the overall population of community college administrators. The percentage of administrative staff in Washington's thirty-four community and technical colleges who identify as female is 66% compared to the sample's 59%; the percentage of administrative staff in Washington's community and technical colleges who identify as a person of color is 19% compared to the sample's 18% (SBCTC, 2014).

Highest educational degree attained by respondents ranged from 6% completing a bachelor's degree to 65% completing a master's degree, to 28% completing a doctorate degree. Deans reported serving in their current role an average of 3.5 years with a range from less than one year to 13 years. Total years in the role of dean, not just in the participant's current role,

ranged from less than one year to 34 years, with an average of 5.76 years. Reported number of direct reports supervised ranged from 0 to 260 with an average of 45 direct reports. Indirect reports ranged from 0 to 140 with an average of 28.7. Participant demographics are further detailed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1  
*Participant Demographic Information*

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean</b>
<i>Gender</i>			
Male	34	41	
Female	49	59	
<i>Age</i>			
			<i>51 years</i>
31-35	2	2	
36-40	12	14	
41-45	14	17	
46-50	15	18	
51-55	16	19	
56-60	11	13	
61-65	9	11	
65+	4	5	
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>			
African American and/or Black	3	4	
Asian / Pacific Islander	3	4	
Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	69	82	
Hispanic and/or Latino	3	4	
Native American/American Indian	0	0	
More than one race	5	6	
<i>Highest Educational Achievement</i>			
Bachelor	5	6	
Masters	54	65	
Doctorate	24	28	
<i>Dean Role</i>			
Instructional or equivalent	65	78.3	
Student Services or equivalent	18	21.7	

<i>Years in Current Dean Role</i>			3.5 years
0-5 years	69	83	
6-10 years	12	14	
11-15 years	2	2	
<i>Total Years in Role of Dean</i>			5.7 years
0-5 years	54	65	
6-10 years	21	25	
11-15 years	4	4	
16-20 years	2	2	
21+ years	2	2	

***Research Question 1: To what extent is each domain of emotional intelligence perceived to be an important leadership factor by deans?***

Participants were asked to rank the four domains of emotional intelligence in order of importance. Fifty-three percent (53%) of participants identified the ability to recognize how individuals and those around them are feeling, a skill related to the domain of *perceiving emotions*, as most important ( $m = 3.38$ ), see Table 4.2. Twenty-nine percent (29%) of participants identified *managing emotions* as most important ( $m=2.80$ ). *Understanding emotions* ranked third, with 13% of deans selecting this domain as most important ( $m=2.37$ ). Finally, the domain of *facilitating thought* was ranked by fewer than 5% of deans as most important ( $m=1.48$ ).

Table 4.2

*Importance of Emotional Intelligence Domains – Forced Choice Ranking*

<b>Emotional Intelligence Domain</b>	<b>% of Deans Identifying Domain as Most Important</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Perceiving Emotions	53	3.38	1
Managing Emotions	29	2.80	2
Understanding Emotions	13	2.37	3
Facilitating Thought	5	1.47	4

Participants were then asked to rate the importance of 12 behaviors, each of which is aligned to one of the four domains of emotional intelligence. For each domain of emotional intelligence (i.e., perceiving, managing, understanding, facilitating), there were three corresponding Likert items. (See Figure 3.1 for sample items.) Responses to these items were aggregated by domain, and means were computed to achieve a non-forced ranking of domains based on the importance participants placed on subcomponents of the domains. See Table 4.3. Using this method, the two domains perceived to be the most important were *perceiving emotions* and *facilitating thought*, with 94% of deans indicating that both abilities were moderately or very important. The third most important domain was *understanding emotions*, an ability that 91% of deans identified as moderately or very important. Finally, *managing emotions* was seen by deans as the least important, with 88% of deans identifying this skill as moderately or very important.

Table 4.3

*Rated Importance of Emotional Intelligence Domains – Likert Scale*

<b>Domain of Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>% of Deans Identifying Domain as Moderately or Very Important</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Perceiving Emotions	94	4.55	1
Facilitating Thought	94	4.49	2
Understanding Emotions	91	4.30	3
Managing Emotions	88	4.28	4

***Research Questions 2: What differences, if any, exist between academic deans and student services deans in the extent to which they perceive each domain of emotional intelligence to be an important leadership factor?***

The Likert ratings of the importance of emotional intelligence domains by academic deans and student services deans were compared using the Mann-Whitney U-Test. Differences between the distributions of the two groups' ratings were not found to be statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) for any of the domains (see Table 4.4). The null hypotheses of independence between the independent variable (dean role) and the dependent variables (importance of four emotional intelligence domains) are not rejected. Of interest, however, is the p value of .109 in the comparison of the importance of *facilitating thought*. While not statistically significant, it is perhaps indicative of educational significance that academic deans placed more importance on facilitating thought than student services deans.

