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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

ASILOMAR LEADERSHIP SKILLS SEMINAR: THE CAREER PREPARATION,  
ADVANCEMENT, AND ENHANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

A dissertation proposal submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership Administration and Policy

by

Estella M. Castillo-Garrison

April 2012

Linda Purrington, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation proposal, written by

Estella M. Castillo-Garrison

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Linda Purrington, Ed.D., Chairperson

Molly McCabe, Ed.D.

Kevin O'Connor, Ph.D.



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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation study to my amazing family for their encouragement and support for without which, this would not have been possible.

To my husband, Cody, for always supporting my pursuit of knowledge and my relentless passion for learning. Thank you for bringing balance to my life and never letting me forget what is most important, Family. To my amazing children, Karl and Ian for your love and laughter and for bringing joy into my life each and every day.

To my big brother Al, who taught me what it is like to live a life full of passion. May all of your dreams be realized.

To all of the amazing women in my life who have taught me so many lessons, the most valuable of which are to be appreciative and kind. Thank you to my late grandmother Maria for pushing me to become a better person even when I did not understand it, my aunts Lillie and Alice for always supporting me, my sister Jessica for teaching me how to be a “big” sister and for accepting my faults, and most of all to my mother, Irene, for the tremendous sacrifices she has made in her life in order to make my life what it is today. Thank you Mom, I love you!

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“And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it” - Paulo Coelho, 1993 *The Alchemist*

I recall reading the *Alchemist* during coursework and remembering how this quote rings true with so many of life’s endeavors. I believe it truly represents what I think and feel about this dissertation. So many amazing people have come into my life at just the right time and have contributed in so many ways to this incredible journey. Dr. Linda Purrington walked into my life during my first visit to Pepperdine University. Her grace and leadership was evident at our first meeting and remained consistent throughout my coursework and dissertation study. Thank you for being my chair and for believing in me every step of the way. Your calm enthusiasm and love of life, is a motivation for all of those who surround you. Dr. Kevin O’Connor and Dr. Molly McCabe, thank you for your time, commitment, and candor; I learned so much from your own shared experiences.

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A special thank you to all of the participants of this study. May the students, faculty, and staff of the California Community Colleges system benefit from your continued leadership. Lastly, with the utmost appreciation to Dr. Pamela Fisher and Cherie Savage for my amazing Asilomar experience. Thank you for allowing me to research Asilomar without any reservations and may you continue to impact the lives of future Asilomar participants.

## VITA

## ACADEMIC PREPARATION

Pepperdine University, Los Angeles, CA Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy	2012
Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI Master of Arts in Education, Instruction	2004
Park University, Parkville, MO Bachelor of Science in Social Psychology	2001
Barstow Community College, Barstow, CA Associate of Arts in Social Science	2000

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Saddleback College, Mission Viejo, CA Director of Community Education	2005 - Present
Park University, Parkville, MO Adjunct Faculty	2006 - 2009
Armed Services YMCA, Camp Pendleton, CA Programs Director Operation Hero School-Age Program Facilitator Preschool Site Manager	2002 - 2005
Fallbrook Union Elementary School District, Fallbrook, CA Substitute Teacher	2002 - 2003
Barstow Unified School District, Barstow, CA Substitute Teacher	2001 - 2002

## AWARDS

Saddleback College, Mission Viejo, CA President's Award for Leadership and Innovation	2010
Armed Services YMCA, Camp Pendleton, CA Employee of the Year	2004

## ABSTRACT

This mixed-methods research study examined the effects on the career preparation, advancement, and enhancement of women from California community college leadership who participated in the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar (Asilomar) from 2005-2011. Data were collected during the 2011-2012 academic year and were gathered from the results of 67 respondents to an online 27-item survey and from 10 volunteer interviews. Eleven important findings resulted from analysis of study data. In the area of career preparation, Asilomar prompted participants to set personal and professional goals, encouraged and inspired them to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility, and positively influenced participants' emotional intelligence. In the area of career advancement, Asilomar provided executive leadership examples and experiences, afforded participants the opportunity to network with colleagues and executive leaders from other colleges, and increased participants' confidence. In the area of career enhancement, Asilomar provided professional development and personal leadership capacity building and encouraged participants to seek work life balance.

The aspects of Asilomar that were perceived as contributing the most to participant success were the executive leadership examples provided by the seminar leaders and the opportunity afforded to network with colleagues and executive leaders from other community colleges. The top five Asilomar topics that emerged from the data were budget and finance, leadership ethics, emotional intelligence, campus politics, and governance.

