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Managing Legitimacy through Presidential Transition in the Bible College

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MANAGING LEGITIMACY THROUGH PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION
IN THE BIBLE COLLEGE

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership

by
Robert Morris Wood, Jr.
May 2008

Accepted by:
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the presidential transition at Northland Baptist Bible College and compare it to the current literature on presidential transition with respect to the grounded theory of social legitimacy. The context of the examination was the presidential transition of a long-time president leaving office and passing the mantle to a younger, incoming president. The methods for this research study were qualitative and phenomenological in nature.

The data was collected through interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and literature review. A strong triangulation of information aided in providing a comprehensive picture of the presidential transition that transpired at Northland.

In comparison to the review of current literature on presidential transition, the Bible college stands in stark contrast to its secular counterpart in several ways. I recommend three propositions that are paramount for any Bible college attempting a successful Presidential transition: 1) Bible college leadership must learn the perceived needs and expectations of the constituency before pursuing a presidential transition, 2) Bible colleges must select a president who embraces the embedded culture of the institution, and 3) the new president must be patient in exercising his or her newly bestowed power. These findings presented a new road map for Bible Colleges to follow as they embark on their dangerous journey through the stormy seas of presidential transition. Finally, recommendations for further study were suggested to increase our microscopic knowledge base on presidential transition within the Bible college movement.

DEDICATION

As I complete this dissertation my heart is full of thanks to many people who encouraged and helped me keep my eyes on the prize.

I could not have completed this project without the loving patience and assistance from my wife, Robin. She was an incredibly competent helpmeet that enhanced my work at every stage. I also appreciate my children, Cotter, Caeleigh, and Caeden, who endured an often absent dad due to heavy travel schedules and the time spent staring at the computer screen while they played cars on my back just to be with me.

To my Dad, Mom, and brother, Stephen, who pushed, prodded, encouraged, gave, and expected a successful result.

To my committee members and their many insights along the way, especially Dr. Flanigan and his extra efforts on behalf of this out-of-state, busy administrator desperately trying to complete a long journey.

To Dr. Olson, Dr. Ollila, Dr. Horn and my fellow administrators that gave me leeway in tight times to work on this project and continued to encourage me despite the heavy administrative burden we share.

To Aunt Shirley Canaday and Adam Blumer for the gift of their editing talents as well as their insight and support.

And finally to all those in the traditional Bible college movement, specifically those I serve with at Northland Mission, Inc., that believe in the strength and poignancy of the model and the necessity of its survival to impact the next generation of harvest-focused laborers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The first chapter provides a short introduction to the phenomenological research conducted. The chapter begins with a general context and background for the inception, growth, and decline of the Bible College Movement and a brief history of Northland Mission, Inc. The chapter will then make a statement of the problem followed by the research questions, the significance of the study, and the limitations of the study.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Within the broad framework of higher education lies a small faction of educators bent on instilling a Christian worldview in its students. Within that grouping of Christian higher education lies a detachment known as the “Bible College Movement.” This service-minded movement has spawned many great leaders, organizations, and mission endeavors around the world. Historically, the YMCA, the Salvation Army, numerous mission agencies, and a myriad of churches find commonality in their leadership by Bible college alumni.

The late 1800s saw the birth of this movement when A. B. Simpson officially began the Missionary Training Institute (now Nyack College) in New York in 1883. Evangelist D. L. Moody quickly followed by opening the doors of The Training School

of the Chicago Evangelism Society (now Moody Bible Institute) in 1887, and A. J. Gordon joined the ranks with the Boston Missionary Training School (now Gordon College) in 1889. From there the movement expanded at a feverish pace in an effort to evangelize a lost world and to rally the hoi polloi to the charge.

The national culture in the late 1800s was broadly accepting of the Bible College Movement with its goals and purposes. More recently, however, this once-thriving movement has been weighted down with the inevitable changes of prevailing culture. Davidhizar (1996) reveals “The same fire and spirit which marked the movement in the 1870s with D. L. Moody is still present, but the fan of the flames has changed in form and in function. In these days, the Bible college finds itself wrestling with mission statements in an attempt to justify its existence or it is plodding through a self-study process in search of regional accreditation” (Davidhizar , 1996, p. 9). A present glance at the national culture would indicate that there are far fewer students excited about training for occupational ministry or even ministry in general. “Bible Colleges experienced an aggregate 15% decline in enrollment between 1979 and 1986” (Kallgren, 1991, p. 28). Many of the students who are interested in God’s work want to do so at a distance. It seems that the younger generation of contemporary Christians are more apt to pursue a secular vocation and then to satisfy their consciences on the issue by giving money to help support God’s work rather than by presenting their lives to be an integral element of it. As the national culture has changed, the Bible College Movement has been left struggling for students, champions, and even for survival. The struggle is well-documented in many works including Lindsey’s “A case study of a Bible college in

North Carolina: Issues pertaining to the continuance of small higher education institutions (1997),” Kallgren’s “Bible colleges: Their present health and possible futures (1988)” and “The Invisible Colleges (1991),” and Davidhizar’s “The American Bible College: An Eye to the Future (1996).”

This crisis has led many Bible colleges on a desperate pursuit for legitimacy from the wrong audience to ensure their financial stability and longevity. Sadly, the mêlée for many institutions culminates in a compromise or abandonment of the original mission of the institution, an all-out fight for survival, or unfortunately, complete extinction.

THE BIBLE COLLEGE MOVEMENT

The Bible College Movement is most often defined by a strong focus on Bible education, strict Christian service components, unwillingness to waver under pressure from the secular world, and most definably, a commitment to producing tomorrow’s full-time occupational ministry laborers. Regarding the specific purpose, “Mostert states that the Bible college is a distinct type of school that is properly classified as a professional or specialized institution with the primary purpose of preparing students for Christian ministries or church vocations” (cited in Bennett, 2000, p. 5, cited in Kallgren, 1989, p. 11).

This movement could be further divided up into many denominational branches, but Virginia Brereton says,

Despite the considerable differences among these groups, they found commonality in their dissent from the intellectual currents represented by the universities and university-influenced seminaries and agreed on the need to provide educational institutions for the instruction of the upcoming generation of 'sound' religious leaders and Christian workers (Brereton, 1990, p. 33).

The Bible College Movement is vitally important to the future of Christian education and Christian missions that directly impacts ministries all over the world. K. G. Hanna (1986) writes that church historian Herbert Kane “estimates that 75% of the evangelical missionaries from America were trained in Bible schools” (p. 54). Bennett (2000) also confirms that the atmosphere created on Bible college campuses is unique and sustainable by explaining, “The distinct focus of the Bible college produces an atmosphere that is difficult to duplicate in other types of institutions. If the members of the movement are willing to embrace Bible principles over pragmatic ideas and associations and resist the temptation to achieve credibility at the expense of institutional integrity and fidelity to mission, then tomorrow may indeed be a bright day for the movement as a whole” (p. 137). One such contemporary institution holding fast to its original mission is Northland Baptist Bible College which is located deep in the north woods of Dunbar, Wisconsin.

HISTORY OF NORTHLAND MISSION, INC.

Northland Mission, Inc., was founded in 1961 as a Christian camp by entrepreneur Dr. Paul “Papa” Patz. In spite of personal hardship and several near bankruptcies, “Papa” Patz invented and patented several pieces of farm-cleaning equipment that altered his destiny by creating a significant fortune. Northland Mission Camp was a realization of his dream. The “second phase of the development of the ministry—the Bible Institute—was the result of Patz’s desire to give lower-class kids of northeast Wisconsin something he never had: a formal education” (Bennett, 2000, pp. 88-89). On September 7, 1976, Northland Mission, Inc., birthed a small Bible institute. In 1977-78, the first president, James Wooster, encouraged the board of directors to make the transition in title and focus to Northland Baptist Bible College, a four-year Bible college offering nine degrees pertinent to ministry service. The college continued to grow as the campus took shape. But Wooster’s direct influence was short-lived.

A few years later, the board minutes state that “on April 14th, 1980, Wooster announced to the board that the Lord had worked in his heart during the school’s recent missions conference to resign as President in order to return to the mission field” (cited in Bennett, p. 94). The college went without a president for the next four years. Although led by an able team of godly men, the student body began a numerical decline. Finally, in 1983, the board determined to hire Dr. Les Ollila, a man known as a visionary rather than an experienced educator or administrator. At that time, the small college had about 120 students. Over the next twenty years, under the leadership of Dr. Ollila, Northland

Baptist Bible College grew to more than 750 undergraduate students, and several graduate programs were established with an enrollment of 31 graduate students. Dr. Ollila was a dynamic, charismatic leader who was prophetic by nature, and people were immediately drawn to his simple style and “Yooper” backwoods humility.

Dr. Ollila faithfully served as president of Northland Baptist Bible College for eighteen years, dedicating his heart, soul, and body to the institution. Fatigue was inevitable. His comments began to reflect his feelings of inadequacy in the role of college president. His remarks suggesting the need for a replacement increased over the years and he even recommended to the board and fellow administrators the need to find a replacement for him. On August 18, 2001, his wife, Charlene, experienced an aortic dissection and was rushed to the hospital, where the family was told to say their last good-byes. Fortunately, Charlene survived the surgery and has fully recovered, but it became apparent to Dr. Ollila that he could not continue as president. The search was already underway, and God quickly brought His plan to light.

In 2002, the Northland board called Dr. Matthew R. Olson to take the reins and lead Northland Mission, Inc., into a new era of ministry. Dr. Olson was first and foremost a church planter who also became an impassioned pastor. Once again the board resisted the temptation to hire an experienced educator as president in favor of a visionary with a focused ministry mind and extensive ministry experience. This would prove to be a wise decision.

Standing at the helm of a Bible college and navigating it through the murky waters of today's culture, financial pressures, and the enticement of missional change is no easy task. Thomas Wolbrecht (1990) conducted a case study of Judson Baptist College, a small Christian college that was forced to close its doors. He began his work with a review of the literature and concluded that three domains of experience had led to this closure. The first was a violation of the institutional culture or commonalities of the institution. The second was the management strategy and the manner in which resources, revenue, and expenditures were handled to meet the current challenges. The third domain involved the actual leadership of the college. Institutional destiny can be negatively affected by its leadership. This leadership may include a board and/or an administrative team of various members, but most often includes the office of the president of the institution. One may logically draw the conclusion that the leadership transition from one president to the next is a difficult challenge for the constituency of any college to experience. In light of this challenge, fostering confidence within the constituency in the character and practices of the new president is of primary concern to aid in a smooth transition and to make the outcomes profitable for all those involved. Northland Mission, Inc., recently experienced such a transition of presidential leadership. Hereafter in this research, the titles "Northland Mission, Inc.," "Northland Baptist Bible College," and "Northland" will refer to the same organizational entity and will be used interchangeably.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Educational institutions need solid, visionary, and trustworthy leadership now more than ever. Historically, poor leadership has been one of the major catalysts capable of significantly weakening and even destroying an institution or its mission. In *The Dying of the Light*, James Tunstead Burtchaell (1998) summarizes the concern present during a presidential transition this way: “In many stories the critical turn away from Christian accountability was taken under the clear initiative of a single president” (p. 826). He follows that pronouncement with an affirmation that “with very few exceptions, the presidents who have been strategists of religious alienation have been large souled, attractive, and trusted” (p. 827). Thomas Wolbrecht’s (1990) study of Judson Baptist College in its final ten years and its three presidents revealed flaws in adaptation to institutional culture, poor management strategy, and questionable leadership. These failures ranged from presidential mistakes to presidential selection errors by the board. That leadership in a traditional Bible college is even more crucial because of the daunting over-arching self-appointed task facing the movement: evangelizing a lost world. Virginia Brereton (1990) though not specific in her numbers, comments that Bible schools (colleges and institutions) as a whole do not have a good survival rate. Currently Bible colleges have no road map to help guide them through successful presidential transitions despite the inevitable institutional crisis these transitions produce.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study attempts to answer two research questions. First, “What factors led to a successful leadership transition at Northland Mission, Inc.?” The answer to this question is designed to provide a road map for those institutions that will face a similar transition in the future. Specifically, this information will be helpful to Bible colleges or similar institutions, but the research will be broadly applicable to all leadership transitions. Second, the research will answer the question “How has Northland’s presidential transition fostered legitimacy from the constituency?” Legitimacy is a prerequisite for any to claim a successful leadership transition, and this study is designed to examine the factors that built that legitimacy.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Phenomenology. Phenomenology is a study that draws directly from people who experienced a given phenomena and that seeks to tell the story from their perspective. Stan Lester (1999) states, “The purpose of the phenomenological approach is to illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation” (p. 1).

Bible College. The application of the term “Bible College” enjoys a broad spectrum of meanings in contemporary educational vernacular, but a few elements are “fundamental to the identity of all Bible Colleges” (Lindsey, 1997, pp. 19-20). The most obvious “is the Bible/theology major which is required of all students enrolled in a traditional four year program” (Lindsey, 1997, p. 20). Davidhizar (1996) suggests the addition of two more components: “Secondly, in order to graduate, a Bible college requires each student to participate in some form of Christian service or ministry” and “the third feature of a Bible college is the professional ministry major or emphasis” (p. 3). It should be noted that many schools no longer require the second and third requirements but continue to claim their nomenclature as “Bible College.”

Legitimacy. Human and Provan (2000) suggest a “generalized perception that the actions, activities, and structure of a network are desirable and appropriate” (p. 328). Legitimacy could also be described as “the rhetorically constructed and publicly recognized congruence between the values of a corporation and those of a larger social system in which it operates” (Hearit, 1995, p. 1). It should also be noted that organizations “can only survive to the extent that they can convince their social environment that their use of exchange power is ‘rightful and proper’” (Hearit, 1995, p. 1).

Successful Presidential Transition. Martin (2004) has suggested “10 indicators” that a presidential transition is over:

- 1) When the new leadership team is in place
- 2) When the board will no longer follow the new president over the cliff
- 3) When the faculty tell the new leader what they really think at Senate meetings
- 4) When the first cycle of the next strategic plan has been completed
- 5) When the new president knows the real story of the institution, that is, where the bodies are buried
- 6) When the media exposure is earned
- 7) When the structural deficit has been eliminated
- 8) When institutional advancement capacity is developed
- 9) When a new building has been financed, designed, and constructed
- 10) When a new degree program has been launched. (pp. 230-233)

It is easily arguable that a component of “value infusion” should also be included in the definition of successful presidential transition. No new president could be deemed successful without garnering legitimacy. Philip Selznick (1957) suggests that “when value-infusion takes place, however, there is a resistance to change” (p. 18). It should be considered that the new president and the institution should have shared values that permeate the atmosphere.

Lindsey (1995) explains that, in the story of Greensboro Bible and Literary School, “the loss of confidence in the leadership of the school” was a major contributing factor to the closure of the institution (p. 112). It is crucial that the Bible college survive this era to benefit existing churches and ministry organizations and to ensure the continuity of such organizations into a new generation. Therefore, it is advantageous to the current administrations and constituencies of those colleges to examine potential crisis points they may encounter within their leadership experience.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research study will be a phenomenological design focusing on the successful transition from Dr. Ollila to Dr. Olson in the role of president at Northland Mission, Inc. This research is intended to provide an in-depth model of successful leadership transition from the eyes of those who served at Northland Baptist Bible College under the leadership of both presidents. The purpose of this study is twofold: first, to identify the elements present in a successful presidential transition; and second, to recommend actions institutions can take to facilitate a successful presidential transition that fosters legitimacy throughout the constituency. The impact and significance of this study cannot be overstated as, currently, no comprehensive research has been conducted dealing with presidential transitions within the Bible college movement. A practical framework will be useful in giving direction to the board and search committees facing a presidential transition within their institution. Bible colleges must succeed in their calling, and

utilizing a positive transition road map can help ensure a healthy future for the traditional Bible college.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The research conducted is exclusive to Northland Mission, Inc. The results should be valuable to any organization facing a presidential change, but as in any case study, the results may be particular to that institution. All of the research done, though in-depth, will be internal to Northland. No attempt will be made to determine how the external public or Northland-related constituencies (such as alumni) viewed the leadership transition at Northland.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

THE BIBLE COLLEGE MOVEMENT

Virginia Brereton (1990) illustrates the existence of the Bible College Movement by dividing its saga into three major periods of time. Her three stages include Foundings, Expansion, and Toward Academic Respectability. She believes the founding saga spans 1882-1915. The Bible College Movement was “an informal movement made up of schools with similar goals and curricula, common cultural and religious outlooks, and similar histories” (Brereton, 1990, p. 78). These educational institutions usually began inauspiciously with a simple one- or two- year program of study. Brereton hypothesizes that these schools maintained an isomorphic state because “leaders and instructors found frequent opportunities to exchange ideas informally; they met during Bible conferences, revivals, and visits to each other’s institutions” (Brereton, 1990, p. 78).

Her second stage, Expansion, continues from 1915 to 1930. This era found its institutions experiencing a common trend toward a four-year course of study as well as significant facility growth. “Finishing the course became more important; now students often earned a diploma or certificate upon completion of prescribed studies” (Brereton, 1990, p. 82). Also, institution administrators began to focus on developing a defining statement of faith for their schools that embodied the institution’s theological

interpretations. “It was usually during stage two (though sometimes earlier) that the first statements of faith, which faculty and trustees were required to sign, came into being” (Brereton, 1990, p. 83). New Bible schools continued to be established, and overall the movement grew although it experienced difficult financial times along with the rest of the country. “Bible schools were affordable, whereas other types of ‘higher education’ were beyond the scope of most founding groups, especially during a time of economic hardship” (Brereton, 1990, p. 84).

Stage three, Toward Academic Respectability, she postulates as beginning in 1940 and continuing to the present. During this stage, Bible schools matured from mere schools and institutes to full-fledged colleges. In practical terms, these institutions added programs of study to their curricula and developed their libraries. Brereton (1990) states, “This is a time when Bible schools began to offer degrees, a bachelor’s or some sort—eventually a B.A. or B.S.” (p. 84). She also notes that while many schools made this crucial jump to stage three, unfortunately “A large number of schools, of course, closed before they got beyond stage one” (Brereton, p. 85).

CULTURAL PRESSURE

The cultural pressure exerted on the Bible College Movement is monumental. Historically, modern and cultural nuances run against the grain of this movement that challenges its constituents to follow the biblical mandate to “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17, KJV). Brereton (1990) affirms that

“fundamentalists were antimodernists in many senses” (p. 29). In modern American society, the cultural pressure is growing substantially as social interests and intellectual trends purport conformity and as political correctness trumps common sense. Hanna (1986) lists what he believes to be the five greatest tests to face the movement: enrollment, economics, consumerism, environment, and evolution (from Bible colleges to Christian liberal arts colleges). He says, “As Bible institutes and colleges enter their second century, they enjoy their greatest success and face their severest test” (Hanna, p. 54).