Table 4.4

*Mann-Whitney U Test Comparing Academic Deans' and Student Services Deans' Rankings of Importance EI Domains*

	<b>Perceiving Emotions</b>	<b>Facilitating Thought</b>	<b>Understanding Emotions</b>	<b>Managing Emotions</b>
Mann-Whitney U	480.000	437.000	479.000	490.000
Z	-1.118	-1.601	-1.110	-.981
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	p=.264	p=.109	p=.267	p=.327

Further, as presented in Table 4.5, there is a pattern of academic deans placing more importance on emotional intelligence and all four domains than student services deans. For the domain of *understanding emotions*, there is a ten percentage point difference between academic and student services deans.



Table 4.5

*Percentage of Deans Who Identified EI Domain as Moderately or Very Important*

	<b>% of Academic Deans</b>	<b>% of Student Services Deans</b>
Perceiving Emotions	94.76	90.74
Facilitating Thought	95.79	88.89
Understanding Emotions	93.19	83.02
Managing Emotions	89.53	83.33

***Research Question 3: What is the reported frequency with which academic deans and student services deans demonstrate each domain of emotional intelligence?***

As presented in Table 4.6, *understanding emotions* was reported as being demonstrated most frequently, with a mean of 4.09 and 79% of deans indicating that they often or almost always engage in behavior related to this domain. The second reported most frequently demonstrated domain was *perceiving emotions*, with a mean of 3.89 and 70% of deans reporting engaging in behavior related to this domain often or almost always. *Facilitating thought* ranked third; it received a mean of 3.59 and 54% of deans indicated that they demonstrate behavior related to this domain often or almost always. Behaviors related to the domain of *managing emotions* were reported as occurring least frequently, with a mean of 3.50 and 52% of deans reporting engaging in these behaviors often or almost always. The domain of *managing emotions* also had the highest incidence of deans reporting engaging in related behaviors rarely or never at 19%.

Table 4.6

*Percentage of Deans Reporting Frequency of Behavior in Each Domain of EI*

<b>Domain of Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Almost Always</b>
Perceiving Emotion	1.20%	8.49%	25.96%	44.55%	25.99%
Facilitating Thought	1.81%	6.88%	37.93%	39.48%	14.50%
Understanding Emotions	1.23%	4.07%	16.35%	43.69%	35.58%
Managing Emotions	2.41%	16.48%	30.37%	36.37%	15.99%

***Research Question 4: What differences, if any, exist between academic deans and student services deans in the reported frequency with which they demonstrate each domain of emotional intelligence?***

The Likert ratings of the frequency with which academic and student services deans demonstrated each domain of emotional intelligence were compared using the Mann-Whitney U-Test. Differences between the distributions of the two groups' ratings were not found to be statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) for any of the domains (see Table 4.7). The null hypotheses of independence between the independent variable (dean role) and the dependent variables (frequency of behavior in four emotional intelligence domains) are not rejected. Both groups, it would seem, demonstrate behavior associated with the domains with similar frequency.

Table 4.7

*Comparison of Frequency by Role*

	<b>Perceiving Emotions</b>	<b>Facilitating Thought</b>	<b>Understanding Emotions</b>	<b>Managing Emotions</b>
Mann-Whitney U	507.000	546.500	510.500	567.000
Z	-.790	-.338	-.745	-.103
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	p=.429	p=.736	p=.456	p=.918

However, as presented in Table 4.8, there is a pattern of student services deans consistently reporting behavior in each domain as occurring less frequently than academic deans. The largest reported difference was in the domain of understanding emotions, where there is a seven percentage point difference. A review of data, though not statistically significant, provides insight and perhaps educational significance.

Table 4.8

*Percentage of Deans Who Reported Behavior in the EI Domain at Often or Almost Always*

	<b>% Academic Deans</b>	<b>% Student Services Deans</b>
Perceiving Emotions	71.05	66.67
Facilitating Thought	54.97	48.15
Understanding Emotions	80.63	73.58
Managing Emotions	53.19	50.00

## **Discussion**

### **Relative Importance of Emotional Intelligence Domains**

Participants in this study were provided two opportunities to communicate the importance that they placed on the four emotional intelligence domains, once by completing a forced ranking of the domains and once by responding to 12 Likert scale items. In each case, perceiving emotions emerged as the most important domain.

The fact that perceiving emotions was ranked as the top domain is not surprising, particularly as this ability is the most rudimentary of Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's (2012) emotional intelligence ability model. The ability to perceive emotions is foundational to acting or reacting to those emotions; without the ability to accurately perceive the emotional state of others, a leader will be unable to understand or manage their emotional reactions. With 94% of academic deans and 90% of student services deans identifying *perceiving emotions* as

moderately or very important, it is indicated that the skillsets associated with this domain are perceived by deans as essential in their leadership.

Some of these skillsets include the ability to sense an employee's feelings about his or her work, to intervene when problems arise, and understand or predict an employee's reaction to a challenging situation. Each of these skills is rooted in the domain of perceiving emotions. Without the skillset associated with perceiving emotions, deans would be less able to lead emotionally charged meetings such as student discipline meetings and meetings with distraught faculty members or students. Given that the average time that survey respondents had served in the role of dean was 5.7 years, it is not surprising that many of them would have come to recognize the importance of accurately perceiving emotions in themselves and others.