Findings from the study support the following conclusions. Asilomar had a significantly positive impact on the career preparation, advancement, and enhancement of California community college women leaders who participated in the seminar from 2005-

2011. Aspiring community college women executive leaders need and benefit from the opportunity to interact and learn from women executive leader role models and mentors in order to prepare for, advance, and enhance their professional careers. Women encouraging, supporting, and promoting other women in their career preparation, advancement, and enhancement is highly inspiring and motivating to aspiring community college leaders. Such interaction promotes professional ties, continued association with Asilomar, and results in new referrals for Asilomar participation.

## **CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM**

This chapter provides an introduction to and an overview of the dissertation. The chapter begins with the background of the study, followed by the problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, importance of the study, limitations, delimitations, assumptions, researcher's relationship to the study focus, and definition of terms. The chapter concludes with a presentation of the organization of the proposal.

### **Background of the Study**

Representing the largest higher educational system in the United States, the California Community Colleges (CCC) system serves the educational needs of over 2.7 million students each year, nearly a quarter of all students nationwide (Community College League of California [CCLC], 2011b). On the national level, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2011) determined that 32% of chief executive officers (CEOs), college presidents, and chancellors across the United States are 60 years old or older. At the state level, the California Community College (CCC) Chancellor's Office's statistics show that 28.7% of all educational leaders, including deans, vice presidents, and presidents, are ages 60 years or older. Another 22.8% are aged 55 to 59, making over 50% of CCC leaders eligible for retirement (CCC Chancellor's Office, 2010). With California's current retirement age at 55, (Office of Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., 2011) such a large percentage of college executive leaders across the nation and statewide are eligible for retirement creates a major succession concern for colleges. According to the AACC:

Community colleges are facing an impending leadership crisis. College presidents, senior administrators, and faculty leaders have been retiring at an alarming rate. The average age of people in these positions continues to increase, and upcoming retirements in the positions are projected to be higher than normal. (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012a, p. 1)

Equal in importance with the CCC system's work of educating students throughout California is the need to ensure that the CCC executive leaders of tomorrow are prepared to advance their communities and state, particularly during these difficult economic times. The concern among colleges is that not enough qualified leaders are willing to step up to these advanced leadership positions (Valeau & Boggs, 2004).

With California's fiscal climate uncertain and with a state unemployment rate at 12.1%, many unemployed individuals are looking to CCCs to prepare them to return to the workforce. Additionally, students who have been turned away from the University of California and California State University systems and who are trying to prepare for the workforce are also seeking admission to CCCs (State of California Employment Development Department, 2011).

CCCs are grappling with the need to serve more students with fewer resources. Regarding the 2011-2012 budget, Chancellor Scott (as cited in Dorr, 2011) noted:

In 2009-2010, we had to turn away 140,000 students due to course reductions. I will call upon our CEOs to provide access to as many individuals as possible but it's extremely difficult when we are essentially asking colleges to live off of their savings accounts and credit cards. (p. 1)



CCCs were cut \$400 million in the 2011-2012 budget and sustained trigger cuts resulting in an additional \$102 million mid-year reduction due to state revenues falling short of projections. Furthermore, the CCC system is preparing for an additional cut of a projected \$149 million in the current academic year (Dorr, 2012).

As the CCCs are summoned to do more with less, the role of the CEO becomes even more critical. The skills needed to successfully lead today's colleges require leaders to be able to respond to an ever-changing environment. This new environment involves greater student diversity, advances in technology, accountability demands, and globalization as well as the need for relationship building and fundraising skills (AACC, 2010).

The advancement of female leaders within the CCC system is an important means of addressing the needs of CCCs. The AACC (2010) noted that 28% of all community college CEOs across the United States are female. Data from the CCC Chancellor's Office show that female educational administrators, including deans, vice presidents, and presidents, throughout the state have increased over the past decade from 46.1% in 2000 to 51.3% in 2010 (AACC, 2011). As such, female leaders within the CCC system need to be encouraged and even inspired to take on advanced leadership positions.

Because female leaders historically have not occupied advanced positions, they do not have much job experience upon which to draw. Research shows a number of reasons for the executive leadership shortage among women within community colleges, including barriers to advancement, power struggles, the mindset of boards of trustees both pre- and post-hire, work-life balance concerns, and societal perceptions of women in advanced leadership roles (Persyn, 2005; Shaffer, 2009; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999).