FINANCIAL PRESSURE

Hanna’s (1986) initial three tests have created major financial pressure on the movement. Of modern Bible colleges, he believes, “They are now living on the down side of expansion. More schools are competing for fewer students” (Hanna, p. 54). This decline in enrollment numbers is documented in various historical records. The AABC (Accrediting Association of Bible Colleges), an accrediting society begun in 1947, aptly illustrates the movement’s pressure from secular academia. Effective June 1, 2004, the AABC transitioned to the ABHE (Association of Biblical Higher Education) as even the term “Bible college” became too heavy an encumbrance for many schools to carry in today’s world. Lindsey (1997) says that “over-all attendance at Bible colleges has declined since the late seventies” (p. 53), and Kallgren (1991) confirms that assessment with statistics.

The economic issues facing the modern Bible college are due in part to the declining enrollment coupled with the loss of major sources of funds, including both private donors and government aid. Hanna (1986) states, “Government support and private gifts that once flowed freely are being carefully rationed. Just as Bible institutes and colleges are improving their facilities, increasing faculty salaries, and enlarging their libraries, the money supply is being squeezed” (pp. 54-55).

Hanna’s (1986) third problem, consumerism, deals with the modern societal needs of Bible college associates as driven by secular trends in educational institutions, workforce opportunities, and even international prospects for Christian service. Potential managers, whether secular or Christian, want students with marketable skills and the work ethic to foster success. “The expectations of students, prospective employers, and the supporting public are becoming major forces in determining educational objectives and programs” (Hanna, p. 55). The results of this kind of institutional drift can often be fatal. “Broadening the program to attract students is often self-defeating. In the process, distinctions are blurred and quality diluted. To be successful, Bible schools must specialize. Strength comes from clarity and simplicity, as well as relevance” (Hanna, 1986, p. 55).

Multiplying programs for the sake of attracting students is costly. Bulking a curriculum to appear well-rounded or to appeal to students seeking a wide range of occupations only weakens the focus and attention given to the core curriculum. Schools that spend their financial resources to increase their number of programs face the daunting challenge of preserving a quality curriculum with thinly spread capital.

Unfortunately, this often results in a cyclical depression within the institution by sacrificing their strengths and perhaps even their mission for the sake of growth.

LEADERSHIP CRISIS POINTS

Robert J. Radcliffe (1983) points out that “any decision to compromise mission is an administrative one” (p. 56). The landscape of Bible college history shows myriads of schools derailed from their mission by a single leader. James T. Burtchaell (1998) points out that many schools were forever altered because a specific leader was “religiously observant but not religiously motivated” (p. 826). He goes on to list a plethora of schools that had a pattern of movement from religious observation to no religious conviction at all during the tenure of one president. His list includes Dartmouth College, Beloit College, Gettysburg College, Davidson College, Lafayette College, Millsaps College, Wake Forest University, Linfield College, Boston College, The College of New Rochelle, St. Olaf College, and Concordia University Chicago as schools that have made this transition away from their religious heritage. It should be noted that his study covered only seventeen schools and he stated in many cases “it is difficult to identify any moment of critical turn” (Burtchaell, pp. 826-827).

Pressure to Change Mission. Hanna’s (1986) last problem facing the Bible College Movement, evolution, notes the severe tendency for institutional drift toward the academic prowess associated with the zenith of academia. Hanna says, “Some critics

have contended that the Bible college is simply a Bible institute on its way to becoming a Christian liberal arts college. Beginning with Harvard, American schools have tended to change in nature even as they improved in quality” (p. 55). Radcliffe (1983) strongly implies that a president’s leadership style may also greatly influence a compromise in original mission. “There does seem to be a demonstrable link between the potential compromise of mission of a conservative, Protestant, church-related college or university and the administration of such a school as far as organizational innovations and presidential leadership style” (Radcliffe, p. 86).

Pressure to Become Progressive. Another attractive distraction from a school’s original intent may be related to the tendency of a leader’s desire to attract more individuals to his or her cause. This desire may lead to a compromise in mission or a drastic, strategic change related to core curricula. Mostert (1986) found that “more than one-half of progressive Bible college presidents indicated a willingness to continue to develop more ‘non-Church-Related Educational Majors’ (NCREMs). On the choice of vision statements, respondents were divided between interpreting ‘ministry’ more broadly and broadening the mission to include students with non-religious vocational goals” (p. 212). Bennett (2000) quotes Witmer’s warning about the attempt of blending a Bible college with more progressive curricula.

If it seeks to meet both requirements of a general college and a Bible college, it will likely turn out to be neither fish nor fowl, neither a first-class general college nor an effective Bible college. It is very questionable

whether a liberal-arts-Bible college combination makes for institutional stability. One or the other will tend to dominate and stamp the institution with its emphasis. History indicates that a dual college usually becomes a liberal arts college. (p. 3)

Transition in Leadership. For a multitude of schools, the actual presidential transition, that period of time when it is known that one president will no longer serve until the new president functions in his complete leadership role, has been the catalyst to many institutional disasters. Martin and Samels (2004) suggest that “various sectors of the higher education community begin to claim openly that their leadership structure is in some form of ‘crisis’” and that “presidential transitions now exert an impact in shaping institutions well beyond the straightforward choice of their next leaders” (p. ix).

For any institution, experiencing a leadership change is a difficult task. For many, the actual process of leader selection can have a monumental bearing on the success or failure of the next leader. “Presidential transition should be viewed as an event in the life of an institution that is greater than the choice of its next leader” (Martin and Samels, 2004, p. 226). Valuable information regarding this topic of transition remains scarce. The difficulty continues for modern search committees to locate solid suggestions and consideration points in selecting a suitable president for their unique institution. “Very little that is specific to a proactive model for presidential transition has been found in the literature” (Stanley and Betts, 2004, p. 84).

Molding a New Team. Brubaker and Coble (1997) highlight yet another area of potential difficulty for a president assuming leadership as that of the preconceived perceptions and attitudes of his or her supporting administrative and management staff. Often a new president must work with staff remaining from the previous president's tenure. Brubaker and Coble explain, "A newly appointed superintendent may well find one or more high-level staff members who are not very happy about the new appointment. In fact, one of these leaders may have been a candidate for the position" (p. 24). This situation indeed poses problems for an incoming president and necessitates excellent communication and team-building skills to incorporate such staff members into the vision of the new administration.

Brubaker and Coble (1997) continue examining the challenges of a new leader in an organization by describing six categories of problems he or she may encounter specifically related to the residual personnel. These categories include 1) strategic differences with management, 2) problems with interpersonal relationships, 3) making strategic transitions, 4) difficulty in molding a staff, 5) lack of follow-through (solving petty problems), and 6) overdependence on school board (p. 22). All of these factors are prospective areas of derailment for an incoming superintendent and, if not handled well, could lead to his or her failure. The focus of Brubaker and Coble's research is on the position of a superintendent of schools; however, their factors apply in the higher academic realm as well.

There are numerous negative examples of transitions whose harmful and sometimes destructive tone has closed schools or, at the very least, dramatically altered

the mission of the school. Lindsey (1997) describes a negative circumstance that led to a positive outcome in the continuance of the Greensboro Bible and Literary School. In reviewing its thorny history, he shares how President Winfred R. Cox drove the college to close its doors for six months at one point due to financial pressure and because “personal allegations were made against Cox which became unbearable” (Lindsey, p. 96). Another president came along six months later and was able to reopen the college “with four teachers and eighteen students” (Lindsey, p. 91).

Strategic Changes. Wolbrecht (1990) wrote about Judson Baptist College and its tragic demise. In its final ten years, Judson went through three presidents and a multitude of strategic changes. Wolbrecht says, “As the story of these three leaders has revealed, a small Christian college president faces a unique challenge in the current climate in higher education. In these organizations, both institutional culture and management strategy are integrated in, and therefore substantially determined by, the person of the president” (p. 243). The first major deviation from the ideal course for Judson was its board’s desire to look for an “academic” to move Judson forward. The board found such a person, but his roots lay deep within Southern Baptist ideology, while Judson was a Conservative Baptist school. The Conservative Baptist Association (CBA) continued to work with the new president, Carl Jones, for a few years, but conflict was inevitable. Dr. Jones’ frustration with the prescribed limits led him to push for, and gain, a self-perpetuating board rather than a CBA rotating board. “Perhaps this was a deliberate move by the board and administration away from the larger constituency” (Wolbrecht, p. 79).

Jones also made a decision to relocate the campus for the opportunity of growth. The faculty was informed of the decision after its final deliberations, and this situation further compounded the difficulties of the time. “To this hurt was added the further pain of the perception that by and large the Judson family was being discounted in the decision-making process” (Wolbrecht, p. 94). There was a disconnect between the administration and the employees that revealed itself through a questioning of the new president’s values. “Judson family members felt that the important management decisions of the college during these years, and especially in the ways in which they were decided, were not always in concert with the college’s core values” (Wolbrecht, p. 121). Though two more presidents during those final four years tried to rescue the conflict-laden college, the damage done was too great and another Bible college closed its doors in 1985. “At its core it was a cultural conflict, a conflict of core values” (Wolbrecht, p. 203).

The Leadership Void. Another crisis point in the leadership of a college is the period between the relinquishment of control by one president (either voluntarily or involuntarily) and the acceptance of the leadership role by the new president. Potentially, this period fosters insecurity in the constituents as well as a power struggle within the administration. Who’s in charge? Who makes the decisions? Langevin and Koenig (2004) suggest that an interim president is appropriate in several scenarios such as “the departure of a long-term president, the sudden, unforeseen departure of the president, or during a presidential sabbatical” (cited in Martin and Samels, p. 162). They remind

administrators that “ultimately, the goal of interim service is to prepare for new leadership” (cited in Martin and Samels, p. 161). They also advocate that “the interim chief executive can play a unique role in helping a college or university to reevaluate its longer-term leadership needs” (cited in Martin and Samels, p. 160).

Presence of Former President. Langevin and Koenig (2004) point to problems in transition when a long-term president does not vacate the institution after leaving his office, when the management style of the new president is at odds with his predecessor, or even when the new president does not interpret the mission of the school in the same practical ways as the alumni. As tenures of college presidents dwindle, it becomes noteworthy that the longer the current president serves, the more difficult the next transition most likely will become. When the tenure of a long-term president is over, easing the transition to a new president “almost always calls for a buffer or cushion between the old and the new” (Langevin and Koenig, p. 162). An institution that has enjoyed a positive experience with a long-term president can also become stamped with his essence. This personification of the institution creates significant fears among its constituents while going into the process of transition. Stanley and Betts (2004) make the following observations:

When a president serves for ten, fifteen, twenty years with effectiveness, mitigating conflicting expectations of primary constituencies, establishing and achieving consensus goals, and constructively resolving major college problems and challenges, her or his style and modus operandi generally

have become imprinted upon that institution. When such a president retires or resigns to accept another position, the various institutional constituencies can become apprehensive and insecure. Changes in leadership can be disturbing to any organization, especially when most of the organization's constituencies are comfortable and pleased with the outgoing leadership. (p. 83)

In these cases, the alumni and current academic personnel of the college begin to mentally picture what the new president should look like, and personal and operational expectations are built on the foundations of individual perceptions of the needs of the institution. “Not surprisingly, alumni will provide important perspectives at this time, based on what they believe the institution’s mission should be, uncompromised by faculty or departmental issues” (Zimpher, 2004, p. 115).

CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY AT NORTHLAND BAPTIST BIBLE COLLEGE

Several specific dynamics began to threaten the legitimacy Northland Baptist Bible College enjoyed from its constituents. These issues were unrelated to each other, yet all occurred in a matter of two years, creating a feeling of upheaval and insecurity upon the once-calm landscape of the college. These dynamics included the decision of the president to step down, the death of the institution’s founder, an unofficial appointment of an interim leader, and extreme financial pressure.

Dr. Ollila's Decision to Step Down. Several factors influenced Dr. Les Ollila's decision to step down as president of Northland Baptist Bible College. These included his physical exhaustion, his wife's health, his desire to spend more time investing in students on campus, and his firm belief that the time had come for another leader to take Northland into its next stage of existence in a modern culture. While his wife was recovering from her aortic dissection, Dr. Ollila confessed, "I knew instantly that God wanted me to cancel my road schedule . . . My number-one priority became my ministry to Charlene" (Kimbrough, 2002, p. 21). However, the president had no desire to leave his post without an able leader at its helm. Dr. Ollila stated, "The future of Northland is strong, and I'm looking forward to contributing by more involvement in the trenches" (Blumer, 2003, p. 6).

This was not the first time Northland had faced such a challenge. Its previous experience without a president had lasted four years and resulted in a stagnation of both programs and enrollment (Bennett, 2000, p. 95). With Dr. Ollila's decision to alter his ministry focus, the board became convinced as it had during the first presidential vacancy, "that a president was needed to provide singular leadership" (Bennett, 2000, p. 95).

Death of the Founder. Adding to the uncertainty of this period in Northland's history was the death of its founder, Dr. Paul "Papa" Patz, in November of 2000. The void left by this loving, generous, God-fearing man was great as faculty, staff, and alumni grieved and rallied around each other for support. In a tribute to the founder, Bennett

(2000) declared, “Your [Dr. Patz’s] ministry was one of vision and provision that continues to make it possible for so many to hear of the love of God that is freely offered to a world of sinful men . . . Your Northland family owes you much, and we will miss you” (p. 149).

Leadership Void Filled by Dr. Horn. As Dr. Ollila made the choice to begin withdrawing from administrative decision making and day-to-day operations of the college, Dr. Samuel Horn, the executive vice president, stepped in to fill the void. Dr. Horn’s natural administrative skills placed him in this key supportive role as he began to mediate between Dr. Ollila and the rest of the faculty and staff. Dr. Horn’s role was strictly unofficial, and he did not assume a title change. His involvement as “de facto” president was not intended to be a long-term solution, but instead was designed to smooth the transition period until a new president could take office. All administrative decisions funneled through Dr. Horn during this time; however, he never officially accepted the title of “president.”

Financial Crisis Facing the College. During this period, the college was also experiencing a decline in enrollment. This decline, of course, led the administration to consider necessary cutbacks to meet financial obligations to its faculty and staff. Added to this financial pressure was the loss of the founder as the key donor for many years. The predicament became even more serious as unmade decisions accumulated and crucial fiscal pressures threatened the college’s very existence.

These factors contributed to a crisis of legitimacy for Northland. The founder was gone, the president wanted to step down, an interim leader was in place, and the financial pressure was excruciating. Constituents, both internal and external to the college, began to feel uncertain about the direction and stability of the college itself. There were questions, both voiced and unspoken, that addressed these concerns. What was going to happen to Northland? The crisis was real, and a solution that would reassure the constituents and communicate a solid and legitimate future for Northland was essential.

LEGITIMACY THEORY

Thoughts within legitimacy theory have its roots in the “Anti-positivistic” paradigm. “Anti-positivism represents a third major shift in organizational thought in the 20th and 21st centuries” (Marion, 2002, p. 165). To better understand these paradigm shifts, we will borrow from a popular dialogue within the Bible college framework. The Calvinism-versus-Arminianism discussions pit positivistic and anti-positivistic arguments against each other. The strict Calvinist would argue a deterministic position under the guidance of an Almighty Hand, while the strict Arminian would argue for the latitude of man’s freewill within God’s sovereign rule. To the positivist, the actions of the organization or its leaders are still bound by organizational determination and, therefore, can have effect only by “having to adopt the organizational structure that is required by the contingency factors in order to gain organizational effectiveness” (Marion, p. 120).

The anti-positivistic theorists would argue that “managers are seen as having considerable discretion regarding structure and management style (this is a freedom of choice issue)” (Marion, p. 121).

A Historical View. Since its inception, institutional theory has undergone many changes. Selznick (1949) is one of the seminal theorists that gave institutions “life” rather than just a mechanical function. Selznick’s early works suggest that “the most important thing about organizations is that, though they are tools, each nevertheless has a life of its own” (Selznick, p. 10). Selznick simply proposed that an organization will adapt to its surroundings because of social pressures by non-rational people. Marion (2002) explains this concept by saying “A system is ultimately motivated by the need to survive . . . and will do whatever is needed to accomplish that end. If a system’s non-rational elements are sufficiently compelling, it may even change its stated or professed goals in order to assure its survival” (Marion, p. 69). With institutional survival as the ultimate goal, an adaptive pressure is added to its administrators’ decision-making process.

New Institutional theory sits within the framework of the anti-positivistic paradigm. Selznick (1992) argued that “the underlying reality—the basic source of stability and integration—is the creation of social entanglements or commitments . . . But when actions touch important interests and salient values or when they are embedded in networks of interdependence, options are more limited” (p. 232). The institution becomes

somewhat bound by its personal history and innate values to legitimize any new behaviors or decisions.

A variety of supporting and inter-relational theories may be considered when discussing institutional theory. One such valuable system of thought hails as the Social Legitimacy theory. This is a relatively new field of ideas and the body of literature and application has room for continued growth and development. Marion (2002) introduces legitimacy by suggesting that “An organization must be perceived as credible and ‘mainstream’ to achieve support from its public” (Marion, p. 282).

A Contemporary View. The theory of legitimacy has enjoyed a growing influence in the academic arena in the last decade. Mark Suchman (1995) believes the legitimacy literature can be divided into three basic sections. He says, “Within the existing literature one can discern three broad types of legitimacy, which might be termed pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy, and cognitive legitimacy” (Suchman, p. 577). According to Suchman, pragmatic legitimacy is derived from constituent value through one of three mechanisms: exchange of legitimacy through decision making, influence by representing the larger constituent interest, and the dispositional personality of the organization. Moral legitimacy is the idea of doing the right thing through one of four means: consequential outcomes as viewed by the constituent, procedural methods that are accepted as normal, structural activities that are featured, and personal charisma of the leadership in direction. And finally, Suchman’s cognitive legitimacy is based on the mission and its necessity viewed in two ways: the comprehensibility of the organization

accomplishing what it says it will accomplish and “taken-for-grantedness” that could be defined as a status enjoyed by managers who have created or who have attained external to their own efforts their own powerful social construct that most likely cannot be assailed by winds of change or dissidence (Suchman, p. 582). [Appendix A]

ACADEMIC PRESIDENTIAL LEGITIMACY

Rita Bornstein (2003) recently placed a practical and informative application of legitimacy theory through presidential transition into public hands in her seminal work *Legitimacy in the Academic Presidency: from Entrance to Exit*. Because of the significant relevance to my research at Northland and based on further applications of social theory throughout academia, I will spend considerable time summarizing her ideas and highlighting both the comparisons and contrasts to the events experienced by constituents during the presidential transition at Northland.

LEGITIMACY IN THE PRESIDENCY

Influences on Legitimacy. Bornstein (2003) suggests an excellent litmus test for applying legitimacy theory in an academic environment. She believes five factors directly influence presidential legitimacy: “individual, institutional, environmental, technical, and moral” (p. xiii). Individual influence, she believes, is derived from a leader’s background and includes such influences as career path choices, gender, religion

and race. Institutional influence, she believes, is derived from the internal cultural context of the actual transition process, including the traditions and norms that relate to the selection of a new president into the prevailing culture. She defines “environmental influence” as the “external context” that impacts a president’s legitimacy (Bornstein, p. 25). Examples of such environmental influences might include national depression, student enrollment decline, and problems in the surrounding community. Her fourth major factor is technical legitimacy as defined by the leader’s competency in “vision, strategic planning, management, budgeting, fund-raising, lobbying, academic and civic leadership” (Bornstein, p. 25). Bornstein believes a final major influence upon presidential legitimacy is the personal morality of the president. Such morality reveals itself in “ethical decision making, selfless devotion, and service to the mission and values of the institution” (Bornstein, p. 25). She adds that “every presidency reflects a different constellation and interaction of these factors, some acting as impediments and others as facilitators” (Bornstein, p. xiii).