Though *perceiving emotions* stood out as the most important domain, it is clear that respondents consider all four domains to be important to their leadership. Over 80% of deans rated all domains as either moderately or very important. One possible explanation for this is that the skillsets in these domains are more context specific. While *perceiving emotions* is foundational, the other domains are more or less useful depending upon the situation. For example, a dean in the midst of managing a group of students who are upset about a change in their academic program will need to be adept at *managing emotions* in order to achieve a successful outcome. The dean will need to be able to not just perceive but also help to influence the emotional reactions of the group. This skill, though perhaps not used daily by a dean, is essential to his or her long term success.

### **Importance of Domain versus Frequency of Domain Behavior**

Deans consistently said that skills found in the domain of *perceiving emotions* were the most important leadership factors. However, they reported exhibiting behaviors in this domain

less frequently than they reported demonstrating behaviors in the domain of *understanding emotions*. Interestingly, ninety-four percent (94%) of deans indicated that skills in facilitating thought were moderately or very important in their leadership, but only fifty-four percent (54%) reported engaging in behavior related to this domain often or almost always. The comparison of importance versus frequency is presented in Tables 4.9 and 4.10.

Table 4.9

*Differences between Importance and Frequency (1)*

<b>Domain of Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>% of Deans Identifying Domain as Moderately or Very Important</b>	<b>% of Deans Reporting Exhibiting Domain Behaviors Often or Almost Always</b>
Perceiving Emotions	94	70
Managing Emotions	94	52
Understanding Emotions	91	79
Facilitating Thought	88	54

Table 4.10

*Differences between Importance and Frequency (2)*

<b>Domain of Emotional Intelligence</b>	<b>Importance Ranking (Forced Choice)</b>	<b>Importance Ranking (Likert Scale)</b>	<b>Frequency Ranking</b>
Perceiving Emotions	1	1	2
Managing Emotions	2	4	4
Understanding Emotions	3	3	1
Facilitating Thought	4	2	3

This finding indicates that the importance that deans place on skills within the four domains is not parallel to the frequency with which they employ them. This could be the result of many factors. Changing events and circumstances on any given day may require deans to employ certain behaviors. The frequency of behaviors may be more a function of these external demands than the level of importance that the deans themselves place on the behaviors. However, if deans are unable to integrate the behaviors related to the domains of emotional intelligence into their

daily work they are less likely to be able to successfully manage people in the complex and ever changing environment of community colleges. Deans strongly indicated that they believe that each emotional intelligence domain, as well as the behaviors associated with each domain, was important to their effectiveness as leaders. One of the most challenging aspects of professional development is changing the way in which individuals perceive themselves and their relationships with others (Dearborn, 2002). In this case, deans have already identified that the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and facilitate emotions within themselves and in their relationships with others as important, thus inviting targeted professional development in this area.

### **Academic Deans versus Student Services Deans**

Academic deans consistently placed higher levels of importance on all four domains and reported more frequent behaviors in all four domains of emotional intelligence than did student services deans. There are several possible explanations for this differences. One possible factor may be that academic deans could be more familiar and comfortable with the emotional intelligence construct and the ability domains. This familiarity with the language and construct might have allowed academic deans to more readily “see” themselves and their behaviors in the survey questions. Though efforts were made within the survey to use common language to describe domains and behaviors, it is possible that the language resonated differently with academic deans than it did with student services deans.

The domain of *understanding emotions* showed the greatest discrepancy. Student services deans placed 10% less importance on the domain than academic deans and also reported demonstrating behavior in this domain less frequently. Upon first impression, this finding may seem counterintuitive. Student services deans are often thought of having great compassion and

‘a heart’ for students. By comparison, academic deans may be thought as being, well, more academic. Though there are many possible explanations, one possible factor could be related to the gender of participants. For student services deans, both genders were equally represented with 8 student services deans identifying as male and 10 as female. For academic deans, 26 participants identified as male while 39 identified as female. Further analysis would need to be conducted to determine if gender serves as a predicting factor in participant responses.

The domain of *facilitating thought* also showed a large discrepancy in both importance and frequency. Ninety-six percent (96%) of academic deans identified the domain of *facilitating thought* as moderately or very important with 55% exhibiting the behavior in the domain often or almost always. Eight-eight (88%) of student services deans rated *facilitating thought* as moderately or very important, and only 48% reported demonstrating behavior in the domain often or almost always. Facilitating thought can be considered one of the most complex of the domains as it involves actually changing the feelings and emotions of oneself and others in order to impact behavior. Provided that developing skill in this domain takes considerable time and practice, one explanation for this discrepancy may simply be time spent in the leadership role of dean. Academic deans in this study reported serving in the role of dean for an average of 6.5 years, with an average of nearly 4 years in their current role. In contrast, the student services deans surveyed reported serving in the role of dean for an average of only 3 years, with an average of 2.5 years in their current role. Furthermore, the data indicated that for 13 of the 18 student services deans, their current position is their first dean role. As was the case with gender, further analysis that is outside the scope of this study would need to be completed to determine if experience is a predicting factor. It is reasonable to consider that overall experience may impact

how important individuals feel various domains of emotional intelligence are to their leadership practice and how often they demonstrate behaviors related to those domains.