The literature suggests that professional development, terminal degrees, hard work, respect for others, academic preparation, job experience, and professional networks are needed by female leaders to compete for advanced leadership positions (Carter, 2009; Krause, 2009). The literature also suggests the following key topics in leadership programs for women in preparation for presidency roles: leadership trends in the 21st century, historical and perceived obstacles to advancement, mentoring, family dynamics, networking, budgeting, and political and legal savvy (Bello-de Castro, 2010; Blackwood, 2011; Krause, 2009; Ligeikis, 2010).

Proactive measures should be introduced early in the careers of female leaders within the community colleges system. This early approach may stimulate professional growth among those who may be interested in pursuing advanced leadership positions and those with the potential to take on senior roles. Further, it is important to identify and examine existing trends with regard to current female leaders to determine ways in which future female leaders at the community college level in California can be better prepared for and subsequently successful in advanced leadership roles. Professional development, mentorship, professional networks, and career opportunities are possible ways to address this need (Bello-de Castro, 2010; Blackwood, 2011; Krause, 2009; Ligeikis, 2010).

Professional development programs for community college leaders are offered through a variety of public and private organizations. While many of these programs focus on various aspects of leadership, they rarely focus on encouraging and inspiring females within the college community to consider leadership positions with increasing

responsibility. Research on and analysis of leadership programs for female leaders is one way to bring this issue to the forefront.

One such program is the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar, often referred to as Asilomar, which was created by the American Association of Women in Community Colleges (AAWCC) and the Yosemite Community College District. Since 1984, Asilomar has prepared female leaders in California to take on leadership roles that involve increasing responsibility. Asilomar is offered annually in Pacific Grove, California. The goal of Asilomar is to identify, recruit, inspire, and encourage women to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility. According to Dr. Pamela Fisher, Founder and Director of Asilomar, “If women do not perceive themselves as capable of doing it, or are not encouraged and inspired to do it, they may never take those next steps” (P. Fisher, personal communication, June 21, 2011). As part of its commitment to promote leadership development at all levels of community colleges, CCLC offers this seminar (CCLC, n.d.).

Participants of Asilomar range from classified staff to management and include members of boards of trustees. Applicants go through an extensive application process, which includes the application, a cover letter with stated career goals, a resume, an authorization form signed by the college president or chancellor, and a letter of recommendation from college leadership. Facilitators of Asilomar include current and past college presidents and chancellors who have participated in the seminar during their tenure within the CCC system. Since its inception, more than 2,200 competitively selected women have completed the seminar (Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar, 2012; CCLC, 2011a). Asilomar is an

intensive four-day experience that focuses on the issues facing women who have made a commitment to community college administration, either in their current position or as a future goal... The purpose of the seminar is to provide information, strategies, contacts, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. The expected outcome is that participants will be able to acquire and successfully accept expanded leadership responsibilities within their own or other California community colleges. (CCLC, 2011a, p. 1)

Seminar topics focus on key issues such as emotional intelligence, budget and finance, cultural proficiency, leading change, leadership ethics, finding balance, campus politics, career choices and paths, governance, job applications and interviews. Each topic is covered within the larger context of being a woman and leading institutions within the CCC system.

### **Problem Statement**

Currently in California, women fill 25% of district chancellor or superintendent/president positions and 37% of presidential positions (CCC Chancellor's Office, 2010). There is a need to increase these percentages as a means to counter the impending leadership gap due to projected executive retirements. Asilomar was created to identify, recruit, inspire, and encourage women to prepare to take on leadership roles that have increasing responsibility in the CCC system. Many seminar participants have gone on to become executive leaders, with several who have returned to share their experiences with incoming participants. Nevertheless, follow-up data had yet to be collected from Asilomar participants to determine how, if at all, their experience inspired and encouraged their career preparation, advancement, and enhancement. Therefore,

both an opportunity and a need existed to study the seminar by examining the experiences of its past participants.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this mixed-methods research study was to explore the career preparation, advancement, and enhancement of women who participated in Asilomar from 2005-2011.

### **Research Question**

The following research question guided this study: How, if at all, has Asilomar affected the career preparation, advancement, and enhancement of women who participated in the leadership seminar from 2005-2011?

### **Importance of the Study**

It is important to understand Asilomar's contribution to women's leadership. This research study involved the initial gathering of information from past participants to determine the themes that emerge from participant experiences, providing evidence-based research documentation of the seminar's contribution on their career preparation, advancement, and enchantment. The study is important because CCCs need to understand how Asilomar encourages and inspires these women, and to ensure that its application and practice continues.