Threats to Legitimacy. On the heels of these thoughts, Bornstein (2003) also states that every academic president must be aware of six threats to his or her legitimacy as a leader: “lack of cultural fit, management incompetence, misconduct, erosion of social capital, inattentiveness, and grandiosity” (p. xiii). By “lack of cultural fit,” Bornstein suggests that an incoming president must personally identify with the culture and belief system of the institution to which he or she has been appointed to serve (pp. 44-45). She adds that

“presidents perceived as the most influential ‘are those who fit well into the socially constructed story of the institution’ (Levin 1998, 420)” (Bornstein, p. 45).

Management incompetence, Bornstein postulates, occurs when an incoming president arrives with a lack of management expertise or an understanding of how the institution’s culture should affect his or her decisions. She points out that “well-known presidential missteps have involved spending too much on home or office renovations, receiving excessive compensation, failing to deal with allegations of administrator or faculty misconduct, making unpopular staff changes or arbitrary program cutbacks, and a host of other actions” (Bornstein, p. 49).

Misconduct on the part of a president is truly reprehensible not only because of the moral implications, but also because of the influence and the position as a role model a college president possesses. Although such accountability is rarely sought by institution leaders, a president is held to a higher moral standard. Therefore personal failure produces disappointment and disillusionment within his or her constituents. On a broader scale, such acts of misconduct grant an unspoken nod of approval or blanket permission to the students within his or her realm of influence to act in a similar fashion. Constituents within and without the institution will not take such acts lightly.

Another threat is the “erosion of social capital” (Bornstein, p. xiii). Bornstein states that “Dissatisfaction with a president’s actions accumulates in the institutional memory” (p. 50). She believes that the moment a president has burdened his or her staff and constituency with the consequences of poor decisions, he or she begins to lose legitimacy in their eyes.

Bornstein describes inattentiveness on the part of a president as a fifth threat to presidential legitimacy. Such inattentiveness, she argues, can erode the confidence of a constituency and raise questions about the president's ability to manage his or her responsibilities. Inattentiveness in fiscal management, personnel structure, and administrative decisions demonstrate a president's lack of commitment to the institution itself. A constituency expects a president to maintain a professional focus by not allowing civic, family, or personal concerns to detract from his or her attention to detail within the institution.

Finally, Bornstein considers grandiosity as a significant hazard for gaining and maintaining legitimacy as a president. Moving forward on major decisions, plans, or projects without proper and expected involvement by the board, administration, faculty, and staff of an institution jeopardizes a president's ability to lead. Personal and/or civic projects, while inherently beneficial to someone, may not be in keeping with the institution's culture or vision. A president who pushes his or her agenda without the full support of the constituency will suffer the consequences of such rash decisions.

Strategies to Enhance Legitimacy. Bornstein proposes a list of strategies to enhance presidential legitimacy.

The strategies for presidential legitimacy are summarized in the following caveats: (1) resist pressure to undertake major systemic changes without thorough review and constituent involvement unless the institution is in a crisis situation; (2) make all possible procedural changes to facilitate the

work of the institution; (3) respect the mechanisms of board and faculty governance; (4) consult, collaborate, and communicate; (5) absorb the culture and listen to opinion leaders; (6) stay attuned to trends in higher education and society; (7) develop a vision consistent with the culture and aspirations of constituents; (8) when the groundwork has been laid, act; (9) make principled decisions and expect the same of others; and (10) maintain a scholarly life and participate in the public discourse on educational issues. (p. 60)

LEGITIMACY IN THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION

Bornstein (2003) devotes the last portion of her book to the application of legitimacy theory as it relates specifically to the succession process of a presidential transition. “Ideally, the succession process should be smooth, with constituents participating in ceremonies reinforcing institutional traditions while expressing gratitude to the departing leader and warmly welcoming the new president” (Bornstein, p. 166). She includes practical strategies, possible threats, and suggested models of inaugurations that have proven to enhance presidential legitimacy.

Strategies to Enhance Succession Legitimacy. She proposes “the following strategies to enhance succession legitimacy: ceremonies and rituals, transition planning, and legacy planning” (Bornstein, 2003, p. 191). Bornstein believes that proper involvement in

inaugural ceremonies and traditions can boost the legitimacy of an incoming president by reaffirming the values and culture of the institution. Thus, the new president becomes a contemporary piece in the larger picture of the institution, while the departing president is appropriately recognized for his achievements. “The institution’s heroes and legends are recalled as background for the coming era” (Bornstein, p. 192). Such integration of both the departing and incoming presidents into one ceremony confers meaning and purpose to both individuals and unifies the institution’s identity by assigning ample attention to the past and the future.

Bornstein also suggests that “a successful transition process requires a plan for a smooth handoff of the baton of leadership from one president to another” (p. 193). Proper planning of each phase of the transition should be carefully undertaken with an adequate amount of time granted for all staff to be informed and assimilated into the process. When this step is taken, constituents gain ownership of the decisions made and are more apt to grant legitimacy to a president they believe was appointed through a legitimate process.

She also believes that careful legacy planning must be considered. Since “college and university constituents tend to talk about their institution’s history in terms of presidential eras,” it is wise to consider a president’s actions in light of the manner in which the president wishes to be remembered (Bornstein, p. 194). She cautions, however, that presidents should not overestimate their influence on the institution’s successes, nor spend an inordinate amount of time in self-congratulation. Nevertheless, she acknowledges that “presidents do try to acknowledge and build on the achievements

of their predecessors and often bring strengths that compensate for the weaknesses of the past” (Bornstein, p. 195).

Threats to Succession Legitimacy. Bornstein (2003) cautions those involved in the succession process of possible derailment factors. Since both the outgoing and incoming presidents are experiencing personal and professional changes simultaneously, careful and thoughtful consideration should be made to areas of endangerment to the smooth succession process. “As threats to the legitimacy of the succession process, I propose the following: (1) Pandora’s box, 2) intrusive predecessor, and 3) inattentive governing board” (Bornstein, p. 187).

By Pandora’s box, Bornstein communicates the idea that the board or search committee may voluntarily or involuntarily withhold valuable and crucial information about the institution’s fiscal situation or about the expectations of the new president. Unvoiced controversies rear their heads after the president takes office and leave him or her struggling to survive the ramifications of the previously undisclosed information.

Bornstein further suggests that an intrusive predecessor can be a major hindrance to a smooth succession. She believes that “boards seeing dignity and legitimacy for a departing president often make the mistake of establishing a new role as chancellor, quasi administrator or board member” (Bornstein, p. 188). When a predecessor is observable and involved, a new president may be impeded in his or her struggle for legitimacy. While she acknowledges that “continuing involvements and relationships of a former president may be harmless to the successor president if the new leader can establish and

maintain legitimacy,” she also points out that “if there are problems, the visibility and intrusiveness of the predecessor can delegitimize the new president” (Bornstein, p. 189).

Bornstein’s third threat to succession legitimacy is an inattentive governing board. Board members who view their role in the succession process as merely a presidential selection committee encumber the new president with unanswered questions and lack of support. Bornstein comments that “most boards do not see the necessity of getting involved in the ongoing care and feeding of their presidents. They are inattentive to a president’s need for support in the transition into the institution, during change, in crisis and at exit” (p. 190). Bornstein believes it is the board’s responsibility to be involved in every aspect of the succession process “to both dignify the exit and clear the field for the successor” (p. 190).

Models of Ceremony. Bornstein (2003) emphasizes multiple times the necessity of an impassioned and well-planned inaugural ceremony to picture the transition from one president to the next. “Three models of inaugurations have been identified, emphasizing stability, change, or innovation” (Bornstein, p. 183). The ceremony should be modeled from one of these three themes and should “reaffirm the meaning and power of the shared mission of the participants. They should excite the imagination with reminders of the unique institutional history and traditions” (Bornstein, p. 184). She believes the inaugural address is a crucial speech for an incoming president and should contain a clear vision and stated goals. She reminds the reader that a mere ceremony cannot assign legitimacy, but merely aids in its development.

In conclusion, Bornstein (2003) acknowledges that “success in a presidency is hard to measure, and different constituents may have different expectations and standards by which they hold the president accountable” (p. 18). Nonetheless, “measurable improvements in academic quality, institutional reputations, facilities, and financial health are generally accepted indices of presidential success” (Bornstein, p. xiv).

A BIBLICAL VIEW

As the Social Legitimacy theory is considered in its relationship to the administration of a Bible college, it is highly appropriate to dive into the historical accounts of such leadership transitions in the Bible, from which the Bible college itself draws its reason for existence.

Old Testament. In the Old Testament, one such leader in pursuit of social legitimacy in the eyes of his constituents was Saul, the man God’s prophet, Samuel, anointed to be the first king of Israel. Although chosen by God and then ceremoniously marked by the prophet, Saul was not recognized as a leader in the eyes of his peers until he had successfully performed an act of valor, whereby he gained the respect and trust of his constituents (1 Samuel 9-11).

Saul’s successor, David, was also chosen by God and anointed by the same prophet, yet he too faced a series of extreme circumstances God orchestrated over a number of years to prepare the Israelites for his leadership. One of the first public

appearances of this shepherd boy was his volunteer effort to slay the giant Goliath with merely a slingshot, a stone, and a heart of faith. When King Saul expressed disbelief in David's ability to accomplish such a feat by saying, "For thou art but a youth (1 Samuel 17:33, KJV)," David declared his credibility by describing his previous experience: "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth" (1 Samuel 17: 34-35, KJV). Much later, David asked for Saul's daughter's hand in marriage. Before acquiescing, Saul requested 100 Philistine foreskins as a dowry (1 Samuel 18:25). David "slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king" (1 Samuel 18:27, KJV). The full story of David's journey to legitimacy can be found in 1 Samuel 16 to 2 Samuel 1 of the Old Testament.

New Testament. The New Testament also offers solid examples that support the need of leaders to gain the perception of social legitimacy from their followers. The Apostle Paul, author of at least thirteen books of the Bible, made his entrance into the Bible account as Saul, the man appointed by Jewish religious leaders of his day to persecute and exterminate converts to Christianity. On the road to Damascus to oversee the death of such followers of Christ, Saul experienced a dramatic and authentic salvation event and became a follower of Christ himself. However, because of his past occupation, early church members did not immediately receive Saul as a legitimate Christian. In fact, it was not until he experienced persecution from the very Jews who had once employed him and

until several respected early believers in various towns defended Saul's change of heart that he gained social legitimacy as a leader of the early church (Acts 8:1-9:29). When the early church became more organized, it was necessary to choose leaders for these small bodies of believers. Pauline epistles delineate descriptive checklists whereby these early Christians could judge the character and reputation of fellow church members to discern their readiness for such leadership. These churches could now determine which men possessed the qualities that deemed them socially and spiritually legitimate to lead them through their birth pangs (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:6-9).

Social Legitimacy and the Modern Christian Fundamentalist. Modern Christian fundamentalists commonly agree that as a movement, they have been conditioned to reject the secular tenets of social legitimacy, seeking instead to please God rather than men. Bible colleges must not, however, spurn the necessity of pursuing excellence for the glory of God by upholding a spiritual and educational benchmark in the eyes of its constituents. While Bible colleges should not be motivated by the applause and acceptance of its secular audience, it cannot turn a blind eye to its biblical responsibility to provide an excellent education to its ministry-minded constituents. Priolo (2007) explains, "It is right to please people to the extent that doing so is not the leading principle of conduct or primary motive for your actions, but subordinate to the love of God and the love of neighbor" (p. 39). While the Bible college should not view social legitimacy as its chief goal, it cannot help but become socially legitimate to its constituency as it produces a consistent product while fleshing out its biblical mission.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to focus on the presidential transition at Northland to determine what factors led to a successful presidential transition as well as to determine how legitimacy was garnered by the incoming leadership following the tenure of a long-term and successful president. This study was designed to respond to the literature that has addressed the institutional problems faced by the Bible College Movement and to assist in providing a road map to navigate one of the key areas of failure - presidential transition.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this study was qualitative in nature. I selected a phenomenological design intended to extract the deepest possible information from the memory and experiences of the constituents during the presidential transition at Northland. Thomas Groenewald (2004) credits Hammersley with the idea that “Phenomenologists, in contrast to positivists, believe that the researcher cannot be detached from his/her own presuppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise” (p. 7). This phenomenology used a triangulation of sources to provide rich,

qualitative data that would draw out the fears and emotions of the individuals as well as the pure facts related to the circumstances surrounding the transition. I chose to use the study of Groenewald as a pattern for this phenomenology. Groenewald's study of phenomenological design "illustrates the phenomenological methodology" (p. 1). Like Groenewald, I concluded that "My epistemological position regarding the study I undertook can be formulated as follows: a) data are contained within the perspectives of people that are involved with" the presidential transition at Northland; "and b) because of this I engaged with the participants in collecting the data" (p. 7).

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The design of my data collection followed an established pattern of qualitative researchers like John Lindsey and Thomas Wolbrecht. This study sought to triangulate the data utilizing three main avenues of data collection: in-depth interviews, focus groups, and document collection.

Interviews. The in-depth, unstructured interviews proved to be the most valuable and beneficial source of information available to me. The memories and recollections of those most impacted by the transition were a constructive source of data collection. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission obtained from each interviewee. The recorded interviews were labeled in succession (for example, "Interview 1, Interview 2," etc.). These lengthy, face-to-face interviews were launched from a list of pertinent

questions [Appendix B] and culminated in a number of different areas influenced by the personal experience of the interviewee. Each level of employee had specific recollections of the transition unique to his or her vantage point.

Focus Groups. Two focus groups provided additional individual perspectives that allowed participants to work together to reconstruct the presidential transition from their memories. One group included students, both past and present, and wives of faculty and staff members of Northland Mission, Inc., comprised the other. Both focus groups were audio-recorded with verbal permission obtained of all the participants. The recordings were then labeled with identifying descriptors (for example, “FocusGroupStudents” and “FocusGroupWives”).

Documentation. Documentation in the form of audio or transcribed public meetings or sermons, publications, meeting minutes, and a dissertation on the history of Northland provided additional sources of information that yielded some helpful data toward a solid triangulation. The scarcity of such documentation made this portion of the research difficult. Northland publishes a periodical publication, *Heart* magazine, that often reports on events taking place in and through the ministry of Northland Mission, Inc. Official administrative meeting minutes were kept on only a few important meetings before the accreditation process, so there was little of value from this source. Dr. Jim Bennett’s dissertation, *A History of Northland Baptist Bible College and Its Role in the Bible College Movement* (2000), has been a tremendous resource in gathering the history of the

institution and in gaining insight about the circumstances preceding the most recent presidential transition.

Direct Observation. A fourth method of direct observation has also been considered. The research has been enhanced by the researcher's five-year relationship with the participants in both the focus groups and interviews as an "insider" doing research on those within the confines of this particular setting. I serve as the chief operating officer at Northland Mission, Inc. This role has allowed me to observe personally the presidential transition. I joined the staff at Northland Mission, Inc. the same year Dr. Olson became president.

PARTICIPANTS

Similar to the study by Groenewald (2004), "I chose purposive sampling, considered by Welman and Kruger (1999) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling, to identify the primary participants" (p. 8). All participants ultimately chosen were present throughout the entire presidential transition process at Northland Baptist Bible College and had valuable and diverse views of events as they transpired. For the in-depth, unstructured interviews, I selected two administrators who possessed higher-level information, two full-time faculty members, three department heads, and three entry-level staff members. The interviewees included both male and female participants. I chose to interview ten participants from different levels of employment. My decision to

interview ten participants was based on Groenewald's (2004) recommendation that "Boyd (2001) regards two to 10 participants or research subjects as sufficient to reach saturation and Creswell (1998, pp. 65 & 113) recommends 'long interviews with up to 10 people for a phenomenological study'" (p. 11). My purpose for choosing participants from various levels of the organization was to provide a fuller picture of the actual transition phenomena as it was simultaneously viewed by multiple individuals. Using their answers and insights along with my knowledge of the setting, I interacted with each interviewee to create a multi-layered interview that a set of flat questions simply would not have accomplished.

The information gleaned from the two focus groups was intended to confirm the data presented in the interviews from yet another perspective. The first focus group included students who were enrolled in the institution during the presidency of both Dr. Ollila and Dr. Olson for at least one year each. Students were chosen because of the possibility that they would bring a fresh perspective on the presidential transition that a long-term employee might not provide. The second focus group was comprised of wives of employees who had served under Drs. Ollila and Olson. Each of the selected wives had worked on campus at some point during her husband's employment at Northland, so they were familiar with the surroundings and campus culture. The wives were chosen to help gain an additional perspective of the presidential transition with a special emphasis on the fears and expectations present during the transition process.

The interviewees and members of each focus group were also provided an informational form [Appendix C] highlighting the description of the research and their

participation, risks and discomforts, and potential benefits; a guarantee protection of their confidentiality; and notification that their participation was purely voluntary. All participants contributed willingly and without any form of compensation for their input.

LIMITATIONS

The data collected in interview and focus group format is subject to a possible distrust of the researcher's motives for collecting the data. All participants interviewed were on a peer or subordinate level to me, and it should be noted that this relationship could have limited the level of accurate information or even the amount of information I was able to collect. It seemed, however, that most participants viewed me simply as an ally and gave full information, even when their viewpoints could have been interpreted as a negative observation of the transition process. The fact that all focus group participants were also on a subordinate level to me may also have potentially influenced their presentation and the amount and type of information they freely disclosed regarding events and individuals involved in the transition process. I worked under the keen awareness that only the documentation outside of their input was protected from any potential bias and could not have been swayed by an individual's fear of possible retribution.

DATA ANALYSIS

Upon completing all interviews and focus groups, I sent the password protected recordings to a neutral source unrelated to the institution or any participants in this research for transcription. The transcriptionist who was external to Northland had no personal knowledge of or acquaintance with any of the participants. The typist transcribed the recordings word for word and sent text files to me with no names attached. The typist further protected the participants' confidentiality by destroying the original recordings and her text copies.

I thoroughly read the transcriptions multiple times to increase my familiarity with embedded themes. I then began to qualitatively code the phenomenological elements in the text of the documents using multicolored highlighting.