And finally, another possible explanation for the differences in the responses of academic and student service deans may relate to the job classification of those they supervise. Academic deans oversee tenured faculty who have a lifetime appointment to their position, the rights of academic freedom, and often a significant role in the shared governance of the institution via the faculty senate and the faculty union. Taken in aggregate, these factors create a very different supervisory relationship than what is experienced by student services deans who most often provide direct supervision for administrative and classified staff. Other than the assignment of work within certain defined limitations, the academic dean has limited levers to influence faculty behavior. If the academic dean is to be effective in leading change management, they must be skilled in the qualities, traits, and leadership abilities that reside within the construct of emotional intelligence.

Regardless of these differences, both academic and student services deans reported an overall positive affiliation with the domains and are likely to benefit from professional development that supports them in operationalizing their values around emotional intelligence and implementing additional behaviors indicative of a high level of emotional intelligence in their daily practice.

### **Responses to Open Ended Questions**

At the completion of the survey, academic and student services deans were asked a series of open ended questions, two of which included, “*Overall, do you feel that your ability to perceive, understand and regulate emotions in yourself and others is a factor in your leadership? Why or why not?*” and “*Do you believe that leaders who demonstrate a high level of skill in*



*perceiving, understanding, and regulating emotions are more effective? Why or why not?"*

Thematic and content analysis demonstrated little difference between academic and student services deans' responses, but did provide further insight into how emotional intelligence domains may be expressed in daily behaviors.

Findings from the open ended questions suggest 87% of academic deans and 92% of student services deans believe it is important to demonstrate at least some characteristics of the emotional intelligence ability model in their leadership. While interpersonal situations may demonstrate multiple domains of emotional intelligence within one interaction, the quotes from academic and student services deans below exhibit how these abilities are present in their daily leadership.

**Perceiving emotions.** Perceiving emotions is described as the ability to recognize how individuals and those around them are feeling. Key to this ability is a thorough understanding of one's own emotions in order to enhance awareness and understanding of others' emotions. This ability may be used to "read" another person's mood for feedback. One academic dean remarked:

"Often going into meetings, myself and others are bringing the earlier part of the week or day into the discussion. I find that I frequently need to be able to "read" a room or meeting in order to be effective."

This dean is perceiving the emotions of others, while also facilitating his or her own emotions to adjust his or her communication style to lead others. By being intentional to perceive and facilitate emotions, one is able to enhance reasoning and other cognitive tasks.

**Facilitating thought.** The domain of facilitating thought describes the ability to generate emotions and use them to enhance reasoning and other cognitive tasks. When individuals are

able to recognize their own emotional state and understand the impact that that state has on their actions, they are more able to intentionally adjust their feelings and emotions to assist in solving a problem, communicating a vision, or leading others. One academic dean states,

“I feel that though we all like to focus on our rational thinking processes, emotions play a very important role in decision making and in the overall health of a person. Especially at times of stress and change, the underlying insecurities can cause people to reject excellent ideas and if there is acknowledgement of those feelings and some efforts to alleviate them the whole process can be more productive.”

This dean recognizes how underlying emotions can negatively impact interactions and decisions when not acknowledged. He or she clearly recognizes that simply ignoring emotions, instead of acknowledging them and the role that they play in both decisions and relationships, is detrimental to individual and institutional success.

Another dean states, “It is important for me to recognize when my emotions are inhibiting my ability to make a sound decision and I need to delay making the decision. I am also better able to lead others if I am in tune with their emotions. It impacts my approach to them.”

**Understanding emotions.** Characteristics of individuals rated high in understanding emotions include respectful listening, feeling their impact on others, and an orientation toward service. Effectively understanding emotions enables one to more accurately predict how people will emotionally react. One student services dean stated:

“Each person responds in such different ways to change, information, positive strokes, critical feedback, new ideas, etc. You need to be able to understand how a person might respond to information in order to present it in a way that allows them to hear the whole thing and not shut down due to an emotional response.”

Another academic dean notes:

“Leadership is primarily a relationship-driven job. If I have a heightened level of understanding of how others are feeling and why, I may be able to guide conversations to deepen mutual understanding of an issue and to come to a mutually beneficial/agreeable decision.”

In both examples, the deans recognize that their employees are individuals and process information differently. Furthermore, these deans understand that each emotion conveys its own pattern of possible messages and actions associated with those emotions. Through understanding emotions, deans are much more likely to create meaningful, positive interactions.

**Managing emotions.** The domain of managing emotions focuses on modulating emotions, sometimes coming back to a feeling at a later time to manage the emotion effectively. The process of reflecting on and examining emotions promotes personal understanding and growth. The ability to manage emotions enables one to integrate emotion and thought to make effective decisions.

Similar responses emerged from both academic and student services deans around managing emotions. Responses from both groups of deans demonstrated that effective decision making is highly linked to emotional awareness and understanding of one's own motivations.

An academic dean stated:

“As far as regulating one’s emotions, these positions carry with them a great deal of stress, and that can obviously be enormously destructive if one can’t regulate [their emotions].”