Evidence-based research has shown the seminar's ability to encourage its participants to accept expanded leadership responsibilities in the CCC system. Nevertheless, prior to this study, no formal research had been conducted on how the seminar contributes to success. The findings of this study assist those within the CCC system determine what is needed to encourage female leaders. The findings have the

potential to inform the development of initiatives as they relate to areas such as hiring practices, professional development programs, and diversity plans.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations are boundaries that are self-imposed by the researcher with regard to the purpose and scope of the study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The researcher set the delimitations in this study to focus on the perspectives of those who recently participated in Asilomar.

Participation in this study is delimited to women in CCC leadership who have participated in Asilomar from 2005 to 2011. These survey participants may be more clearly able to recall their experiences than could women who had taken the seminar earlier than 2005. Additionally, interviews were delimited to those survey respondents who agreed to be interviewed.

Participants who attended Asilomar before 2005 are not part of this study; however, it is possible that could complete the study's survey if they became aware of its existence through knowledge given to them by 2005-2011 participants or through social media used in this study to increase participation in the survey. Results from those who participated before 2005 may be reviewed only for the purpose of informing recommendations for future research.

### **Limitations**

Limitations are factors that may affect the methodology, data, or interpretation of findings during the study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). This study has the following limitations:

1. Women leaders who were in the middle of their leadership tenure may not have felt that it was politically appropriate or timely to share their experiences with the researcher.
2. Due to the narrow focus on recent participants, it is possible that the study had a limited number of survey respondents.
3. Because the interviews involved only those survey respondents who agreed to be interviewed, the number of interviewees may have been limited.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are the conditions that are taken for granted within a research study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Lunenburg and Irby (2008) describe assumptions as postulates, premises, and propositions that are understood and accepted as operational for the purposes of research. Assumptions indicate the influence on the nature, analysis, and interpretation of data (Richards & Morse, 2007).

This study included the following assumptions: (a) past participants would be willing to share their experiences, (b) past participants would be interested in contributing to this body of knowledge, (c) survey respondents would answer questions honestly, (d) a number of survey respondents would volunteer to be interviewed, (e) interviewees would answer questions honestly, (f) the researcher could determine an accurate picture of participants' experiences, (g) a high level of participation in the overall study would occur, and (h) the interpretation of the data accurately reflects the perceptions of Asilomar's past participants from 2005-2011.

### **Researcher's Relationship to the Study Focus**

As a female leader in the CCC system for nearly 7 years, I am very interested in research on women in community college leadership. In spring 2009, I attended Asilomar, which was an incredible experience. As I began networking with some of the female leaders within the CCC system, it became apparent to me that this seminar had a profound impact on them as well. In the 27 years of Asilomar's existence, no research has been conducted on past participants. This study focused on the perspectives of past participants in regard to how the seminar influenced their decision to take on advanced leadership roles.

My personal experience with Asilomar has given me keen insight into the program and its impact. Thus, to avoid potential bias, extensive outside review of the study was sought from four trained independent coders who coded interview transcripts, as well as from each of the interviewees themselves who reviewed transcripts for accuracy of representation. Additionally, to maintain objectivity, the researcher solicited outside review of the analysis of findings from the dissertation committee of three who reviewed content, findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Career advancement.** A career is defined as an "occupation or profession followed as a life's work" and advancement is defined as "the action of advancing or the state of being advanced" ("Career," 2006, pp. 151, "Advancement," 2006, pp. 18). Career advancement, as it relates to this study, involves the advancement of one's job or career and includes applying for jobs, interviewing, seeking promotion, engaging in mentorship activities, and networking for the purposes of advancing one's career.



**Career enhancement.** Enhancement is defined as “the act of enhancing or the state of being enhanced” (“Enhancement,” 2006, p. 355). For purposes of this study, career enhancement refers to affecting one’s career in a positive way and to increasing one’s leadership capacity. Examples of career enhancement include, but is not limited to: preparing for politics within an organization; understanding budget and finance; building community; sustaining cultural proficiency; and taking classes, courses, seminars, workshops or engaging in other professional development programs.

**Career preparation.** Preparation is the “action or process of making or getting something ready” (“Preparation,” 2006, p. 819). Career preparation, in this study, refers to the intentional and preparatory practices of moving one’s career forward. Resume building, career counseling, and goal setting are examples of career preparation activities.

**Leadership development.** Professional leadership development encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, including college degrees, formal coursework, conferences, and informal learning opportunities situated in practice (Jeandron, 2006).

**Lived experience.** Moustakas (as cited in Creswell, 2007) defines lived experience as emphasizing the importance of individual experiences (phenomena) of people as conscious human beings (p. 236). In this study, participants will describe their lived experiences as related to CCC leadership and to Asilomar.