As a model, I used Groenewald's (2004) five phases of an "explicitation process." His process is as follows:

- 1) Bracketing and phenomenological reduction
- 2) Delineating units of meaning
- 3) Clustering of units of meaning to form themes
- 4) Summarising [sic] each interview, validating it and where necessary modifying it
- 5) Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary. (p. 17)

Comments and themes from each interview and focus group were labeled and entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for data manipulation. Each coded statement was then placed into the spreadsheet with a number or letter code to show the transcribed document from which it had originated and then labeled with a section title, keyword, and secondary description. The compilation data was then sorted by sections and themes so the various phenomena would clearly be revealed. The data was stratified, and reports were created from the themes that emerged from the body of the texts [Appendix D]. The themes were then explored to determine their validity as a value to the transition process or their impact on the perceived legitimacy of the leadership.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Chapter four presents the culmination of many interviews and focus group sessions. The subsequent information is the result of following the procedures presented in the methodology chapter to retrieve the themes present as the participants phenomenologically perceived them before, during and after the recent presidential transition at Northland Baptist Bible College. No attempt has been made in this chapter to tie the themes into the concepts of legitimacy.

Five major themes surfaced from the participants' comments: The Ollila Administration, Transition, The Olson Administration, Change, and Continuance. Each major theme is further subdivided into related groups of comments. Themes and sub-points are unavoidably intertwined as a result of the conversational atmosphere of the interviews and focus groups. The major themes have been ordered to help describe the experience of the participants as they observed and experienced it.

THE OLLILA ADMINISTRATION

A large body of comments described various aspects of the administration under Dr. Ollila as well as of the man himself. These comments have been grouped into the following four categories: 1) leadership strengths, 2) management style, 3) background and personality, and 4) perceived pressures on Dr. Ollila.

Leadership Strengths. Participants of this study remember Dr. Ollila as a “prophet and an exhorter,” “a vision-setter,” and “a challenger.” Several implied that “visionally and missionally . . . there was a great deal of security on the part of everyone.” Many believe that he is “committed to the most important things” and that he “was a driver of philosophy. That was his strength. He also had powerful connections with pastors, which is one of the reasons why Northland has been successful.” Of his leadership style, the implication was that “Doc O[llila] typically leads from a distance, with a very long leash.” Another participant described his leadership this way: “Dr. Ollila historically was more philosophy and direction-setter. He would allow the key administrators to run with a lot of rope in various areas.” Dr. Ollila’s relational strengths inspired confidence in his constituents.

Management Style. Inevitably, with leadership strengths come leadership weaknesses. Consistent comments described Dr. Ollila’s management style as the president of Northland Baptist Bible College. Because many recognized that “details were not his strong point,” that he “doesn’t have the administrative gifts,” and that he doesn’t “have

the gift of organization,” they noticed that “things didn’t get done; phone calls didn’t get answered; lots of decisions didn’t get made.” One participant noted that the administration “loved Dr. Ollila and did not make a big deal about the fact that he was not hands-on leading, but that [they] were more or less running by committee.” One reflected, “Dr. Ollila was very consistent for the twenty years he was president. That is, ‘just tell me what I absolutely have to deal with here, and then I will.’ Everything else I would just as soon not.” When he made decisions inherent to his office, “Dr. Ollila had so much on his plate, and was trying to handle so many things, that decisions sometimes were made very quickly. Dr. Ollila would get information, but he would get it from one or two people and then pretty much [would] go with whatever their recommendation was.” Because of his management style, some felt that “there was a lot of friction, a lot of problems.” In fact, two different participants described his management style the same way: “Our president was rarely around as president.” One participant shared that Dr. Ollila was personally aware of his lack of administrative gifts and that he “felt it was time to bring in someone who had gifts in that area and turn him loose in what he is great at, which is relational and setting visions, and representing the school one-on-one.”

Background and Personality. “Ollila is a north woods logger.” His Northland family saw him “driving a pay loader on campus or getting up in a tree and cutting things down.” One participant said, “He’d rather be outside than in an office.” In fact, this tendency to be outdoors created some challenges for his staff. “His secretary could never find him. He’d be out in the woods cutting down a tree or something.”

Comments surrounding this theme showed that participants viewed Dr. Ollila as a powerful and integral part of the fabric of Northland; “Let me just tell you about Northland, it’s really Les Ollila.” Several expressed a sense of awe in the way Dr. Ollila can relate to anyone, no matter his or her personal or social status: “He’s the man who’s at home with the garbage collector ... or the CEO of a company There are not many of us, period, who can bridge that kind of gap.” Another comment about his abilities as an “original thinker” and his “real wisdom” echoed the obvious respect felt by the constituents for their former president: “Doc O[llila] when he would walk in to a student body activity, ‘Woohoo!’ They’d be cheering him, ranting and raving.” Even with his popularity, he was a “very humble, meek person” and “never was a man who wanted attention drawn to himself.” One participant revealed, “I think the greatest thing that Doc O[llila] has done is teach people how to be real as far as their devotions. Even to this day, he meets with the freshmen.” Several participants credited Dr. Ollila as the reason they came to Northland. One participant encapsulated Dr. Ollila’s influence by saying that he is the ultimate “example of the person who truly lives humility and servant leadership.”

Perceived Pressures. With only one exception, the body of comments describing pressures participants felt Dr. Ollila experienced in his role as president came from the focus group comprised solely of students. Many implied that they believed Dr. Ollila felt hindered by the rigid standards of fundamentalism in his decision-making capacity. They communicated that they consider Dr. Ollila to be a traditionalist who is from a generation when fundamentalism “while based on the Bible, is more standard-oriented and issue-

driven,” as opposed to a generation that is philosophically teaching students to make biblically based decisions for themselves. The students’ impressions were that the burden of the fundamentalist movement weighed heavily on Dr. Ollila’s shoulders and prevented him from making decisions he otherwise felt were biblical.

The issues of accreditation and girls wearing slacks were topics of that conversation. One participant said of girls wearing slacks, “It always seemed to feel like he [Dr. Ollila] wasn’t necessarily opposed to it himself; he just didn’t feel like he could take that jump and make it okay for everybody else.” Another student said, “Dr. Ollila would have made that decision ages ago, but he was also discouraged in making that decision because of what the constituents would say.” In regard to the decision to pursue accreditation, still another student mentioned Dr. Ollila’s willingness to stick to tradition because he “knew that from somewhere, some church, some sending-church that sent us students, he was going to get flak if he made that decision.”

TRANSITION

Various themes rose from the discussion surrounding the actual transition period from one president to the next. Comments fell into one of the following categories: 1) transition circumstances, 2) general transition comments, 3) the interim leadership period, 4) the inaugural ceremony, 5) impressions about Dr. Ollila during the transition, and 6) impressions about Dr. Olson during the transition. Some categories inevitably merged

within a single participant conversation, but are classified separately for the sake of organization.

Transition Circumstances. Remarks regarding the circumstances surrounding the actual transition were broad in nature. Initially, they included comments about Dr. and Mrs. Ollila's physical condition before the transition as well as the idea that Dr. Ollila had already begun to withdraw willingly from many of the obligations of his role as president. Participants observed that Dr. Ollila was "exhausted" and felt that the hectic travel schedule and pressure from his role were "killing him physically." When Mrs. Ollila's aortic dissection occurred, one participant quoted Dr. Ollila as saying, "I don't want to be president anymore." The general feeling among participants was that Dr. Ollila both initiated and encouraged the presidential transition and that his administration had stepped up to "relieve that pressure for Dr. Ollila."

Other remarks about the circumstances at the time of transition focused on the fact that Dr. Olson was relatively unknown to many of the constituents. Some mentioned hearing him speak on one occasion, but a significant number of the participants had limited access to the new president before his actual inauguration. One participant recalled, "I didn't really know that Dr. Olson was going to be the next president until it was already announced." Another commented, "I knew who he was, but I didn't really know anything about him." It should also be noted that some felt this unfamiliarity with the new president engendered predictable fear among constituents, and several wished

more time had been taken to familiarize the faculty and staff with the search committee's choice before he actually took office.

General Transition Comments. Moving on to general comments about the entire transition period, I found that participants recalled strikingly similar impressions. Almost everyone communicated that they had observed a “very smooth transition” and had attributed that smoothness to the fact that it was “orchestrated by God” and impacted by the “godliness of both men.” Many also noted that they couldn't remember any major event or crisis point and that they “never knew there was any conflict.” One commented, “I don't think it [transition] could have gone better.” When asked to comment on their impressions of the transition period, several struggled to remember anything significant or noteworthy and maintained, “I don't remember anything about it, and then it happened, and it happened so smoothly that you wondered if it hadn't been planned for a long time.” As one participant noted, perhaps this smooth transition was helped by the quickness with which “one [president] backs down to honor the other.”

Interim Leadership Period. The interim leadership period during the transition seemed to be an undefined length of time Dr. Ollila initiated when he began removing himself from the operations of the college until shortly after the actual inauguration of the new president. As one participant recalled, “Dr. Ollila did a very wise thing. He started transitioning before we looked for a president. He transitioned to Sam Horn.” There was no argument among the participants that the man who had stepped forward to shoulder

the administrative responsibilities until the new president took charge was Dr. Sam Horn, the executive vice president. One observer noted that Dr. Horn “emerged from this group as the *de facto* choleric strong administrative decision maker, so he was the interim president, if you will, the *de facto* president in all but name for quite a while.” Other participants remembered that “Sam played a key role in the transition time . . . because of his administrative gifts and his being able to deflect a lot of decision-making pressures off of Dr. Ollila during that time.”

While most expressed gratitude for Dr. Horn’s leadership during this murky time, some also described it as a difficult time: “I think the hardest time was the Doc Horn transition time.” Some attributed that difficulty to the difference in leadership styles between Dr. Ollila and Dr. Horn. Several commented on Dr. Horn’s decision to “micromanage” the day-to-day operations of the college during that time. Others noted his willingness to step in and take the flak of several major decisions as a means of smoothing the path of transition to the new president. Overall, the participants looked to the leadership of Dr. Horn during the interim transition period.

The Inaugural Ceremony. When I asked about the actual inaugural ceremony, I was astonished that most participants could recall few memories of the event. As one wife put it, “Well, we did have an inauguration, but it was definitely Northland style; we don’t stand on great ceremony.” Another remembered that there was “an installation service or something . . .and we brought in those who had been special to his life as well as to the life of the institution. Everyone was fine. I just remember so little about that.” Another

explained the simplicity of the event by saying, “We didn’t professionally print anything with [our ceremony] and things like that.” One recalled hearing encouraging words from a visiting pastor and seeing the administrators and Dr. Ollila standing around a kneeling Dr. Olson during a prayer time. “It [the ceremony] wasn’t necessarily to honor either man as much as it was a focus on what God has done.” This humble assessment was echoed by another participant who said that we “don’t raise up the person, but raise it to God.” Several participants could not recall any form of ceremony or inaugural event. For those who recalled the actual ceremony, they felt the service was simply an expression of gratitude to God “that He had provided someone who was much-needed.”

Impressions About Dr. Ollila. Impressions about Dr. Ollila during the transition time were consistent and positive in nature. Most participants who commented about Dr. Ollila sensed a level of excitement and thankfulness from him at the prospect of his passing the presidential mantle to Dr. Olson. Many participants also expressed confidence that Dr. Ollila had played a significant role in selecting Dr. Olson. “I really trusted that Dr. Ollila would be a part of the process, and in his wisdom (not that he would dictate because he’s not that kind of person) but that he would direct that way, to guard the philosophy.”

With regard to Dr. Olson’s decision to pursue accreditation, one participant noted of Dr. Ollila, “I never sensed privately or publicly any animosity toward that decision.” In fact one participant remembered Dr. Ollila saying, “I’m 100 percent behind Dr. Olson. This is the direction we need to go . . . It is a decision I probably would not have made,

which is why God brought Dr. Olson here.” Others felt that “Doc O[llila] was mentoring him and preparing Dr. Olson for the things he was going to have to do.” Several credited Dr. Ollila for his contribution to a smooth transition by revealing, “He was so gracious to step away and let Dr. Olson take over . . . It just seemed like family.”

Of his relationship to the new president, participants said they sensed “total support” and felt like Dr. Ollila was looking forward to taking on the role of chancellor. One student mentioned, “To the students, it looked like this is the best of both worlds: Doc O[llila] is getting what he wants, we’re getting a new president, nobody’s getting their feelings hurt.” Several expressed personal concern for Dr. Ollila during this transition time, wondering if he had known “how he fit into the big picture” and if he had struggled because of “how his role changed.” Overall, participants expressed significant respect for the manner in which Dr. Ollila conducted himself during the transition period.

Impressions About Dr. Olson. Participants also had a significant amount of comments regarding Dr. Olson’s conduct during the transition period. Scattered remarks that did not lend themselves to categorizing as a theme include the fact that initially the Olsons engendered security among their constituents by building a house in the area and by putting “down deep roots,” thereby communicating their commitment to the institution. Several participants also noted that during Dr. Olson’s initial speech to the college family, his humility and his ability to connect to his audience at their level alleviated any concerns they had experienced up to that point. One participant remembered the “very

first major project” the new president had asked them to do: “Get job descriptions for every single person on this campus -- because they didn’t exist, including his own.”

A major theme that surfaced about Dr. Olson during this transition period was his personal attitude and conduct toward the former president. Many descriptions of the new president include “humble” and “respectful.” Over and over, participants pointed to the idea that “Dr. Olson was very careful of not overstepping his bounds,” that he “sought Dr. Ollila’s heart,” that he “made it very clear that he highly respected Dr. Ollila and his ministry,” and that “he always deferred to Dr. Ollila and told him how much he respected him.” Perhaps one participant summed up this idea by saying, “Our current president has enough wisdom and character to consult the former president.”

A second major theme related to Dr. Olson during this time was his lack of power-hungry decisions. One participant noted, “There was a whole year when Matt Olson didn’t do things that the president had always done, and Doc Ollila continued to do those things, and I think that was a very wise move on [his] part.” Others commented, “I love that he sat back for a while and just watched,” and “he didn’t seem to come in like a bull in a china shop.” Several admired the fact that Dr. Olson made “the decision not to decide to act so aggressively and so quickly.” One participant observed Dr. Olson’s deference to Dr. Ollila by saying, “There were times that Dr. Olson was ready to move forward that Dr. Ollila wasn’t, and I saw Dr. Olson step back and honor Dr. Ollila and wait until he was completely ready.” Many pointed to the belief that their new president spent significant time in prayer before making any major decisions. “That gives you confidence . . . that this person is really praying about a lot of these decisions.” Several

mentioned their belief that Dr. Olson was a “good choice” for the institution. In summary, participants viewed the presidential transition period to be a positive one. One student concluded, “Dr. Olson brought just what we needed here.”

THE OLSON ADMINISTRATION

Participants had much to say about the new president, both about the individual as well as about his administration. These comments from the interviews and focus groups have been dissected into the following two categories: 1) Dr. Olson’s personality and 2) his management style.

Personality. All participants had positive comments describing various aspects of Dr. Olson’s personality and character. Several expressed appreciation for his “pastor’s heart” evident “in the e-mails that he sends to us.” A few said they still viewed him in a pastoral role, and one student agreed, “I would go to Dr. Olson the way I would go to the pastor.” Other positive observations of the new president’s charisma and personality included his ability to honestly communicate “his heartbeat of what God’s done in his life” both in “chapels and with our faculty meetings.” Indeed, many echoed the thought of this participant: “I trusted what was being communicated to me.” Dr. Olson’s humility was mentioned more than once. One wife from the focus groups affirmed, “He provided us security in his type of leadership because he was willing to learn and to grow under Doc O[lila], so it wasn’t like we were just greatly uprooted and thrown into the hands of

somebody else.” One participant expressed his gratefulness for Dr. Olson’s personal concern for the college constituents by sharing, “The thing that impressed me with Doc Olson more than anything is the fact that Doc Olson wants us to get to know God in a deeper way.”

Management Style. The majority of the comments about the new president’s style of management deal with the perceived relationship between president and participant. Apparently, Dr. Olson has fostered an environment within his administration, faculty, and staff built on his desire to see each member of the corporate body improve in his respective field – whether that improvement has involved administrating, teaching, or overseeing maintenance areas. Several mentioned his “hands-on” style, but all agreed it wasn’t “micromanaging.” Rather, many communicated that Dr. Olson is “trying to develop every department to work effectively to reach the goals.” Another said, “He wants to cultivate leadership skills for those who work under him.”

Several expressed admiration and respect for the new president in his attention to departmental details and circumstances. Dr. Olson’s sincere concern about the details in the lives of his constituents and his personable manner seem to have created a trusting relationship among all parties involved.

A few comments were made about his outstanding ability to administrate, organize, and lead the college. “He just has the gift of organization” is descriptive of many remarks. Also noted by several participants in both the interviews and the focus groups is the security they enjoyed in knowing that their new president would “make a

tough decision when he feels like he needs to make it.” The tone and content of all comments about Dr. Olson’s management style were positive, and everyone seemed to feel that their new president was indeed “taking Northland to another level.”

It should be further noted that most participants also made observations about the overall personality of the college under both presidents. Interestingly, participants’ perceptions of the school’s personality closely mirrored their perceptions of the current president. When the president changed, their perceptions of the qualities and defining characteristics of the institution changed as well. Sufficient comments suggest that participants have assigned the personality of the president to the institution itself.

CHANGE

Almost every participant mentioned some form of change they believed would transpire or had already transpired during the presidential transition. Several mentioned their fear of potential change in the personality of the school based on the inevitable change in the personality of the new president as compared to the old one. Specific comments about this personality change included observations about Northland’s becoming more “polished,” more organized, and more “corporate” as compared to its former reputation as “a beatnik,” “a farmer,” or “a small family.” Several feared that it might be impossible for another president to understand and keep the same “heart” for discipleship and pastoral training embodied by the previous president. Several simply feared the unknown.

Accreditation. A few participants communicated the fear that those outside the school would believe that the new president's initial decisions were evidence that he was taking the school in a different direction than that of the previous president. The topic of accreditation was mentioned in almost all of the interviews and focus groups as a defining moment in the transition, and it merits some discussion.

The former president had made many strong declarations over the years that Northland would never mar its reputation or damage its mission by succumbing to the compromise of regional accreditation. In fact, during Dr. Ollila's administration, Northland issued a policy statement delineating its view of accreditation: "We do not think that non-Christian accrediting agencies will enable us to accomplish our goals of preparing young people to know and do the will of God in church related ministries" (Bennett, 2000, p. 58-59). Dr. James Bennett (2000) summed up Northland's stance on accreditation by firmly stating, "In short, a Bible college has no business pursuing accreditation, for it is inconsistent with its stated purpose" (p. 59).

Many participants viewed Dr. Olson's decision to pursue accreditation with a Christian accrediting organization as a bold, positive move on his part that would steer Northland into the modern age of education while preserving its mission. All participants who commented on accreditation felt that it was a good decision on the part of the new administration and that thoughtful care had been taken to show respect for the former president's stand on the issue. Several participants expressed the belief that the standard of academics at the institution had risen as a result of the decision to pursue accreditation.

One participant pointed to the increase in the size of the library and in the volume of resource materials as proof that a change in academics had occurred.

It should be noted that several comments about Dr. Ollila's reaction to the new president's decision were positive in nature. Many participants communicated that Dr. Ollila had supported the decision to pursue accreditation, although it was a decision he never felt he could make. In all, the participants viewed this change as a positive experience in the life of Northland.