Emotions are expressed on a continuum, from extreme to very mild, to seemingly not at all by some. In this example, the dean demonstrates the *managing emotions* domain of emotional

intelligence, through understanding that how a reaction is perceived may be just as significant as what is internally processed. In other words, it is important for a person in a position of authority and influence to be aware and manage their response to situations. In doing so, emotions may promote one's own and others' personal and social goals.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

Each year, more than ten million students are enrolled in public, two-year colleges in the United States. The success of community college students in their academic endeavors has significant implications for the United States. Building and leading community college institutions that support the success of students is largely the work of academic and student services deans.

In the current climate of higher education, where change is constant and rapid, it is critical that leaders who serve as deans are able to build positive, trusting relationships with faculty and staff as they strive to fulfill the mission of the organization and support students in their pursuit of degree attainment. Emotional intelligence has proven to be important, both personally and organizationally, to workplace outcomes.

In the age of information, emotional intelligence provides yet more data for leaders of organizations to consider. In particular, in open access institutions such as community colleges where there is immense diversity of individuals, emotional intelligence provides more information to make effective decisions.

“Emotional information is crucial. It is one of the primary forms of information that human beings process. That doesn't mean that everybody has to process it well. But it

does mean that it is circulating around us, and certain people who can pick up on it can perform certain tasks very well that others cannot perform” (Mayer, 2012, p.2).

Knowing that the ability model of emotional intelligence is perceived to be important, and that deans self-report behaviors associated with the ability model of emotional intelligence invites further exploration.

### **Implications for Practice**

One of the key findings of this study is that although deans indicate that they place a high level of importance on emotional intelligence, and believe that skills in the emotional domain can positively impact their leadership, they report demonstrating behaviors reflective of this value less often than one might expect. This finding suggests an opportunity for meaningful professional development.

Often the most challenging element of creating professional development activities is obtaining “buy-in” from those involved. That initial problem is minimized in this case, as over half of the deans in the Washington State Community and Technical College System have, by and large, already “bought into” the concept of emotional intelligence and its importance to their effectiveness as leaders. Given the level of importance that deans place on the emotional intelligence domains, it is likely that professional development opportunities about how to operationalize and implement the concepts of emotional intelligence into day-to-day leadership practice would be positively received. By postulating in their ability model, that emotional intelligence is malleable and can be developed and refined over time, Mayer and Salovey (1997) provide added support for targeted professional development in this area.

Cherniss (2000) further outlines four main reasons why the workplace would be a logical setting for evaluating and improving emotional intelligence competencies:

1. Emotional intelligence competencies are critical for success in most jobs.
2. Many adults enter the workforce without the competencies necessary to succeed or excel at their job.
3. Employers already have the established means and motivation for providing emotional intelligence training.
4. Most adults spend the majority of their waking hours at work.

Many quality professional development programs for emotional intelligence are already available and used throughout the country. The American Society for Training and Development has published guidelines for assisting people in organizations to cultivate emotional intelligence competencies which distinguish outstanding performers from average ones (Cherniss & Adler, 2000).

Professional development focused on emotional intelligence and that emphasizes andragogical approaches to learning that are problem-based and collaborative can provide deans the opportunity to connect real-life leadership experiences to their learning. Framing the domains of emotional intelligence as relevant to the specific everyday practice of deans is apt to increase the ability of these deans to operationalize and implement new skills and exhibit them more frequently in the workplace.

A second implication raised by the findings suggest that selection is another area of possible investigation. Deans overwhelmingly identify emotional intelligence as an important factor in their success as leaders. Therefore, the possibility that implementing screening tools during the hiring process that help to identify potential leaders who already exhibit a high level of emotional intelligence may have a positive impact for organizations. Although skills related to emotional intelligence are malleable and can be honed with time and training, leaders who have a

higher “baseline” in the domains of emotional intelligence when they enter the role of dean will be able to more rapidly acclimate to their environment and help to positively manage transitions for the faculty, staff, and students with whom they work.

### **Limitations**

The fact that any individual perceives him or herself as favorable is not a new concept. Self-report scales rely on individuals' endorsement of descriptive statements about themselves and may lack accuracy. Socially desirable responding is defined by Paulhus (2002) as a response pattern in which test-takers represent themselves with an excessive positive bias. Therefore, it is not surprising to observe that institutional leaders view themselves as emotionally connected beings.

While this study demonstrates that academic and student services deans believe they value and practice emotional intelligence, this study does not present a mechanism for evaluating a) whether the respondents actually practice or value emotional intelligence to the extent their responses claim, or b) whether the respondents are actually effective leaders. With any self-reporting measure, results can only provide information about past or likely actions. Responses may not describe how people will actually act in a given situation.

Furthermore, participants in this study were not selected at random. All deans in the Washington State technical and community college system were invited to participate individually, however, the survey is essentially a self-select survey and as such cannot be seen to be representative of all Washington deans. Self-selection is likely to introduce a bias into the results.

Finally, although a representative sample was achieved, it remains difficult to capture an entire system ethos with a study population consisting of 65 academic deans and 18 student services deans. A much larger sample, likely to include deans outside of Washington State,

would be needed to truly make these results representative. Despite unexpected findings and limitations, there are both theoretical and practical implications of this study that may serve as the foundation for future works.