### **Organization of the Study**

This chapter provided the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, importance of the study, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, the researcher’s relation to the study, and definitions of terms. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature, which includes a presentation of historical, theoretical, and empirical

research as a framework for the study. Chapter 3 includes the methodology and procedures used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 includes the findings, and Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the findings, the conclusions, and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature. The chapter begins with the literature on CCCs, including their history, the current fiscal crisis, and the impending leadership gap. Subsequently, the literature on college leadership is presented, including theoretical considerations, leadership pathways, challenges, and professional development programs. In particular, because it is the focus of this study, the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar, also referred to as Asilomar, will be discussed.

### **California Community Colleges**

When studying leadership in CCCs, it is important to understand the system and its rich history. Representing the largest higher education system in the United States, CCC serves the educational needs of over 2.7 million students each year. Comprising 112 colleges within 72 districts, the system represents nearly 24% of all community college students nationwide. During the 2008-2009 academic year, CCC awarded more than 61,000 Associate of Arts degrees and more than 23,000 Associate of Science degrees. Additionally, during the same year, CCC awarded over 127,000 credit and non-credit certificates (CCLC, 2011b).

The CCC system strategic plan's executive summary notes that, as California's population continues to grow, so does the importance of a quality education:

A population lacking critical knowledge and skills cannot fully participate in the state's economy or even fully enjoy the benefits of its democracy. An educated California will advance the state's economic and political success...California

Community Colleges are better positioned than any other entity to meet this educational and societal challenge. (CCC Chancellor's Office, n.d.b, p. 1)

In early 2011, the CCC Board of Governors (BOG) began a 12-month strategic planning process to improve and recommit the CCC to student success. Pursuant to Senate Bill 1143 (Chapter 409, Statutes of 2010), the BOG developed the Student Success Task Force (SSTF). In July of 2011 the SSTF comprised of 20 members of community college leaders, faculty, students, staff, researchers, and external stakeholders worked in an open process to form recommendations on transformative change elements that are meant to refocus and align the CCC system's efforts and resources to better support its students in attaining their educational objectives. The Student Success Plan consisting of 22 SSTF recommendations will further help the CCC system achieve its core missions to focus on education for 4-year college or university transfer, basic skills development, and career technical education, including workforce-oriented certificates and degrees (CCC Chancellor's Office, 2011a, 2012). Equal in importance with the CCC system's work of educating California students is the need to ensure that future CCC executive leaders are prepared to advance their communities and state, particularly during these difficult economic times.

**History.** Both growth and contraction have occurred throughout the history of CCCs, greatly influencing the demands placed on its leadership. In 1910, the system began with Fresno City College in the central valley of California. In these early years, the schools were called junior colleges because they provided the first 2 years of a college education (Scott, 2010). The system focused on preparing students to transfer to 4-year institutions. Gradually, vocational programs began to flourish within the colleges

and soon transformed the system to an inclusive community institution. More recently, however, the system has begun to revert back to its original focus.

Expansion throughout the system included markers such as the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act, which is widely known as the GI Bill. This bill encouraged World War II veterans to seek higher education and provided educational benefits to retrain returning veterans. The GI Bill played a monumental role in the expansion of community colleges (AACC, 2012b; Scott, 2010).

In his keynote address at the CCLC Conference, Chancellor Scott noted three additional key periods that have shaped CCC (Scott, 2010). First, in the 1960s, the California Master Plan for Higher Education clearly outlined the role of the three segments of higher education in California: the University of California, the California State University, and the CCC system (CCC Chancellor's Office, 2012a). The plan emphasized the functions of the CCC specifically with regard to transfer, vocational skill building, and open access. This definition had a positive effect on enrollment, as students flocked to this local community education alternative.

Second, the 1978 passage of Proposition 13, which reduced property taxes, also played an important role in the history of CCCs. This proposition removed the taxing authority of community college boards of trustees and centralized the funding of colleges at the state level. This led to the creation of the CCC Chancellor's Office in Sacramento. This structure currently exists within the CCC, for which funding is collected at the state level and then distributed out to the local colleges and/or districts (Scott, 2010).

Third, Proposition 98, passed in 1988, played an integral part in funding, as it ensured that the CCC and the K-12 (K-14) systems received at least 40% of the state's

revenue. Some advocates of CCCs believe that this proposition had a negative impact, as the 40% was intended to represent a minimum; historically, however, it has acted as a ceiling for funding, which resulted in a cap in growth potential for the system (Scott, 2010; Townley & Schmieder-Ramirez, 2008).