Management Style. Participants in the administration and those who enjoy direct contact with the president consistently commented on changes they experienced in the management style from one president to the other. Almost everyone remarked about the strong relational gifts of the former president while pointing to the outstanding organizational gifts of the new president. Many communicated that they knew Northland had been in need of someone who could fiscally lead the institution at this point in its history, and all comments pointed to the common belief that Dr. Olson had stepped up to the challenge.

Many remarks also indicate that while Dr. Ollila's leadership style took a loving "hands-off" approach, Dr. Olson's change to a personable "hands-on" approach was much welcomed. The general feeling among participants was that the new president was more willing to implement change if he believed it would benefit the school, whereas the former president was content with the status quo. Such evidences of this willingness to change were Dr. Olson's decisions to allow girls to wear pants on campus at pre-

determined times, to require attendance at fewer campus events, and to address difficulties in traditional musical interpretations by the school.

Philosophical Focus. Several students indicated that they have also noticed a change in the focus of philosophical teaching. The students in the focus group shared their perception that while the former president presented excellent biblical standards for Christian living, the new president's focus centered on the biblical philosophy behind such standards with the purpose of giving students the tools to make such practical decisions for themselves.

CONTINUANCE

The sixth major theme to emerge from the research deals with the continuity experienced by the participants during the presidential transition. All comments supporting the idea of stability and connectivity between the two presidents and their administrations were again positive in nature. I have grouped these impressions into six categories for sake of explanation: 1) philosophy, 2) vision, 3) direction, 4) family, 5) focus, and 6) heart.

Philosophy. Participants repeatedly expressed the belief that Dr. Olson demonstrated a sincere desire to maintain continuity in philosophical areas of the institution. In fact, a common idea was that Dr. Olson arrived on campus "with the same philosophy of

ministry.” Many recall Dr. Olson’s stating in chapel that he “wanted to carry on what Dr. Ollila had begun here” and that “he was very concerned to maintain the philosophy that Dr. Ollila had.” One participant expressed confidence in Dr. Olson’s “good solid convictions” and his ability “to take us where we need to go.” Dr. Olson seemed to foster that philosophical continuity by being “very committed long-term to Doc O[llila]’s continued leadership in the philosophical orientation of the ministry.” A student concluded, “I don’t know how the board did this, but somehow they picked people for the presidency who saw the school as a mission instead of as a person. Doc O[llila] was more about the mission than about himself, and in choosing Dr. Olson, they were able to determine that this was the person who . . . is willing to put the mission before himself.”

Several participants echoed the idea that “Matt Olson is willing to embrace a vision that was already here versus coming with a new vision.” Many believed that Dr. Olson simply “embraced the vision that was here, and his passion is to take that vision now and...solidify it so that it will not be wrapped up in the person of the former president, but it literally will be wrapped up in an institution.” Another commented that Dr. Olson saw himself simply as “another player on the team to help fulfill Dr. Ollila’s burden and vision for ministry.”

Vision. Another area of continuity between the presidents was their commitment to the vision of training students to go into the world as able ministers of the gospel of Christ. One comment that reflected numerous others was “I think the essence of their vision is identical, the idea of that pioneering spirit, the idea of Northland graduates being

committed to ministry for their lives and going to places that others don't go." Another participant perceived Dr. Olson as "matching the vision and the burden of Northland very well. I do not see any diversion at all from the vision that Dr. Ollila had or that the founding of Northland had." Many participants pointed to the fact that "Dr. Olson definitely has a heart for missions. He definitely wants to see our graduates going to places and being in places no one else is going to go to."

When asked to comment on any changes or differences about the vision of the school between the two presidents, most simply could not see any. Several participants noted that while the presidents' visions seemed to be exactly the same, perhaps the manner in which the presidents fleshed out their vision was different. "They both have the same burdens but with different emphases on those areas because of their past." A focus group member expressed, "Sometimes it seems like Dr. O[llila] has the 'upper vision,' and then Dr. Olson has come in, and he's refining us departmentally and individually to meet a goal. So Dr. Olson is just refining so that we are all completing the higher purpose." Stating his thoughts bluntly, one participant said, "They have the same vision."

Direction. The direction of the institution, that is, the mission that is incorporated throughout the institution's curricula, preached in its chapels, and embodied in its faculty and staff, also enjoyed a solid continuity between the two presidents. Several commented that "Dr. Olson's tweak on that vision is not directional in anyway." Another was pleased that the committee had chosen a pastor to be president. "I thought the best thing the

school could have done was to get a theologian . . . that would keep us where we were. The thinking was right; the practical applications could change as the culture changes, but I think that's why Olson was picked." Evidently, such missional continuity was not shaken when Dr. Olson practically applied its principles in a different way. One commented, "The selection of Dr. Olson reset the rudder a little bit. It didn't turn the ship around. It didn't sink it. It just changed the rudder a little bit. Going the same direction, but there's a different emphasis here. Same focus, but different emphases, and so did it maintain a continuity? Did it continue it? Yes, in the core. Yes, in the institution. But it changed our programs, our curriculum, our structure." A student described the difference with this metaphor. "I see Dr. Ollila as the farmer with the hoe, and Dr. Olson was the farmer with the rototiller. Things are just progressing faster under Dr. Olson – all going toward the same thing, but with a little more efficiency and a little more speed."

Family. Northland's small size has historically fostered a warm "family" atmosphere among its constituents. Located in the deep north woods of Wisconsin, it enjoys both privacy and seclusion that draw its members together. A common mission drawn from a common source, God's holy Word, solidifies the bond felt among its companions. Many comments were made about Northland's having "a family feel to it rather than an organizational feel." Several assigned a family role to Northland saying that it was like a "big brother" or even a "dad" who would support you.

It became clear that participants viewed Dr. Ollila as an integral part of this family atmosphere on campus. A student warmly commented, “I think Dr. Ollila is like a grandfather, willing to do anything that you need. He’s there; he’s open to talk to anytime.” Of the transition to Dr. Olson, one participant believed it was simply “the maturing of Northland from a little family to an expanded family.” While Dr. Olson takes on the role as “dad,” the family continues to enjoy its “closeness.” “Dad is retaining a lot of Grandpa’s heart, but he’s saying, you know, we’re a different family. We’re going to do a few things differently.”

Focus. Each president, while working from the same mission and possessing the same vision of sending out able ministers into the world, retained a unique stamp upon the practical development of that focus. Dr. Ollila knew the founder of the institution personally and in many ways simply “took Papa Patz’s vision of having a camp for young people” and “carried that vision on.” One participant remarked, “How well I remember Dr. Ollila buying into that vision! Training young people for the ministry . . . and helping campers take the next step.” Indeed, Papa Patz’s desire to give local students an opportunity for a Christian education was developed and expanded by the guiding hand of Dr. Ollila.

Dr. Ollila’s humble approach to this ministry was noted. “Dr. Ollila wasn’t out there to impress anybody.” His gifts lay in the area of ministering to people. In fact, his desire to minister to people kept him from campaigning for Northland on speaking engagements. One participant recalled, “I remember very clearly his saying to us, as we

had more and more opportunities to travel and speak and preach, that we're not going to push or present Northland; we're just going to minister to people." Several commented that while Dr. Ollila's focus was "missionally minded," he hadn't spent much time personally on the foreign mission field. Foreign missions is an area in which Dr. Olson has continued to expand Northland's focus.

Participants communicated several times that Dr. Olson's focus and "ultimate desire is to see God glorified." Others noted that Dr. Olson has taken on a "bigger focus" and "talks a lot more about the global idea, getting kids around the world." Dr. Olson's primary love, church planting, was also noticed with a heart for international missions taking a close second place in his perceived focus.

One participant explained that Dr. Olson's focus went beyond the immediate community by saying, "Dr. Olson has a real burden for the West, for instance. Forgotten places, towns and cities and villages that don't have a lot of people or don't have any gospel witness."

One last remark about Dr. Olson's focus pointed to his desire to honor the founder and to remind the institution regularly of its rich heritage and humble roots. In fact, one participant realized, "There seems to be much more about Papa Patz since Dr. Olson's time than Dr. Ollila's time."

Heart. The "heart of Northland" defies a concise definition. Some outside the institution use this as a descriptive term to identify those who serve on campus who are wholeheartedly committed to Christ. Those within the institution struggle to narrow the

term into a simple explanation. For lack of a recognized definition, one could say the “heart of Northland” is the nebulous yet warm, personal identification with the mission and core values of Northland lived out humbly, practically, and sacrificially in its constituents’ day-to-day lives.

Many participants praise Dr. Olson for recognizing, pursuing, and even possessing Northland’s “heart.” One said, “He was familiar with it before he came in.” Another reflected, “I think he had a lot of Northland in him before he came. And he seemed to pick it up real fast.” A student was immediately impressed by Dr. Olson’s first address to the student body. He remembered thinking afterwards that “what’s important at Northland is we really deal with the heart. So when he came in, he communicated that he had that heart that we really want.”

A focus group member commented of Dr. Olson that “he’s learned the heartbeat of every department!” Several felt that Dr. Olson picked up this “heart” and “fell in love with the ministry” by “talking to people,” “by spending tons of time with key individuals,” and by being on campus when he “pursued his doctorate here.” One focus group member believes that “he’s learned it [the heart] through the staff, through those who have been here a really long time. They’ve opened their hearts, and that’s how he’s learned it.” Regardless of how Dr. Olson actually acquired Northland’s “heart,” no comments suggested that he didn’t already possess it.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE

The purpose of this study has been to identify factors that led to a successful leadership transition at Northland Mission, Inc., by comparing the constituents' perceptions of their experiences and memories surrounding Northland's presidential transition to the pertinent literature. A second consideration was the manner in which Northland's transition process fostered legitimacy within her own constituency, thereby defining its presidential transition as a successful endeavor. Research findings and conclusions drawn from the literature have enabled me to supply a road map for traditional Bible colleges to use during their inevitable presidential transitions. These suggestions may also prove to be a valuable tool for Christian liberal arts colleges as well as secular colleges.

This chapter begins by arguing that the recent presidential transition at Northland Mission, Inc., was indeed a successful venture. I will then discuss four broad factors that specifically contributed to this success followed by a discussion of the manner in which Northland gained genuine legitimacy from its internal constituents through the transition period. Included in this section are two ways in which Northland hindered its legitimacy within its own constituency. Next, I will suggest a navigation tool for traditional Bible

colleges to follow when directing their courses through the unstable waters of their own presidential transitions. Finally, I will make several recommendations for further study.

SUCCESSFUL PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION AT NORTHLAND MISSION, INC.

According to Martin (2004), there are ten indicators that a presidential transition period is over. I will examine Northland's transition in light of Martin's indicators. His first factor, "when the new leadership team is in place (Martin, p. 230)," was accomplished by Northland's administrative team with the movement of key officials. After becoming president in 2002, Dr. Olson began the process of molding his new administrative team with the appointment of a new chief operating officer in 2003, the replacement of the vice president for student life in 2004, and the replacement of the chief financial officer and the chief academic officer in 2006. At the time of this writing, this team is complete, with the possible exception of a currently unfilled position of chief development officer. This process has spanned four years to date.

Martin's (2004) second indicator, "when the board will no longer follow the new president over the cliff (pp. 230-231)," occurred on June 17, 2005. The board sent Dr. Olson an ultimatum letter [Appendix E], requiring the present financial crisis at Northland be resolved by any means necessary within a specific time frame. Dr. Olson had inherited a financially stressed college, and the board had observed three consecutive

financially deficit years in his tenure. They required Dr. Olson to personally turn the college around fiscally. Dr. Olson took prompt action to submit to their request.

The third indicator that a presidential transition is over is “when the faculty tell the new leader what they really think at Senate meetings” (Martin, 2004, pp. 231-232). Although Northland has no faculty “Senate,” this function is replaced by its steering committee, comprised of the administrative team, key operational directors, and academic department heads who meet quarterly. At the initial meeting of this new steering committee, four academic department heads strongly expressed their personal desire for change in the expectations placed upon them in their various positions.

A fourth indicator, “when the first cycle of the next strategic plan has been completed (Martin, 2004, p. 232),” occurred in 2005 when Dr. Olson brought Joseph Miller to Northland to help compile a specific strategic plan to guide Northland into her future. Joseph Miller’s expertise lay in the realm of church strategic planning, and he had previously aided Dr. Olson when Dr. Olson served in the pastorate in Colorado. Martin (2004) explains, “Nothing acquaints a leader with an institution like an in-depth self-assessment and fair-minded evaluation of strengths, opportunities, threats, and weaknesses” (p. 232). During this first cycle of the strategic plan, Dr. Olson added the position entitled “director of institutional effectiveness and assessment” for the purpose of self-evaluation and self-improvement.

Martin’s (2004) fifth indicator, “when the new president knows the real story of the institution, that is, where the bodies are buried” (p. 232), aligns itself closely with Bornstein’s (2003) Pandora’s Box, a significant threat to succession legitimacy. This

threat occurred at Northland when Dr. Olson became fully and painfully aware of the college's financial situation after taking office as president. Another facet of this crisis was Dr. Olson's growing awareness of the board's expectations of him as a fundraiser. One administrator commented in an interview, "I think where I dropped the ball, if there was a ball dropped, was that I knew the board's main concern was fiscal . . . I wish I had pushed [Dr. Olson] more in terms of the fundraising side of it and forced that even to the cost of the relationship, because I think it cost him chips with the board that he needed later."

The sixth indicator, "when the media exposure is earned" (Martin, 2004, p. 232), finds its application to Northland's constituency in a unique fashion. Because of its limited secular contacts and influence, Northland's media exposure through such avenues is limited. However, within the circles of Christian fundamentalism, the media exposure on fundamentalist blogs such as www.sharperiron.org exploded. A full range of discussions, from Dr. Olson's appointment to spirited dialogues about his decisions regarding accreditation, girls wearing slacks, and necessary faculty and staff cutbacks found its way to many of Northland's constituents all over the world. Most media exposure was positive in nature although all sides of the issues were fully debated.

"When the structural deficit has been eliminated" (p. 233) is Martin's (2004) seventh indicator of transition completion. When the board required Dr. Olson to make the faculty and staff cutbacks to meet their financial demands, he stepped up to the task. Between August 2005 and January 2006, Dr. Olson informed twenty full-time salaried faculty and staff that, due to the financial crisis in which Northland found itself, their

contracts could not be renewed for the following academic year. While this was a painful time of loss for Northland because of the family atmosphere on campus among the faculty, staff, and students, for the most part it was viewed as a positive challenge for the greater good of Northland's future. An annual deficit of one to two million dollars became a surplus of approximately one million dollars within one year (2007). The financial crisis was past, and the board's mandates had been met.

Martin's (2004) eighth indicator is "when institutional advancement capacity is developed" (p. 233). For Northland, this indicator occurred in several ways. With the decision to pursue accreditation, institutional credibility increased within the constituency. One alumnus expressed in a focus group his confidence in the positive results he had observed on campus due to the accreditation process. He went so far as to say, "I'm not sure that if it would have continued in the same vein that I would have sent my kids to the school."

A second technique of advancement was the commencement of the first development office in Northland's history. This office oversees a variety of fundraising ventures external to Northland for on-campus development projects. Although Northland's alumni are not a large source of revenue due to their ministry vocations as pastors, missionaries, Christian school teachers, and servants in other service-oriented occupations, Northland has launched a monthly electronic letter (*e-Associate*) that links their alumni to Northland's website and to the alumni association on campus to keep alumni informed of ongoing campus projects. This website also serves as a facilitator for reconnecting Northland's alumni with each other around the world.

The ninth indicator of transition success is “when a new building has been financed, designed, and constructed” (Martin, 2004, p. 233) As a result of the newly appointed development office, many campus projects have been accomplished. To date, several new buildings and campus maintenance projects have either been completed or are currently in progress through the work of this innovative office. These completed projects include the paving of campus roads, the remodeling of the women’s residence facility, new bleachers and lights in the gymnasium, and a facelift of the student recreation hall and commons area. Nearing completion is the construction of a three-phase building project including two housing units and an additional recreational facility. The funds to complete this three-phase building project were raised by the development office in their entirety before the completion of the final phase [Appendix F].

The concluding indicator of transition completion is “when a new degree program has been launched” (Martin, 2004, pp. 233-234). One of the course-altering major decisions Dr. Olson made within his first two years as president was to pursue academic accreditation. According to the accrediting agency, Northland agreed that during the candidacy period, she would launch no new degree programs. It could be argued that the very act of initializing an accreditation process is a more compelling feat than launching a new degree program. However, a feasibility study for a new degree program has already been completed at Northland. Upon gaining full accreditation status, the new Ph.D. program is scheduled to be unveiled.

Based on Selznick’s (1957) idea of “value-infusion” (p. 18), an academic president gains legitimacy when he or she becomes a valued, integral part of the fabric of

the institution, so much so, that his or her constituency is loathe to give him or her up. The research certainly supports the idea that Dr. Olson has become an essential part of the present and future of Northland. The sentiment expressed by the following quote was consistent throughout both the focus groups and interviews. “I see him [Dr. Olson] matching the vision and the burden of Northland very well. I do not see any diversion at all in the vision that Dr. Ollila had, or that the founding of Northland had.” Another participant summed up his thoughts this way: “He [Dr. Olson] has what we need.” There can be no argument that Dr. Olson has become a valued and central part of Northland’s very core of existence. This fact simply indicates that he now enjoys legitimacy as the president of Northland.

WHAT FACTORS LED TO A SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP TRANSITION AT NORTHLAND MISSION, INC.?

My phenomenological research indicates that Northland’s constituency possessed an unstated but definite hierarchy of perceived needs when they sought a new president. Comments and perceptions indicate that perhaps the most important factor in the constituency’s accepting the new president was the required proof that he would value continuity of mission or core values. Almost every participant in both the interviews and the focus groups discussed this issue in some manner; therefore, it leads me to the conclusion that the assurance that their mission would be valued and integrated into the future direction of Northland was paramount before they would award the new president

full legitimacy. Bornstein (2003) captures this constituent skepticism in her statement, “Observers of a new college president are on the lookout for mistakes and for violations of ‘our culture’” (p. 180). On the other hand, other literature suggests Dr. Olson was automatically granted a measure of legitimacy simply because he was selected in part and supported by the previous much-loved and respected president of the institution.

However, it appears in Northland’s situation that full legitimating status in this area of mission and core value continuity was withheld only briefly because Dr. Olson verified quickly and repeatedly both verbally and through his actions that his mission and vision accurately mirrored that of the college. Constituents communicated that their trust in Dr. Olson’s personal incorporation of Northland’s mission continues to be validated five years after his appointment as president. In fact, there were no dissenting or negative comments from participants when they were asked about missional continuity. Not only were there no negative comments, but every participant responded in positive affirmation that they were confident Dr. Olson had successfully continued to make decisions that enhanced Northland’s mission. Perhaps this affirmation was captured best by a student in a focus group.