### **Future Research**

The construct, knowledge, and applicability of emotional intelligence continue to develop with time. This study represents a modest exploration in the field of higher education and serves as a step in a much needed wider and deeper analysis of leadership practices.

In regard to hiring individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence, as well as training existing staff to be more emotionally intelligent, multiple studies have demonstrated improved competence and benefits across the organization (Cherniss & Goleman, 1998; Cherniss, 2000; Stys & Brown, 2004; Pellitteri, 2002; Bar-On & Parker, 2000). Trainings for emotional intelligence in the workplace can occur at all levels, and several evaluated programs have found success in developing more emotionally intelligent workforces (Stys & Brown, 2004). More studies of this nature and perhaps expanded to other such other topics as promotion and tenure could be beneficial.

Finally, future studies in this area could compare supervisor and subordinate perceptions. By exploring the perceptions of supervisors and subordinates, a clearer understanding of effective and ineffective leadership practices might be developed, which when understood collectively, could result in more successful outcomes for institutions.



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## Appendix A

### Email Invitation to Participants

Hello,

You are receiving this email because you have been identified as a dean of an instructional or student services area at a community or technical college that is part of the Washington State CTC system. We would like to invite you to participate in a survey that is being conducted as part of a doctoral research project at the University of Washington. The purpose of this survey is to investigate the perceptions of Washington State community college deans' values related to particular leadership characteristics. The survey is short and should only take you 4-7 minutes to complete. Your responses are confidential and your participation will provide valuable information about leadership within the CTC system.

You can begin the survey by following this link:

<https://catalyst.uw.edu/webq/survey/hibbs1/285863>

Thank you in advance for your participation. If you have any questions about the survey or the research project, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Lauren Hibbs and Valerie Sundby-Thorp  
Doctoral Candidates  
University of Washington Tacoma

## **Appendix B**

### Washington State Community College Dean Survey

#### Introduction & Informed Consent

You are being invited to participate in a research study surrounding Washington State community and technical college dean's use of particular leadership characteristics.

Leadership is not easily defined. In fact, “there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept” (Stogdill, 1974, p. 259). The purpose of this survey is to investigate the perceptions of Washington State community college deans’ values of particular leadership characteristics. This survey should take approximately 4-7 minutes to complete and includes four components: (1) general demographic information, (2) one ranking question, (3) twenty-four multiple choice questions and (4) three short answer questions. At the beginning of each section, you will be directed by the general heading and a short description of the area of focus.

Your input on this survey is very important. The information you provide will be used to make contributions to the higher education community and inform future studies.

Minimal risk is involved in this study. Your answers will be confidential and protected. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. You may choose to not answer any questions by simply clicking "next." By moving forward in the survey, you are providing informed consent. If you wish not to participate, you may stop now by exiting your web browser.

This research project has been approved by the University of Washington's Institutional Review Board. Any complaints or concerns regarding human subject rights can be directed to UW's Human Subjects Division (206 543-0098, [hsdinfo@uw.edu](mailto:hsdinfo@uw.edu)).

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or your participation, please contact the researchers: Lauren Hibbs (hibbsl@uw.edu) or Valerie Sundby-Thorp (vsundby@uw.edu). We thank you very much in advance for your time.

### Part I

This section is included to allow researcher to create data analysis in the form of cross tabulations to compare survey data across multiple demographics.

What gender do you identify with?

Male

Female

What is your age?

25-34 years old

35-44 years old

45-54 years old

55-64 years old

65-74 years old

75 years or older

To what race or ethnic group do you most identify?

African American and/or Black

Asian / Pacific Islander

Caucasian (non-Hispanic)

Hispanic and/or Latino

Native American or American Indian

More than one race

Other

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? *If currently enrolled, highest degree received.*

High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)

Some college credit, no degree

Trade/technical/vocational training

Associate

Bachelor

Master

Doctorate

In what academic discipline did you receive your bachelor's degree (if applicable)?

Fill in the blank

Not applicable

In what academic discipline did you receive your masters (if applicable)?

Fill in the blank

Not applicable

In what academic discipline did you receive your doctorate (if applicable)?

Fill in the blank

Not applicable

What Dean role do you currently occupy?

Dean of instruction or equivalent

Dean of student services or equivalent

Other [fill in]

How many years have you been working in your current role as a Dean?

[Fill in]

How many years in total have you been in the role of Dean (at any institution)??

[Fill in]

How many direct reports do you have (i.e., how many employees do you directly supervise)?

[Fill in]

How many indirect reports do you have (i.e., how many employees report to people who you supervise)?

[Fill in]

### Part II

*The following section will ask you to rank four abilities in terms of their order of importance.*

For the descriptions below, assign a ranking of 1 to 4 for each leadership ability for how important do you feel each is in your role as a community college dean. You must choose a unique ranking for each ability.

Scale: 1 least importance - 4 highest importance

a\_\_\_The ability to recognize how individuals and those around them are feeling.

b\_\_\_The ability to generate emotions in self and others.

c\_\_\_The ability to understand simple and complex emotions.

d\_\_\_The ability to manage emotions.