**Fiscal crisis.** During the 2009-2010 academic year, CCCs experienced an 8% (\$520 million) cut to their state funding, the largest cut in the system's history. This resulted in difficult decision making at the college level for local leaders who had to determine which courses to cut. Some 140,000 students were turned away due to course reductions. Then, in the 2010-2011 academic year, CCCs sustained no further cuts, and the 2.2% of growth funding for that year was deferred until the next budget year (Dorr, 2011).

In the 2011-2012 budget, to close the state's \$6.9 billion deficit, CCC were cut \$400 million and sustained trigger cuts, resulting in an additional \$102 million mid-year reduction due to state revenues falling short of projections. Furthermore, the CCC system is preparing for an additional cut of a projected \$149 million in the current academic year. Since 2008-2009, the CCCs have experienced funding cuts of \$809 million, which represents about 12% of the system's annual funding (Dorr, 2012). Faced with this fiscal challenge, CCC leaders are implementing efficient strategies, delivering best practices, and doing more with less to stretch available funding as much as possible (Scott, 2010).

As the landscape of the nation's financial and educational systems continues to change, so do the leadership needs of these institutions. Today, CCCs have narrowed their priorities to workforce development, basic skills, and transfer of students to 4-year institutions (CCC Chancellor's Office, 2012a). Other non-credit programs or those that

do not directly lead to transfer or to the workforce, such as programs for older adults, categorical programs, and kinesiology courses for recreation and fitness, are currently on the brink of being eliminated as a result of state budget cuts. Thus, CCCs have a need for leadership that is politically, fiscally, and people savvy.

**Leadership gap.** With a broad perspective, there is a leadership gap within the community college leadership ranks that needs to be addressed nationwide. At the national level, the AACC (2011) determined that 32% of chief CEOs, college presidents, and chancellors across the United States are 60 years of age or older. At the state level, the CCC Chancellor's Office's statistics show that 28.7% of all educational leaders, including deans, vice presidents, and presidents, are 60 of age years or older. Another 22.8% are 55-59 years old, making over 50% of CCC leaders eligible for retirement (CCC Chancellor's Office, 2010). With the current state retirement age at 55 (Office of Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., 2011), such a large percentage of college executive leaders across the nation being eligible for retirement creates a major succession concern for colleges. With nearly a third of the leaders across the nation eligible for retirement, this presents a considerable concern for colleges and students.

The need for effective leaders to step into these roles is of critical importance. As educational leaders begin to look at various ways to address this potential leadership crisis, they can see that the advancement of female leaders within the CCC system is an important means of addressing the needs of CCCs. The AACC (2010) noted that 28% of all community college CEOs across the United States are female. Data from the CCC Chancellor's Office show that female educational administrators, including deans, vice presidents, and presidents, throughout the state have increased over the past decade from

46.1% in 2000 to 51.3% in 2010 (AACC, 2011). As such, female leaders within the CCC system need to be encouraged and even inspired to take on advanced leadership positions.

**CCC system leadership structure.** Many professional development programs, including Asilomar, encourage leadership at all levels. Thus, it is important to understand the various levels of leadership within the CCC.

Within the system, community colleges encompass several levels of leadership, and each plays an important role in the system at large. In California, the leadership structure involves the state Chancellor's Office, district level leadership, and college level leadership. The CCC Chancellor's Office is located in Sacramento, California. Its mission is to provide leadership, advocacy, and support to CCCs. The state Chancellor's Office is also responsible for allocating funds to colleges and districts. The state chancellor works closely with a 17-member, governor-appointed BOG that sets policy and provides guidance to the colleges and districts within the system. Similarly, each community college district has a locally elected board of trustees (BOT) that represents the local community and is responsible for maintaining the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the college or colleges within its district (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, n.d.).

***District level chancellor or superintendent/president.*** The title of district chancellor is used for the CEO of a multi-college district, and superintendent/president is the title referred to the CEO of a single college district. Working with the BOT, the chancellor or superintendent/president oversees the operations of the district office and provides leadership in setting and communicating expectations throughout the district while supporting the college or colleges within the district. The chancellor gives



responsibility and authority to the local college president and holds him or her responsible for overseeing the operations at the college level without interference (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, n.d.).

***College level executive leadership.*** As outlined in accreditation standard IV, B: Board and Administrative Organization: “The president has primary responsibility for the quality of the institution he/she leads. He/she provides effective leadership in planning, organizing, budgeting, selecting and developing personnel, and assessing institutional effectiveness” (Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, n.d., p. 26). The president leads the institution with varying levels of administration and management that make up the management team.