I think another thing is there is a mission here, and a purpose. And I think they [Dr. Ollila and Dr. Olson] both get it, and they both see the big picture, and with that change it’s not like we’re changing philosophy or the mission, so to speak, or the heart. They both are equal to it. They both understand the reasoning, why we’re here, why we do what we do. And though there have been slight changes, making more effective changes,

striving to be better, they both have that same “big picture” mentality, the same goal. They worked together at it. It’s not a competition; it’s not a change; it’s not “I’m right; you’re wrong.” They work together and understand the purpose, and I think that has attributed a lot. There hasn’t been a change in mission or goals in a big way.

Perhaps the complete significance of Dr. Olson’s continuity of the college’s mission and core values cannot be fully appreciated until one considers the temperament and characteristics of the constituents’ religious persona. Christian fundamentalists are by nature traditional in their approach to every aspect of their lives. The very word they have chosen to describe their movement, “fundamentalists,” speaks to their adherence to firm and simple tenets of a belief system. They have made life choices based on the absolutes of the Bible and are not inclined to waver from those convictions due to society’s undulating political and social standards. Therefore, outsiders have truthfully observed that fundamentalists tend to cling to the stability of their beliefs and the principles from which these beliefs spring.

Some would also argue that this dogmatic stance on the traditional leads fundamentalists to develop a timid and perhaps even fearful view of anything that smacks of change to their carefully designed structure of living. My interviews and focus group discussions revealed this natural fear of change during the presidential transition period at Northland. However, the interviewees were quick to explain that it did not take long for Dr. Olson to alleviate their fears in the area of Northland’s mission. Dr. Olson was careful to identify the need for positive verbal communications regarding the traditional

mission of Northland. He humbly and confidently assured his new constituents of his respect for their carefully guarded core values and his desire to continue them. Because the language of his communications addressed their concerns as his concerns, he promptly assimilated himself into the community by confirming his personal desire to carry on and to defend the traditional mission at Northland. This reassurance gained him credibility and certainly led to a successful leadership transition at Northland.

Expectations Met. A second consideration of factors that led to a successful leadership transition must be contemplated. My research made it clear that despite a lack of personal consultation, the board had indeed found and installed a new president that met the constituents' expectations. Several participants indicated that they wanted the new president to be a pastor because they felt that a pastor was the only appropriate type of leader for a Bible college. One participant aptly summed up many participants' statements: "I was expecting a pastor. I was expecting somebody who came out of the ministry." In their opinion, Dr. Olson's years of pastoral experience qualified him for this position.

Other participants were concerned that the new president would arrive on campus already in possession of the very "heart" of the campus family. A participant explained, "I thought, 'I'm sure they'll find someone who has the same heart . . .' I think they did." Dr. Olson's pursuit of his doctorate at Northland enabled him to experience and assimilate the campus heart before the position of president was ever offered to him. Many participants communicated the desire for a humble leader. One stated, "I was

thinking that they [the board] would be looking for somebody who had a degree of humility and would be willing to learn from Dr. Ollila.” Dr. Olson’s demeanor and the manner in which he conducted himself during the crucial initial years as president demonstrated a deep humility and dependence on God that his constituents could respect and follow.

The very nature of a Bible college demands that its leader be a studied theologian, one whose academic example its faculty and students could follow. Several participants communicated a desire for a president who possessed “an academic bent.” Dr. Olson once again met this expectation. The administration’s need for a hands-on leader and an effective communicator was also met in Dr. Olson’s management style and character. One participant’s expectation described the need for a new president with “strong leadership abilities, able to come in and completely multitask to handle everything.”

And finally, the board’s desire for a capable and trustworthy financial manager was also granted in Dr. Olson. A participant voiced this expectation by saying, “I think one of the things that the board may have been looking for was someone who understood business, because we were looking at a time in our ministry that fiscally we were needing strong leadership in that area.” So, although the faculty and staff were not directly consulted in the search process for a president, it is clear that Dr. Olson has already satisfied and continues to satisfy their expectations for the multifaceted role of the Northland president.

Transition Circumstances. My research suggests that a third facet of the successful transition enjoyed at Northland has to do with the actual circumstances surrounding the transition. Because Dr. Ollila had been publicly vocal about his desire to step down as president, he had unwittingly prepared his constituency to receive a new president with an open heart. Their much-beloved president was exhausted and wanted to retire. Dr. Ollila publicly expressed his desire to help his wife, Charlene, recover from her aortic dissection. He also communicated to many his desire to spend more time on campus rather than to keep the rigorous travel schedule required of a college president. The only recourse left to his constituency was to welcome a new president who would allow their beloved retiring president his peace. Bornstein (2003) suggests this step as a necessary responsibility of an outgoing president. “The departing president, especially one leaving under positive conditions, has an obligation to assist the new president’s search for legitimacy, most importantly in the language and comments used with constituents eager for gossip” (Bornstein, p. 182).

The constituency had reached the point with Dr. Ollila that Suchman (1995) refers to as “taken-for-grantedness” (pp. 582-583). In other words, Northland and Dr. Ollila had enjoyed a confidence from their trusting constituents that no matter what major decision must be made, the board and administration would reach the right conclusion. One interviewee communicated his confidence in Dr. Ollila as his leader by saying, “He attracted us here greatly. He was one of the main reasons we came, from a human standpoint.”

In fact, some participants indicated that they never even considered that they should have direct input in the installment of a new president. One said, “I trusted the leadership that they knew what they were doing, and I didn’t really feel like I needed to have input.” When Dr. Ollila publically voiced his desire to step down as president, his loyal constituents supported his decision. When he publicly supported the new president, his loyal constituents followed his lead. Therefore, Dr. Olson was viewed as the man who rescued Dr. Ollila from a demanding schedule while continuing to champion the cause of Northland. This view indeed aided in a smooth leadership transition.

The Character of Both Presidents. A fourth factor leading to a successful presidential transition is the honorable character of both the old and the new presidents. Bornstein (2003) suggests that “the departing president gains legitimacy by being valued as a source of advice and information while the incoming president wants to display independence from the predecessor and competence in meeting all challenges. In general, new presidents ask for very little advice from their predecessors” (p. 183). Research suggests that outgoing and incoming presidents usually experience a great deal of conflict during the succession period, leaving a bitter taste in the mouths of their constituents who are loyal to one or the other.

However, this conflict did not occur during Northland’s presidential transition. The humility of both the outgoing and incoming presidents was evident and created an atmosphere of unity and continuity as the two men used their unique gifts and talents to flesh out Northland’s mission in different ways. And while Dr. Ollila definitely made

himself available as a source of advice, Dr. Olson showed a true attitude of humility by consistently looking to Dr. Ollila for wisdom. Newly appointed as chancellor, Dr. Ollila did not force his opinions upon Dr. Olson. Newly appointed as president, Dr. Olson did not succumb to the desire to prove himself by making bold or rash decisions. He neither acted insecurely nor was hesitant to make decisions when they needed to be made. Instead, both men submitted themselves to God and to the mission of the institution. They sought to carry out their responsibilities for the greater good, remarkably free from personal agendas for recognition. This amazing situation was displayed to their constituents and greatly contributed to a smooth presidential transition at Northland by creating confidence that God would be glorified and that Northland would continue to fulfill its mission regardless of who held the title of “president.”

Because of the multiple perceptions of the tasks both formally and informally assigned to the office of chancellor in a higher-education setting, a description of the responsibilities appointed to the position of chancellor at Northland Mission, Inc. will aid in an accurate picture of the interactive relationship between Dr. Olson and Dr. Ollila during the transition period. As chancellor of Northland Mission, Inc., Dr. Ollila is paid a full salary and is a very visible and enthusiastic part of the day-to-day life of the college. He retained an office in the administrative wing next door to Dr. Olson, and the former and present presidents share the services of the same secretary. Dr. Ollila attends campus banquets, mingles with the students in the dining hall and campus coffee shop, and participates in the bi-annual in-service training of the faculty and staff. He continues to preach in chapel, to actively travel representing the college around the country, to teach

classes on campus, to publicly promote Northland's mission, and to aid in development projects ensuring the future of Northland. He is still very much committed to the vision of the college and retains his primary residence about a mile from the campus. Again, the chancellor's continued practical involvement at Northland Mission, Inc., speaks well for the supportive relationship cultivated by Dr. Ollila and Dr. Olson, and has simply aided the efficient transition to a new president.

Change of Management Style. The adjustment from one management style to another historically produces growing pains within an organization. A board or search committee generally seeks a president who has the skills and experience to lead the institution in a new era. Bornstein (2003) believes this management style transition contributes to the new president's success by commenting that "it can be an asset to a new president's quest for legitimacy to be very different from a well-liked predecessor. Some institutions seek new presidents with strengths in areas in which the predecessor was weak" (p. 179). Northland's board and administration determined that Northland's future would require a leader who was administrative and demonstrated a hands-on approach to leadership. This management style was very different from the philosophical, relational, and hands-off approach of the outgoing president. Interestingly, because the constituents were quick to recognize that each style of leader has its time and place in an institution's history, this transition in management style did not take on a negative flavor even while growing pains were present. The constituents were ready to embrace a new style of leadership that would steer Northland in a familiar direction.

Interim Leadership. The influence of the interim leadership of an institution cannot be overstated. In Northland's case, the interim leadership played an essential role in the successful transition to Dr. Olson. While technically the transition from Dr. Ollila to Dr. Olson happened in a ceremony, all the interviewees commented on a transition period when Dr. Ollila backed away from leading and passed the decision-making reins to Dr. Sam Horn.

Most of the constituents believed Dr. Sam Horn acted as an interim president, even though he was not given that title publically. In many ways, Dr. Horn deflected flak and acted as a sacrificial lamb for the sake of Northland during this time. Obviously, an incoming president will bring changes to the table. Because a fear of change and the unknown can lead to frustrations, Dr. Horn was often viewed as a micromanager through a major transition in the life of the institution. One interviewee commented, "That's micromanaging to a point where you can get frustrated. It was such a staunch difference, it was just a light switch turned off and here you have Doc Horn. And you shut the light off and you have Doc Ollila]. It was such a huge difference." Another participant made it clear that there were some tough decisions that could have derailed the fledgling presidency. "There were decisions that had to be made that the guy making those could not stay long term in the head role." Though clearly everyone loved and respected Dr. Horn, it was also evident that he became a major source of frustration for some and could not continue in the role indefinitely.

Dr. Horn was considered by most constituents both inside and outside the institution as the most likely selection for the presidency of Northland. In reference to

the question about Dr. Horn and the presidency, one interviewee responded, “Everyone suspected that [Sam would become President].” Another commented that “I really thought that Sam Horn was the person that was going to be hired.” Even after Dr. Olson was commissioned, another noted that “everybody wanted to know why he [Sam] didn’t take it.” Dr. Horn served simultaneously as the executive vice president, the vice president for academic affairs, a full-time professor, the graduate school supervisor, the human resources director, and the operations director while traveling to speaking engagements nearly six months out of the year. The workload was so overwhelming that he made fast decisions by gut reaction and didn’t have time to explore or explain the consequences. This manner became a frustration to many around him and led to excitement about the new leadership style a new president would introduce. One person commented, “I really was hoping he [Sam] would not become president.” This concern was echoed throughout the ranks, and while many expressed respect and affection for Dr. Horn, the frustration because of his leadership style simply paved the way for a smooth transition to Dr. Olson’s new leadership style.

HOW HAS NORTHLAND’S PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION FOSTERED LEGITMACY FROM THE CONSTITUENCY?

It is important to note that success and legitimacy are not the same concept although they often go hand in hand. My goal is to dig deeper into legitimacy than a simple study of mere success might offer. One can have success without legitimacy, and one may have legitimacy without enjoying success, but the two are often viewed in the

same vein and often run hand in hand. Success speaks to the outcomes of one's undertakings, and legitimacy speaks to one's credibility.

For example, a highly touted professional baseball player may have all the credibility he needs to maintain a position for some time. However, he could go into a performance slump that grants no athletic success. Conversely, an individual with no training, experience, or legitimacy as an actor could land a theatrical role that would lead to personal recognition and further lucrative contracts. Some of the following considerations may directly influence a leader's successful transition into the presidency; however, we will specifically consider Northland's transition in light of Bornstein's framework of legitimacy.

Factors that Influence Legitimacy. Bornstein (2003) believes five factors influence legitimacy in the light of a presidential transition. Dr. Olson garnered "individual legitimacy" (p. 25-29) because he had the ideal personal background for becoming Northland's next president. Bornstein (2003) suggests that "an individual's particular background and identity characteristics are most significant in the search process and early stage of a presidency. Stakeholders are especially wary of those who do not appear to be a good fit with their institutional culture and traditions" (p. 29).

Dr. Olson's experience as a pioneer church planter in Colorado mirrors Northland's pioneering mission to train and send students to remote areas of the world with the gospel of Christ. One participant commented, "I think the essence of their [Dr. Ollila and Dr. Olson's] vision is identical. The idea of that pioneering spirit. The idea of

Northland graduates being committed to ministry for their lives, and going to places that others don't go. That humble doggedness that is willing to go to 'the dark places,' as Dr. Olson says." This pioneering spirit coupled with the stability of Dr. Olson's serving in Tri-City Baptist Church, in Westminster, Colorado, over twenty-one years before coming to Northland showed the same determination and longevity that Dr. Ollila had modeled at Northland. Building Tri-City Baptist Church from its inception (1981) to a thriving, multifaceted ministry that helped plant many other churches showed the kind of vision and leadership Northland had come to seek and embrace in her president.

Finally, Dr. Olson is a family man who has been married to a highly involved and respected wife for over twenty-one years while raising three children. Individually speaking, he was a fully qualified candidate for the position.

Dr. Olson accomplished "institutional legitimacy" (Bornstein, 2003, pp. 30-32) by immediately demonstrating that he cleaved to the same norms the institution did with respect to mission, core values, and philosophy. Each participant in the interviews commented on Dr. Olson's continuance of those key components with fresh, new perspectives. Different participants commented, "They [Dr. Ollila and Dr. Olson] both have the same burdens but with different emphases on those areas because of their past, and that obviously is going to permeate the institution," "They have the same heart and the same vision," and finally,

I think another thing is there is a mission here, and a purpose. And I think they both get it, and they both see the big picture, and with that change it's not like we're changing philosophy or the mission, so to speak, or the

heart. They both are equal to it. They both understand the reasoning, why we're here, why we do what we do. And though there have been slight changes, making more effective changes, striving to be better, they both have that same 'big picture' mentality, the same goal. They worked together at it. It's not a competition; it's not a change; it's not 'I'm right; you're wrong.' They work together and understand the purpose, and I think that has attributed a lot. There hasn't been a change in mission or goals in a big way.

It would be difficult to overstate the consistency of this position as agreed upon by all participants, but this comment from one long-term constituent sums it up:

Mentioning the transition, I've been at Northland for about twenty years, and it's been the same old Northland for as long as I can remember. I've lived here a long time; I've gone off to another college and come back, and I've been through both presidents, and it seems to have been pretty much the same except for a few structural changes here and there, more students, more buildings. The attitude has seemed to be pretty much the same the whole way through. Different admin, different ones come and go, but it seems to be the vision has continued from the founding to now, as far as I can remember.

Dr. Olson accomplished institutional legitimacy because he was perceived as a philosophical, seamless match for the institution.

Bornstein's (2003) third influencing factor is "environmental legitimacy" (pp. 33-34), and Dr. Olson has relentlessly proven his value through both lean and prosperous periods. Bornstein (2003) suggests, "In good times, a president's success is measured by the ability to generate resources and enhance quality; in bad times, success rests on the ability to deploy scarce resources judiciously to maintain quality" (p. 33, 2003).

After years of an unbalanced budget and after a mandate from the board, Dr. Olson walked Northland through its most difficult challenge: major staff reductions. Approximately twenty percent of the full-time faculty and staff were laid off to balance the budget. Dr. Olson kept the constituents' eyes on the mission and purpose through those difficult times of testing. His personal concern for each employee who was laid off was real and he made sure he or she could land on his or her feet with a new opportunity for employment elsewhere. In fact, he ensured that those former employees who needed assistance in finding a new place of employment receive practical help in doing so.

Two short years after those staff reductions, in May of 2007, Northland finished with more than one million dollars in the black. At the end of that fiscal year, Dr. Olson ordered the first ever end of fiscal year bonus. His desire was to show his fellow employees how important they were to the mission and how much he personally cared about them. Dr. Olson has consistently proven that he cares deeply for Northland's constituents and that he will lead effectively and with compassion no matter what environmental factors must be dealt with.

Dr. Olson has demonstrated technical legitimacy (Bornstein, 2003, pp. 34-38) on many levels as a leader. It was apparent from the comments of the participants that they

felt he was a highly competent president capable of leading the institution well into the future. One well-read participant said, “The man knows leadership inside and out. Oh my goodness, he’s read all the books! And he knows it; he practiced it for who knows how many years in his pastorate.” While all the participants highly regarded Dr. Ollila and his philosophical leadership, they felt Dr. Olson was the right man to help move Dr. Ollila’s vision forward. One participant commented,

I mean things are progressing a little rapidly under him; he is making a lot more staff changes. There’s been a lot more movement around, people changing positions in admin to going to another department, hiring new faculty. Things are just progressing faster under Dr. Olson—all going toward the same thing, but with a little more efficiency and a little more speed.

His technical legitimacy was tied positively to his institutional legitimacy by the fact that he had earned his Doctor of Sacred Ministry degree at Northland. One administrator commented that the board and administration were looking for someone

who had actually been involved with Northland. It wasn’t like a deal killer if he wasn’t, but that was really high on our list of things we were looking for, a guy who had been through more than just ‘I came to Heart Conference once.’ Or, ‘you want me to come to Northland? I’ve never even been to the campus.’ Somebody whose life had been deeply impacted by Dr. Ollila. And Matt’s definitely had been; he got his doctorate here, and so that was very helpful to us.”

As one participant explained, the board and constituents expected a new president to have “a heart for Northland and that he would have the tools in the toolbox to be a president.” Not a single participant expressed any disappointment in Dr. Olson’s technical competency. In fact, most made positive comments in regard to his leadership abilities.

Finally, Bornstein (2003) characterized her fifth legitimizing influence as moral influence (pp. 38-40). Based on participant comments, Dr. Olson exemplifies the highest level of personal integrity and ethical behavior. One participant commented that he knew Dr. Olson was a man of character because “he was going to be a man of integrity and get this financial house in order.” The constituents expressed the belief that Dr. Olson would level with them and tell them the truth. One interviewee commented, “The one thing I really like about Dr. Olson is his honest communication, with the chapels and with our faculty meetings, that he is really, he puts it out there.” Some commented on Dr. Olson’s desire to see God use Northland rather than to promote a personal agenda. “Matt’s strength is bringing people underneath him and around him that don’t have an agenda other than to make him and Doc O and this place successful.” My research gives clear evidence that Dr. Olson has achieved the perception of a stabilizing moral influence.

Threats to Legitimacy. It is also important to consider the potential threats to Dr. Olson’s legitimacy and how those are viewed by the constituency. Bornstein (2003) lists six threats she believes can quickly derail one’s leadership capacity.