### Part III

*The following section will ask you to identify your frequency in engaging in certain behaviors.*

Thinking about your typical work week, please use the following scale to indicate the level of frequency on the following behaviors:

(1) Never (2) Rarely (3) Sometimes (4) Often (5) Almost Always

How often do you rely on your “gut feeling” to help you make decisions?

How often do you consciously reflect on your own emotional state?

How often do you pay attention to emotional cues such as tone of voice and posture during conversations?

How often do you make a conscious effort to change your emotional state?

How often do you find yourself feeling empathy for others?

How often do you find that the way you are feeling about a situation affects the way you think about a situation or your ability to problem solve?

How often do you use your emotional skills to help you “figure people out?”

How often do you consider the emotional state of others when trying to understand their actions or reactions?

How often do you consider the root causes of emotional reactions in others in order to better understand them?

How often does your decision making include both thinking and feeling?

How often do you take time out to intentionally process your feelings or the feelings of others?

How often do you find yourself disengaging from your emotions during times of stress or conflict?

#### Part IV

In your role as a Dean, please use the scale to indicate the level of importance you place on the following statements:

(1) Not important (2) Slightly Important (3) Neutral (4) Moderately Important (5) Very Important

How important is it for you to spend time reflecting on how your behavior or words impact others?

How important is it that you consciously think about how your emotions and thoughts affect your behavior?

How important is your ability to manage anger, stress, excitement and frustration?

How important is feeling confident in your abilities?

How important is understanding your own emotional state?

How important is it for you to consider other people’s points of view in your decision making?

How important is it to understand the feelings of others?

How important is it to be able to predict how others will react to a given situation?

How important is it to have a service orientation to those you lead (i.e., how important is it to think about meeting the needs of those you lead)?

How important is it to plan, react to, and adjust the tone of a conversation?

How important is planning what you are going to say before saying it?

How important is it for you be in tune with your emotions during difficult situations?

### Part V

Q1: Overall, do you feel that your ability to perceive, understand and regulate emotions in yourself and others is a factor in your leadership? Why or why not?

Q2: Do you believe that leaders who demonstrate a high level of skill in perceiving, understanding, and regulating emotions are more effective? Why or why not?

Q3: Can you describe a situation in which your ability to perceive, understand or regulate emotions in yourself and others resulted in effective leadership?