***College level management and executive leadership.*** The president, academic administrators, and managers normally comprise the management team at the college level. The president generally has an executive leadership team, comprised of vice presidents and others in executive positions. The division or department heads, as well as those in other leadership positions such as classified senate leadership, the academic senate leadership, and the associated student government, generally provide the leadership structure within the college.

***College level Academic Senate.*** The Academic Senate (AS) represents the leadership of college faculty, and, according to Title 5 of the Administrative Code of California, Section 53200, the AS is the faculty organization whose function is to formulate recommendations for academic and professional matters (CCLC, 2011c).

***College level Classified Senate.*** The Classified Senate (CS) takes on the leadership representation of the classified staff and organizes participation in shared

governance. Through the governance process, classified staff members are assured of the opportunity to provide input in all areas that may affect their classification (CCC Chancellor's Office, n.d.a). With the passage of Assembly Bill 1725 (Chapter 973, Statutes of 1988), the California Community Colleges BOG was charged with upholding the minimum guarantee to "ensure faculty, staff, and students the right to participate effectively in district and college governance" Education Code section 70901(b)(1)(e) (Oncle, n.d. p. 1).

### **Leadership**

**Leadership pathways.** Traditional leadership pathways within the CCC begin at the faculty level and progress to presidency (Carter, 2009; Krause, 2009). Although the pathways do not differ by gender, the literature suggests that female leaders need the help of certain factors to progress through these traditional pathways. Amey and VanDerLinden (as cited in Krause, 2009) found that both women and men follow similar career paths with a notable difference being the number of years in a position, with women representing fewer years than men.

Because female leaders historically have not filled advanced leadership positions, many females do not have the needed job experience to be competitive. Particularly important to their advancement is academic preparation, nontraditional but related work experience, professional networks, terminal degrees, and professional development (Carter, 2009; Krause, 2009).

Campbell, Mueller, and Souza (2010) describe the shared leadership experiences of six women community college presidents in their collective case study. They explain "most of the previous studies focused on male-dominated leadership skills, traits, and

characteristics. There is a lack of leadership studies that focus on women as the population sample” (p. 19). These women presidents tended to value the soft skills over the harder skills of technical competency, which successfully surfaced in their communication and interpersonal skills. Although they credited traits such as entrepreneurialism and content knowledge, they also stressed the importance of relating and respecting people. Professional development was significant in the lived experiences of these female leaders, and they credited formal organizations and associations that focused on leadership development with helping them to expand their horizons and gave them valuable opportunities to network with others seeking leadership positions. Further, they highly recommended professional development programs and gave significant credit to the role of mentors who pushed them to earn their doctorate degrees and apply for higher levels of leadership. Furthermore, trusted mentors taught them how to succeed in highly political environments and provided them support and encouragement.

Eddy and Cox (2008) found in their research of six women presidents’ lived experiences that the organizational structure in community colleges is still based on male norms and hierarchies, along with corresponding reporting structures. Acker (as cited in Eddy & Cox, 2008) describes a gendered organization where reliance on hierarchy and positional power are still evident. The women in this study shared that their adoption of masculine behaviors such as being tough and gaining control were rewarded as they advanced into presidency. Eddy and Cox state that within organizations, “power structures still form the basis of hierarchy, women continue to be judged by male models of leadership, and gendered stereotypes persist” (p. 78). They state that increasing women’s representation does not address the larger issue of male-normed organizational

structure, calling for the creation of gender-neutral institutions and recognize that individuals can bring about change in microenvironments. Furthermore, they state that bringing the issue to the forefront will work to deconstruct gendered organizational structures within community colleges and provide a gender-neutral environment that reflects the student population.

Carter (2009) studied 13 female college presidents from Tennessee, Alabama, and Kentucky to determine the personal and professional factors that contributed to their pathways to the presidency role. Carter found that the traditional academic route from faculty to administration was common and that most had stepped into their current role directly from the role of chief academic officer or provost. Personal factors such as professional development and terminal degrees, along with hard work and respect for others, were also important factors.

**Leadership challenges.** Many leadership challenges at community colleges, including shared governance, are common to all leaders. Shared governance encompasses building relationships between students, staff, faculty, and management as a means to make decisions for the good of the institution. This process differs significantly from that of private institutions or organizations, where leaders may make decisions with far less input from those at varying levels. Reduced funding and resources compound these leadership challenges.