The first threat she discusses is a “lack of cultural fit” (pp. 44-48). This concept of cultural fit has been well-discussed in prior sections of this research, and many comments support the conclusion that Dr. Olson was a perfect cultural match for Northland. It seems that the constituents believe Dr. Olson is simply an extension of the cultural leadership from the first time he stepped on campus as a student: “Matt Olson connected with Les Ollila in his grad studies so well, with heart, philosophy, and everything. And Dr. Ollila was fleshing out what Papa Patz had expressed to him.” Even though the wives’ focus group tended to concentrate on change, they also revealed some feelings of cultural continuance: “Dr. Olson has made a statement that he does not want to take this school away from the mission statement, away from the direction it was going. He’s said that a lot: ‘I don’t want to make major changes here; I just want to be supportive of what God is doing and keep it going.’ I think that’s his heart.” The students’ focus group also commented on his cultural understanding of this new generation and on the added benefits of that understanding: “And so Olson, I believe, really understood the culture that you and I live in today, and he reflected a study that was more generated towards kids that are coming in now. He understood that.”

Bornstein (2003) says “management incompetence” (pp. 48-49) can also spoil a leader’s legitimacy. In previous sections, the perception of Dr. Olson’s personal competence has been well-established, but there are other areas in which he has continued to build the perception of a competent leader. As one participant noted, Dr. Olson showed competency because he “wanted the advice and sought the advice of Dr. Ollila.” Dr. Olson demonstrated wisdom by seeking solid advice and by allowing people

down line to make decisions in their areas of ministry without excessive interference from him. One participant remarked,

Dr. Olson is somewhere in the middle [not hands off or hands on]. He wants to be involved in key decisions, what he views as key, but he will let individuals who he has cultivated and trusts to run with those other things so that he doesn't have to burden himself with that.

His constituents felt that Dr. Olson aligned himself with them in the ministry of Northland. Perhaps the fact that he did not decorate his new office until Northland had emerged from her fiscally lean times was another evidence of his team mentality. Bornstein (2003) states that "once presidential legitimacy is attained, it must be maintained through behavior that continues to be viewed as competent and consistent with the culture" (p. 23). Dr. Olson's patience and prioritization have exemplified his management competence.

Bornstein's (2003) next threat of "misconduct" (pp. 49-50) should be simple for a leader to avoid, but many have been destroyed by detrimental personal conduct. There were no comments or concerns by anyone of misconduct on Dr. Olson's part. Many comments from different individuals gave testimony to this fact. "His demeanor was very reassuring." "This president is an exhorter and an expositor." Dr. Olson "has a shepherding pastor's heart. I see that a lot, even in the e-mails that he sends to us." "He [Dr. Olson] provided us security in his type of leadership because he was willing to learn and to grow under Doc O[llila], so it wasn't like we were just greatly uprooted and

thrown into the hands of somebody else.” These comments give the impression that his conduct is consistently above board.

“Erosion of social capital” (pp. 50-52) is Bornstein’s (2003) fourth delegitimizing factor. Many comments have been explored already that demonstrate Dr. Olson’s ability to build social capital, but his extreme efforts to memorize the names of all the faculty and staff members’ children as well as all the students’ names have proven to develop high levels of social capital. That reservoir was later drawn on as the institution was faced with necessary staff reductions. Participant comments implied that each staff reduction became personal to Dr. Olson, not simply a name on the payroll. Bornstein (2003) quotes Samuel Williamson (2001), a former college president, as believing in the “six silver bullet school of executive power” (p. 51). He surmises that each “silver bullet” is a major presidential decision that must be made to protect the welfare of the institution, but whose results may be unpopular and poorly received by his or her constituents. Williamson believes that these bullets must not be used “gratuitously,” for once a president spends his or her six silver bullets of social capital, the end of his or her presidency is near (Bornstein, 2003, p. 51). Not a single participant commented on any erosion of Dr. Olson’s social capital.

Bornstein (2003) postulates “inattentiveness” (pp. 52-54) is one of the major threats to enjoying legitimacy as a college or university president. Dr. Olson set aside a significant amount of time to learn about the individuals and activities of each department on campus. As a result, his faculty and staff perceive that he is very attentive to their personal endeavors. One of the wives commented, “Doc Olson has the vision, but he’s

also very involved in the nitty-gritty of seeing it completed. So he knows what's happening in my department; he's just aware of much more. So when I go to him with 'This is what happened; what do you want me to do?', I don't have to try to fill him in on this or that; he usually already knows, and he's more capable of bringing a solution to the difficulty."

Bornstein (2003) details the difficulties of a president's "allocation of attention" (p. 52) with so many departments and people competing for a piece of that attention. Even though Dr. Olson maintains a heavy travel schedule, it does not rise to the level of his predecessor's, and Dr. Olson has been able to satisfy the need for attention to details and people on campus. In our focus group, one of the wives commented that "an example of that [his personal attention to campus details] would be [that] Dr. Olson came to a music concert rehearsal, a tech rehearsal, and gave his comments about it. 'This isn't working, and this should work, and this isn't relating.' That never happened before, for our president to come in and actually care!" It is a significant statement to conclude that there have been no negative comments about Dr. Olson's inattentiveness as a leader.

"Grandiosity" (pp. 54-56) is Bornstein's (2003) final threat to presidential legitimacy. If grandiosity can play a role in destroying legitimacy, we can assume conversely that humility can play a role in increasing presidential legitimacy, especially in the environment of the traditional Bible college. No comments were made of any perceptions of grandiosity in respect to Dr. Olson, although there have been dozens of comments about the humility of both presidents. One person observed that when viewing Dr. Olson, there was "humility about him, a simplicity about him, which also

characterizes Dr. Ollila.” Another participant mentioned that this humility was significant in Dr. Olson’s acceptance by his constituency “because it’s so inbred in us.” It seems the new president simply continued a culture of humility started by the founder and continued through the previous president. One participant, in thinking about Dr. Ollila’s leadership, stated that Dr. Ollila “led by an example of the person who truly lives humility and servant leadership. You have the utmost respect for the person, but you know he would be the first one to take his chainsaw out of his truck and cut a tree down in your yard if need be.” Northland was accustomed to humble leaders, and any form of grandiosity would most certainly have caused instant destruction in a president’s quest for legitimacy in Northland’s institutional culture.

Legitimacy Through the Succession Process. A thorough exploration of potential pitfalls for a new leader cannot be complete without a thoughtful consideration of the actual succession process itself. The literature suggests that the successful presidency may be rivaled by the success or failure of the course of action or manner in which the new president obtained his or her office. In other words, a dynamic and talented president’s legitimacy may be fatally harmed by the means by which he or she gained office. A review of Bornstein’s (2003) succession strategies in chapter two reveals that Northland unwittingly, howbeit successfully, ignored almost all of the recommendations for a successful presidential succession, exposing the idea that mere succession strategies in a traditional Bible college may not rise to the same level of necessity as the personal actions and attitudes of the incoming president.

While Bornstein (2003) first explores the importance of “ceremonies and rituals” (pp. 191-192) in the succession process, in Northland’s case almost all participants remember little to nothing about the actual installation ceremony. Comments already reviewed in this research show the insignificance the actual ceremony had on the constituents as they welcomed their new president. Most of the vague ceremony memories were of the actions memorialized in one of the few pictures that appeared in the yearbook.

Second, Bornstein (2003) refers to “transition planning” (pp. 193-194) as imperative for a successful transition. The research would indicate that very little planning went into Northland’s transition other than the fact that Dr. Horn “intentionally began preparing the staff through preaching, through in-service, through articulation of the vision [and] the mission, through all kinds of assurances, through the continual presentation [with] assurances that Doc O[llila] was here long-term.” Most participants had no involvement of any kind in the transition and even commented that it was out of their hands by saying, “There was a sort of a veil on the whole process.” Another participant commented that the transition happened as if it had been well-planned. “I don’t remember anything about it, and then it happened, and it happened so smoothly that you wondered if it hadn’t been planned for a long time. It just all seemed to run together; you didn’t really know when it started or when it ended.”

Finally, the suggestion of “legacy planning” (Bornstein, 2003, pp. 194-195) was also mostly ignored. Without exception, constituents view Dr. Ollila as a philosophical giant and an uncompromising theologian. Judi Coats, chairwoman of the English

Department at Northland Baptist Bible College, promoted his legacy through her book *A Man Among Them: The Les Ollila Story* (2004) after the presidential transition.

Several threats to succession legitimacy that Bornstein (2003) also considers include “Pandora’s box” (pp. 187-188), an “intrusive predecessor” (188-189), and an “inattentive governing board” (189-190). Again, little appeared in my research on any of these fronts. However, if there was a Pandora’s box in Northland’s succession story, it was the financial stress of the institution. One participant noted the failure “to anticipate and bring in more closely to the discussion Dr. Olson and the board in terms of . . . their expectations . . . I think where I dropped the ball, if there was a ball dropped, was that I knew the board’s main concern was fiscal.” The board wanted Dr. Olson to embrace the role of fundraiser, yet from the research it appears he was not aware of their level of expectation in this area. When Dr. Olson did become aware of this need, he willingly accepted the challenge. If he had not had the talent and ability to meet their expectations, it could have been devastating to his presidency from the board’s point of view.

Dr. Ollila has proven to be far from an “intrusive predecessor” (Bornstein, 2003, pp. 188-189), and my research confirms that Dr. Olson values his predecessor’s input and wisdom. Bornstein (2003) highlights the potential setback for a new president by explaining, “The problem for an incoming president is establishing legitimacy when a successful predecessor with ‘big shoes’ is so visible and involved” (p. 188). The multiple comments on Dr. Olson’s desire for Dr. Ollila’s input coupled with Dr. Ollila’s willingness to point to Dr. Olson as the God-given head of the institution again speak to the humility of each individual as well as a lack of personal agendas. Of Dr. Olson’s

actions, one participant observed, “For one thing, Dr. Olson made it very clear that he highly respected Dr. Ollila and his ministry here.” Another participant explained that consistent communication by Dr. Olson “set Doc O[llila] at ease. And Doc O[llila] was very supportive and always has been of the new president.”

My research produced very few comments regarding the governing board of the institution. If anything, the governing board, comprised of mostly “Papa” Patz’s children, was more involved in the day-to-day operations after the new president took office than it had ever been before. In speaking of the former administration, one interviewee commented that “we had a bit of a schizophrenic or at least a paradoxical arrangement anyway because our board was very business-minded, that being their background, and our president was not particularly business-minded and would be the first person to admit that.” Consistent comments on the board’s involvement indicated they wanted the next president to be more business-minded or administrative. The governing board is not highly involved in Northland’s operation on a day-to-day basis; however, no participants communicated a perception that the board was inattentive through the succession process in any way.

Negative Influences on Northland’s Legitimacy. Minimal comments pointed to negative influences on Dr. Olson’s quest for legitimacy. The few remarks that surfaced highlighted two areas of concern. Several participants communicated their unmet desire to be more familiar with Dr. Olson before he became their president. One commented that “I had no idea who he was so it was, ‘Well, let’s see what he’s like.’” On the lack of

communication regarding the transition, one commented, “I don’t know that I had enough information to have yellow or red flags beyond ‘wait and see.’” Another said flatly, “I’d never heard of him before he came here.” Summing up the frustration felt by a few constituents regarding the suddenness of the transition, one participant believed more communication was the key: “Just communicating why or how or what’s the purpose of it. I never had a problem with the transition, [but we should have communicated more].” Those participants who expressed concerns in this area seemed to focus on the succession process itself rather than on the new president.

The second group of comments indicating a possible negative influence on Dr. Olson’s quest for legitimacy involved the participants’ desire to see firsthand the developing affirmative relationship between the outgoing and incoming presidents. Bornstein (2003) considers this circumstance in a positive light as she explains, “A new president may seek a close, amiable relationship” with his predecessor as a means for building legitimacy (p. 183). While this constructive relationship between the outgoing and incoming presidents occurred in Northland’s transition phase, evidently not many constituents were able to observe this firsthand. One explained, “I’d heard there was a lot of positive between the two, and that they get along great, but it would have been nice to actually see that too.” Another added, “I think it would have helped the transition for simply the two of them to be seen together, to speak together more often, even if it’s just one introducing comments for the other.” Obviously, participants felt that their personal observation of such a supportive relationship between the two presidents would have

enhanced Dr. Olson's legitimacy in their eyes and smoothed the transition process in their minds.

A PROPOSED ROAD MAP FOR SUCCESSFUL PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION IN A TRADITIONAL BIBLE COLLEGE

This research has led me to suggest three propositions for other traditional Bible colleges facing a presidential transition. Adherence to or, at least, a serious consideration of the following proposals will greatly facilitate both the search committee as well as the institution's quest for legitimacy during the succession process itself and help the new president after his or her installation into office. While most parties in a traditional Bible college would adhere to the belief that it is God who provides the direction, the individual, and the final blessing on any presidential transition, they should also consider that He expects them to diligently pursue excellence to ensure a successful transition.

Proposition 1. It is paramount that the leadership of a Bible college learn the perceived needs and expectations of the constituency before pursuing a presidential transition. This observation and gathering of information should be an ongoing process rather than just a simple focus during the actual transition itself. All leaders know the importance of keeping a pulse on the ever-changing opinions and passions of their constituency. However, they should take greater concern and thoughtful respect during times of leadership transition when their constituency faces fears and heightened levels of

uncertainty. Their people need regular reassurance that someone is caring for their needs. It is during this time that consultation and encouragement for constituents to be personally involved in the transition process can bring reassurance that individual concerns are being considered in this monumental institutional step.

At Northland, many constituents felt completely left out of the transition. In fact, many expressed that they did not even know there was going to be a presidential transition until the ceremony was taking place. Focus groups, interviews, and prayer meetings are beneficial ways to learn the perceived needs of the group in a traditional Bible college.

This advice may seem counter intuitive in the traditional Bible college setting where leadership frequently adheres to a top-down leadership model. This desire of the board to control the outcome in presidential selection should be tempered by the search committee to aid in building institutional acceptance of and affirmation for the new president. If such measures are taken, the new president will be given an open door to attain legitimacy because a good match between the constituency and the incoming president will be made. To be clear, this is not a suggestion that Bible colleges adopt a system of an up-or-down vote, but rather an advantageous system that allows all constituents to have their voices heard.

Proposition 2. It is imperative to select a president who embraces the embedded culture of the institution. “Embedded culture” should not be confused with “vision.” A new president with a new vision that appropriately takes into consideration and conforms to

the accepted cultural norms of the institution will most likely not cause any harm to his legitimacy as a leader. However, a president who does not accept the institutional culture will be swimming upstream for constituent approval from day one. A presidential candidate who does not love the institutional mores and customs would serve the institution best by looking elsewhere for employment.

A possible exception to this rule might be a new president with a new vision who would fit an institution whose constituents desire to change the institutional culture. In such a case, it would not be necessary for a new president to fit seamlessly within the old culture. However, most research suggests that institutional culture is very difficult to change and attempts to change can lead to institutional termination. One could only expect that the traditional Bible college model, with its conservative-minded constituents, would be even further grounded into any embedded institutional culture and would subsequently resist such change. It is clear in Northland's case that Dr. Olson embraced not only the culture but also the previous leadership along with that leadership's vision and philosophy. This embracing only enhanced his legitimacy in the minds of his new constituents.

Proposition 3. The new president must be patient in exercising his newly bestowed power. The new president needs to be perceived as knowing and understanding institutional culture before making adjustments that may affect that culture. Once again, in this situation it seems counter intuitive to withhold or temper the exercise of a newly acquired power, but the constituents' desire is to have a president who will follow

Stephen Covey's (1989) mantra "Seek first to understand, then to be understood" (p. 235). People believe their president is doing what is best for the institution if he or she knows and understands the identifying characteristics of their culture. The impulse to make snap decisions and fix an immediate problem can result in harming a facet of the institution a new president has not had the time or experience to consider.

In regard to major decisions, it is wise for any new president to seek much counsel from newly appointed administrators as well as from the those who have gained wisdom from their experience with the institution and who have been around long enough to see things as they really are. A new president protects the institution as he or she energetically pursues an understanding of the full ramifications of each major decision. This patience to act was one of the most highly noted characteristics of Dr. Olson's presidency in its infancy. It gave the constituents great relief to know he was not coming "to change this place" but rather to sharpen and improve it. Once he was established in the culture of the institution, he made some of the greatest changes in institutional history without harming his legitimacy with the constituency. Presidential patience will pay off with great ability to govern proper change in the proper time.

The traditional Bible college is simply an institution, and it complies with most standard institutional theory. However, certain aspects are felt more strongly in this model than in others, and certain cautions must be taken to avoid legitimacy shipwreck that would not be necessary in other models. Likewise, certain necessities from other models (such as pompous ceremonies) can be purposefully neglected with almost no negative implications. Traditional Bible colleges must exercise much caution when

navigating the perilous waters of transition to avoid the potential havoc that has claimed the lives of other similar institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

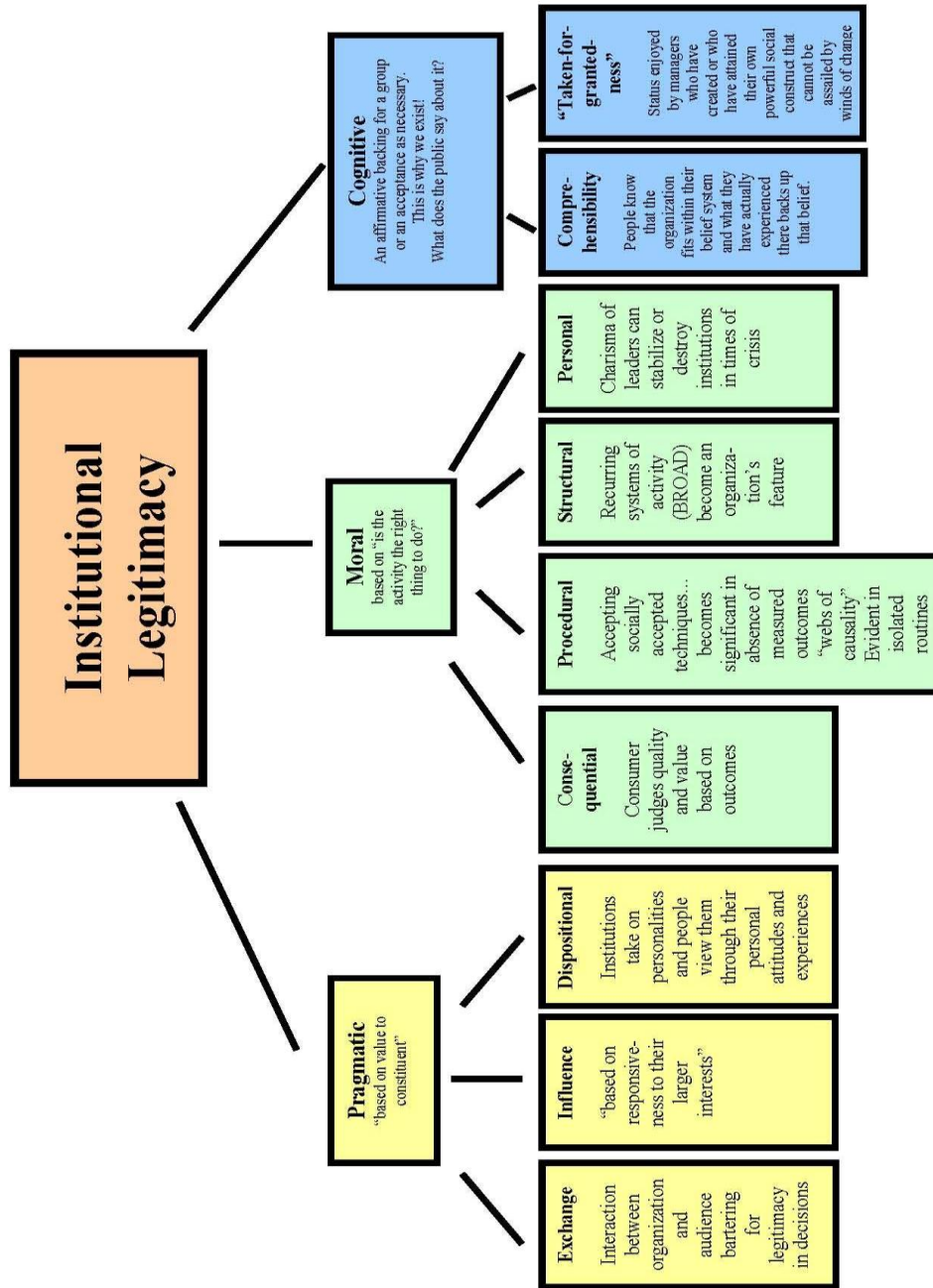
This study was limited to one healthy Bible college that replaced a long-term president in positive circumstances. A similar study of the circumstances of institutional crisis would yield beneficial research that would be helpful to the ongoing mission of the traditional Bible college. Many colleges have gone through the unexpected loss of a president through death, illness, moral failure, family problems, or a myriad of other reasons. Because these unexpected transitions will certainly continue in the future, a road map through crisis transition would be extremely valuable.