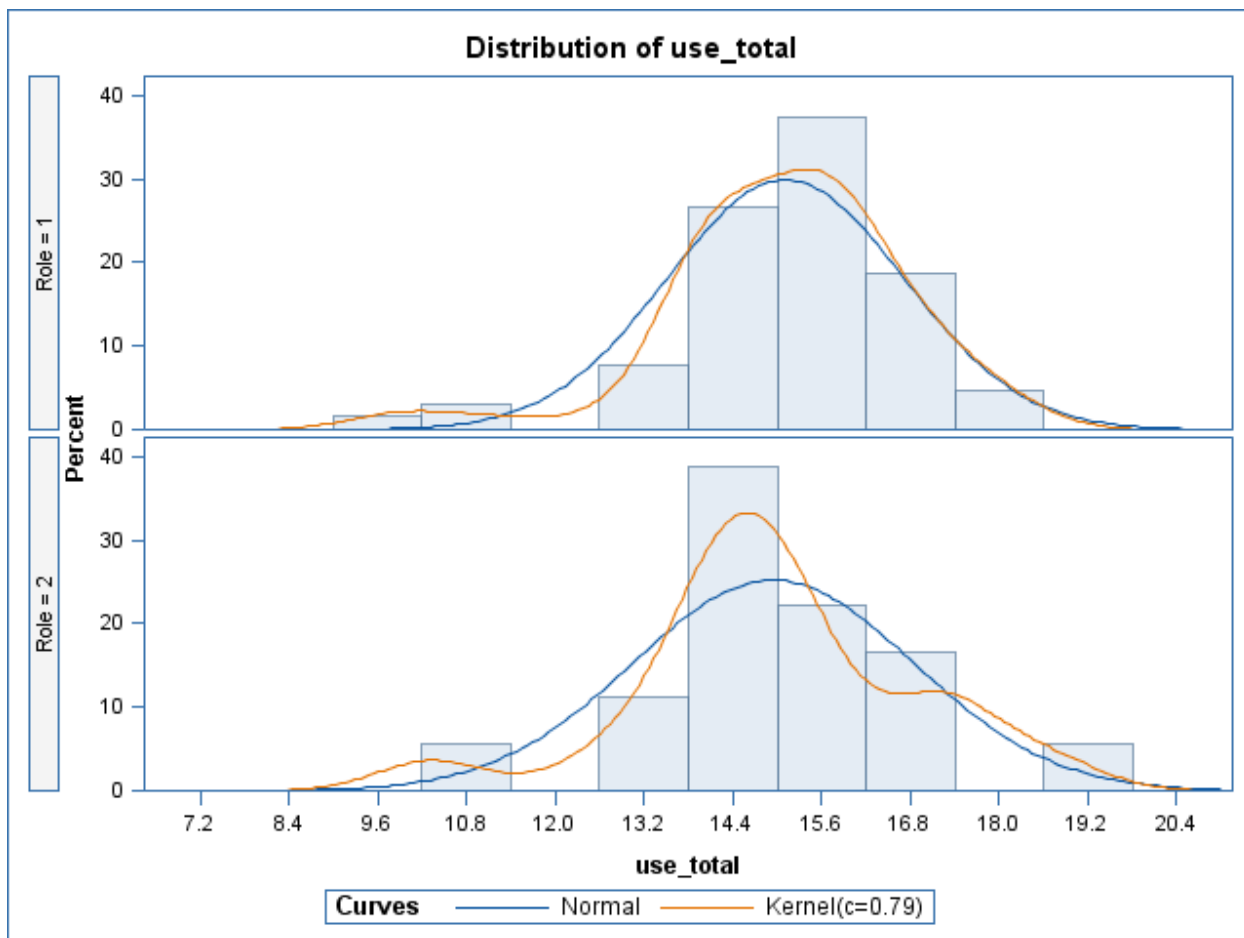
### Closing

This completes the questions for this survey. The researchers thank you for your time and honesty in participating in this study.

## Appendix C

### Statistical Graphs

Distribution of Frequency of Reported Behavior by Group (Role)

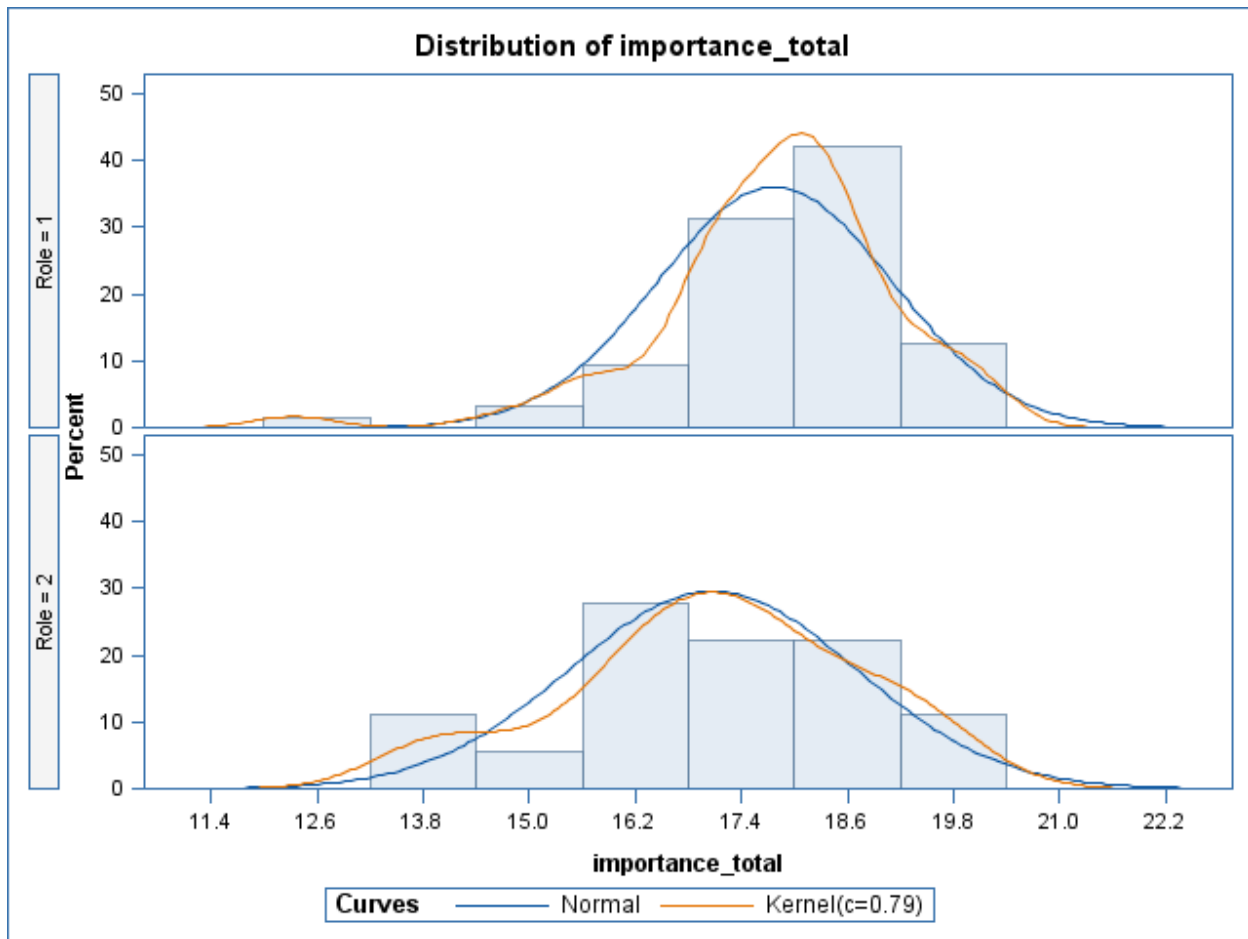


Role 1: Academic Deans

Role 2: Student Services Deans



## Distribution of Importance Rankings by Group (Role)



Role 1: Academic Deans

Role 2: Student Services Deans