It would also be helpful to do a similar study of an institution that went through a transition failure within the first three years of a new president's taking office. This study would help to identify and document the key circumstances, decisions, cultural violations, management failures, or other aspects of that presidency that culminated in a loss of legitimacy. This new research would help to confirm or modify the propositions set forth in this study and to further create the road map to success and longevity for our Bible colleges.

APPENDICES

Appendix A.

PERSONAL INTERPRETATIONS OF SUCHMAN'S LEGITIMACY THEORY



Appendix B.
INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

**UNSTRUCTURED PHENOMENOLOGICAL INTERVIEW
AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

- 1) When you learned that Dr. Ollila was stepping down, what were your expectations of the type of person the board would hire to take his place?
- 2) When you learned that Dr. Olson had been chosen to be Northland's next president, what were your initial thoughts or concerns?
- 3) How does the management style differ from Dr. Ollila to Dr. Olson?
- 4) How did you view the relationship between Dr. Olson and Dr. Ollila during the transition? (focus question on relationship of transition)
- 5) How do you remember the transition from Dr. Ollila to Olson (peaks, highlights, frustrations)?
- 6) How do Dr.'s Ollila and Olson relate to "Papa" Patz's vision for Northland?
- 7) How does the vision of Dr. Olson differ from the vision of Dr. Ollila?
- 8) If Northland were a person/personality how would you define it and how have you seen that personality change in the past five years?
- 9) How do you think Dr. Olson "learned" Northland?
- 10) How much ownership do you feel you had as an employee in this process?
- 11) How was the school led between Dr. Ollila's decision to step out of the Presidency and Dr. Olson's decision to step in?
- 12) What was the first major decision you remember Dr. Olson making regarding Northland and how did you perceive Dr. Ollila's opinion of that decision?
- 13) Do you feel the selection of Dr. Olson matched the direction of Northland and why or why not?

Appendix C.

INFORMATIONAL LETTER TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Information Concerning Participation in a Research Study Clemson University

(Managing Legitimacy through a Presidential Transition)

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Jackson Flanigan and Bobby Wood. The purpose of this research is to explore the factors present in a successful presidential transition and expand the knowledge base in the study of Legitimacy Theory. The researchers want to make it very clear that we understand that true legitimacy comes only through Jesus Christ and our relationship to Him. It is our desire to further the present research and create a tool that can measure perceptions of legitimacy and aid in leadership development.

Your participation will involve completing an anonymous survey, an anonymous interview, or an anonymous focus group regarding your perception of the Presidential transition at Northland.

The amount of time required for your participation will be 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey or under an hour to complete the focus group or interview.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research.

Potential benefits

This research is designed to present an in-depth record of a Presidential transition in a Bible College.

Protection of confidentiality

The survey you complete will be completely confidential and anonymous. We will not be able to identify you. Your answers will be submitted directly to the web-based survey tool for compilation. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study.

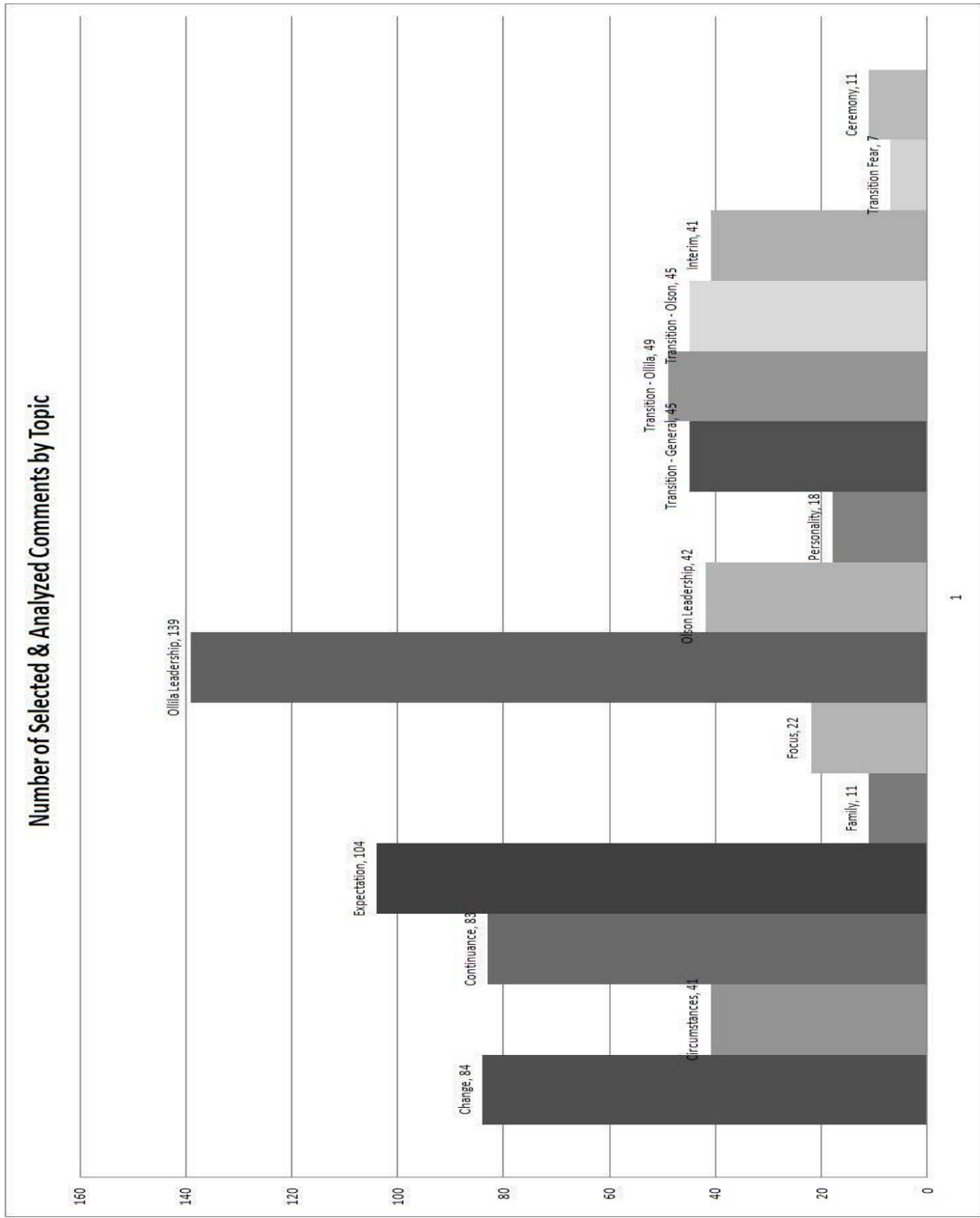
Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Jackson Flanigan at Clemson University at 864.656.5091. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance at 864.656.6460.

Appendix D.
CHART OF SELECTED AND ANALYZED COMMENTS BY TOPIC



Appendix E.

**LETTER FROM THE NORTHLAND MISSION, INC. BOARD TO DR. OLSON
WITH ATTACHMENTS**



P. O. Box 7 • Pound, WI 54161 Telephone: (414) 897-2251 • Fax: (414) 897-4586

June 17, 2005

Northland Baptist Bible College
Attention: President Matt Olson
Chairman Howard Patz
W10085 Pike Plains Road
Dunbar, WI 54119-9711

Ref: Endowment Fund Preservation

Gentlemen,

On May 31st the Executive Committee and Endowment Fund Committee met to discuss the diminished value of Northland Mission Endowment Fund. A copy of the May 31st Northland Endowment Fund Committee meeting items discussed is attached marked #1.

Point #7 specifically states (the Endowment Fund can no long afford to withdraw principal)

Point #5 stated (Northland needs to live within our means). These key points were repeatedly and with strong emphasis addressed by several Endowment Fund Committee members.

Immediately following combined Board Meeting, the Endowment Fund Committee continued to meet and took action described in the Northland Endowment Fund Committee Meeting, May 31st. Copy enclosed Marked #2. The action taken is described in item #2.

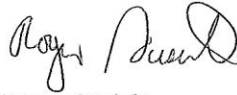
On June 8, 2005, President Matt Olson e mailed myself, copy of June 8th e mail marked #3, copy enclosed. The most troubling question President Olson raises is "We are anticipating the ability to draw upon the fund up to that amount this fiscal year (1,080,000). This clearly goes against the Endowment Funds recommendation and amendment action taken late in the day on May 31st. Again, annual investment earnings are estimated at \$500,000 to \$800,000. This is

the number that the Endowment Fund Committee sees possible to draw upon for this fiscal year.

We repeat, Point #7 (from May 31st items discussed, the Endowment Fund Committee hereby puts on notice the Operating Budget Board, the Endowment Fund can no longer afford to withdraw principal).

I hereby, strongly recommend that the Operating Budget Board take all action necessary to operate within its means and not to expect more that \$750,000 total withdrawal during the new fiscal year June 2005 - May 31, 2006, from the Endowment Fund.

Sincerely,
Northland Mission Endowment Fund

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roger Gusick".

Roger Gusick
Member

Enclosures

#1

**Northland Endowment Fund Committee Meeting
May 31, 2005**

Howard Patz, N.M. Chairman, has requested a meeting of the Endowment fund committee and Matt Olsen, NBBC President. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss operating fund withdrawals and establish a clear understanding of policy and limitations between NBBC Operating Budget Board and NM Endowment Fund Committee.

1. Endowment fund history and philosophy –
2. Endowment fund committee is deeply concerned with the diminishing principal of the fund.
3. We have reached the \$10 million limit.
4. Annual investment earnings estimated between 5 to 8% (\$500,000 to \$800,000).
5. We need to “live within our means”. This means staying within the limits of a balanced budget.
6. We need to adjust policies and make changes necessary to balance the budget.
7. The Endowment Fund Committee hereby puts on notice the Operating Budget Board: the endowment fund can no longer afford to withdraw principal. We will distribute all earnings to the Operating Board as earned on a quarterly basis.
8. Any additional funds needed, will have to be borrowed by the Northland Operating Board.

**Northland Endowment Fund Committee Meeting
May 31, 2005**

In order to ensure the future financial health of N.M., the Endowment Fund Committee recommends the following to the Operating Budget Board:

Please make the necessary changes to balance the income and expenses in the annual operating budget for the new fiscal year.

Income:

1. Make changes to student accounts receivable to limit this account not to exceed \$500,000 at any time.
2. Raise tuition, etc. to necessary levels in order to balance the budget.

Expenses:

1. Reduce staff to levels necessary to balance the budget
2. Reduce salaries to levels necessary to balance the budget
3. Reduce programs to a level necessary to balance the budget
4. Reduce world travel expense to a level necessary to balance the budget

(#2)

**Northland Endowment Fund Committee Meeting
May 31, 2005**

The Endowment Fund Committee met immediately following the joint Executive Committee meeting on May 31, 2005. Further discussions on approval of the \$300,000 distribution request were expressed. It was agreed there wasn't any choices, but to approve the request.

By granting the request the Endowment Fund will decrease to approximately \$9.7 million. This committee is deeply concerned about continuing operating budget excess losses. The fund is now below the \$10 million minimum limit we all believed healthy for N.M.I. Further action is necessary.

A motion was made by Clifford Patz, that because of the reduced level of the endowment fund, that we amend (policies and guidance) Section 12 par. C Trust Distributions to read:

Effective Immediately – The Endowment Fund must strive to preserve principal. Annual distributions will be limited to annual earned income. 2nd by Roger Gusick - motion carried

A second request presented by President Matt Olson to transfer \$100,000 to an Employee Financial Relief Fund was denied for a number of different reasons.

We the undersigned, being all the committee members hereby ratify all actions taken at this meeting.

Clifford Patz

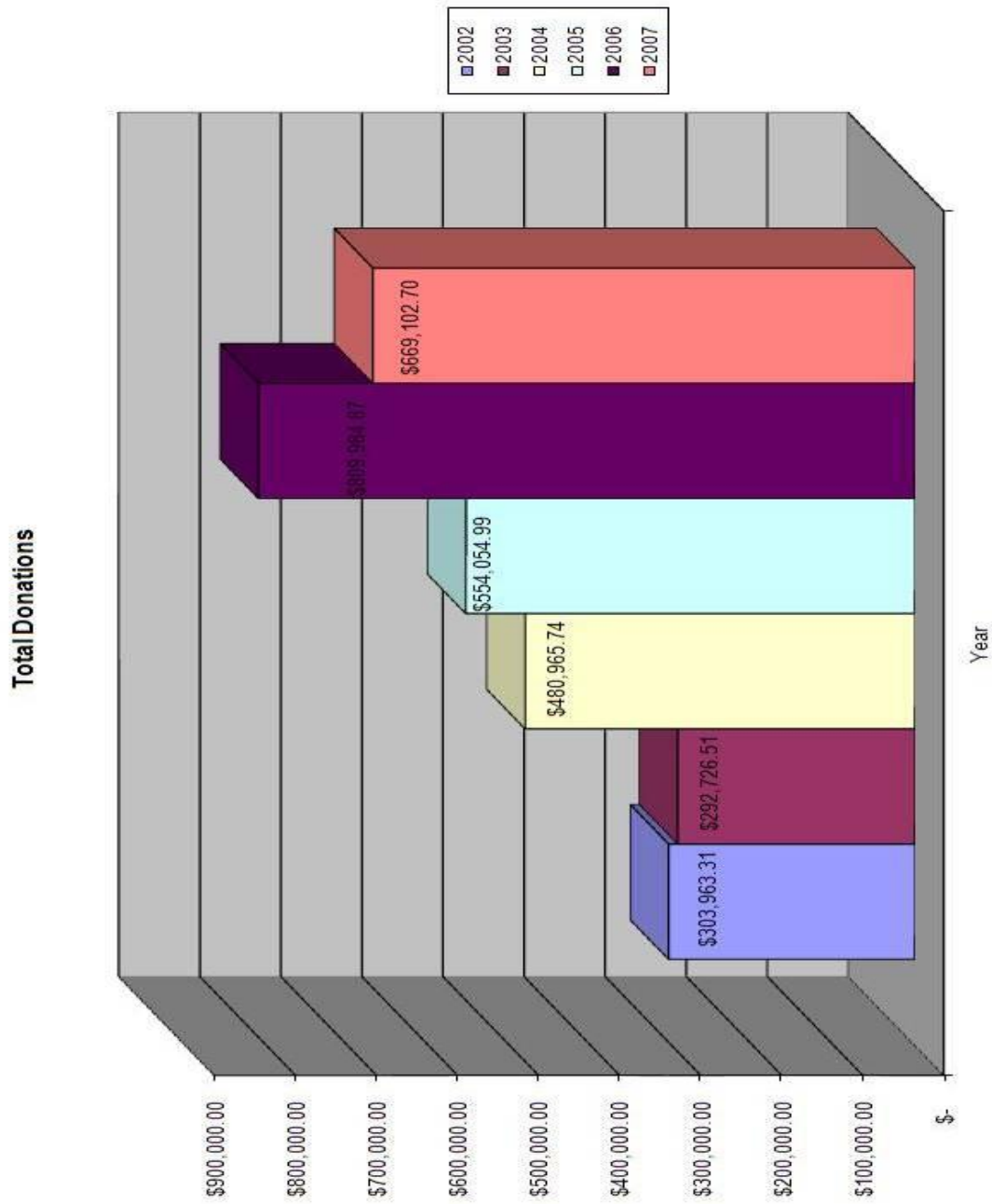
Darrell Patz

Roger Gusick

Eleanore Gusick

Appendix F.

TOTAL DONATIONS FROM 2002-2007 TO NORTHLAND MISSION, INC.



Appendix G.
GS7 – FINAL DISSERTATION APPROVAL FORM



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
CLEMSON UNIVERSITY

**GS7 - FINAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAM AND THESIS/DISSERTATION
 APPROVAL FORM**

Date 02/13/08

TO THE DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL:

This committee has given Robert Morris Wood Jr.
(Student's Name)

024180103 a final examination for the PhD degree with a major in
(CU Student ID number) (Degree: MS, PhD, EdD, etc.)

Educational Leadership and reports the results as follows:
(Major)

- PASSED final comprehensive exam, no thesis/dissertation required, and student has met all departmental requirements related to special projects, etc.
- PASSED final comprehensive exam, thesis/dissertation required, and the student's committee has approved the manuscript.
- FAILED final comprehensive exam; please indicate recommendation relative to a second final examination, if any:

Examining Committee

This form must be signed by all committee members.

Jackson F. Flanigan
Signature
J. V. Dennis
Mike Campbell
Ted Whitwell

Jackson Flanigan 8880015982
Type or Print
Ted Whitwell
Mike Campbell 888021089
James Devink

Return this form to: Enrolled Services, D-104 Sikes Hall, Clemson, SC 29634; 864.656.5339.



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
 E-108 Martin Hall Box 345713 Clemson, SC 29634-5713
 864.656.3195 FAX 864.656.5344

Form GS7
 Rev. 07/07

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