In addition to these common challenges, female leaders face a number of barriers to advancement, including the fact that, historically, leadership positions have been filled by men and, as such, the job descriptions were more suited to them (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). Women who entered these positions had a difficult time navigating these new

roles as they lacked the necessary experience. Power struggles of BOTs pre- and post-hire as related to gender issues, the issue of work-life balance, and societal perceptions are additional barriers to advancement for female leaders (Ebbbers, Gallisath, Rockel, & Coyan, 2000; Persyn, 2006; Shaffer, 2009; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999).

Work-life balance is a recognized issue for female leaders, as they have to balance family obligations with their professional duties. Although the same holds true for their male counterparts, societal perceptions with regard to the work-life balance for female leaders place additional pressure on women. According to Persyn (2006), “Balancing motherhood, family, and academic obligations complicates the pursuit of presidency” (p. 1).

In a survey conducted by the Leadership Institute for a New Century (Ebbbers et al., 2000), past participants noted that a major challenge or barrier for the advancement of women within the community college system was the mindset of the BOTs. The presidential selection processes conducted by the local boards were deemed mainly pro-male. The study revealed a tendency for boards to favor leaders who were most similar to themselves (male). The institute also found that if females did make it through the hiring process, female leaders continued to face the challenge of trying to convince a predominantly male board to view things from their frame of reference.

Shaffer (2009) conducted a study of three women who left their presidency positions. She describes her study as one in which she thought she would uncover major headlines of reasons why these women left their presidencies. However, instead she found various smaller situations that led up to their departure. Among Shaffer’s recommendations for practice, she indicates that current and future female leaders should

understand that female stereotypes are still prevalent and that being a female president sometimes influences how governing boards and individual board members interact with the president. She states that understanding the risk that comes along with dealing with governing boards is important and recommends uncovering the agendas of board members before problems arise. Additionally, because women leaders are still the minority within community colleges, Shaffer notes that they need to decide how and when they will conform to the majority male culture in order to be better prepared for situations as they arise.

In a qualitative study of women's experiences in community college leadership positions, Tedrow and Rhoads (1999) found that women face a number of unique challenges such that community colleges, much like many other American organizations, are traditional in their structure and in their leadership ideas. They noted that the removal of barriers to the advancement of women would not occur unless key members of the institution were willing to examine the college's culture while engaging in reflection and discussion about gender issues. Tedrow and Rhoads believe that this may begin to expand the opportunities for women at all levels of leadership within the institution. During in-depth interviews with 30 female leaders, they found that coalitions were also noted as an effective means to create a more inclusive decision-making process by allowing for more meaningful dialogue and shared authority to occur throughout the campuses.

Munoz (2008), who studied Latina community college presidents in her mixed methods study, learned about the conditions that led to her participants' ascension into the presidency, including the influences that had the most impact on their personal career,

the strategies employed to overcome challenges and barriers on their path to presidency, and the practices or policies that either supported or hindered Latinas.

Munoz (2008) found that personal context or experiences of responsibility and leadership during adolescence, cultural and familial influences such as families wanting more for the next generation, and career and family factors such as the ability to support extended family members, had the most impact on these women's ascension into the presidency. Strategies to overcome challenges and barriers included quickly becoming involved in the community, acting decisively, utilizing interpersonal skills to effectively communicate, and establishing clear expectations were among the most important. Further professional preparation including formal academic programs, professional development programs, fellowships, and guidance from a mentor were also cited as essential. Munoz asserted that the maintenance of the status quo and a gap in the pipeline for Latinas to advance to presidential roles hinder the advancement of this group. She stressed that early intervention in the identification, recruitment, and preparation of future leaders was a major priority for the women in her study.

**Leadership development.** In 2003-2004, AACC received a grant from the Kellogg Foundation to conduct a study of what makes an effective community college leader. The 2-year study resulted in a report that found six competencies essential for sustainable community college leadership: (a) organizational strategy, (b) resource management, (c) communication, (d) collaboration, (e) community college advocacy, and (f) professionalism. AACC also presented five assumptions that underlie these competences: (a) leadership can be learned, (b) many members of the college community can lead, (c) effective leadership is a combination of effective management and vision,

(d) learning leadership is a life-long process, and (e) the leadership gap can be addressed through a variety of strategies (AACC, 2005).

Krause's (2009) qualitative study affirmed AACC's six competencies and offered others to be considered in her examination of the perspectives of 10 female community college presidents and chief academic officers in regards to leadership development and the career pathways of women in senior academic positions. The results of her study indicated that leadership development programs were important either through formal degree or specialized leadership development programs, the development of strong networks was also deemed necessary, and working closely with mentors is a key component of support for female leaders in advancing along their pathways into executive leadership positions. Krause further postulates that career pathways for college presidents and chief academic officers remain traditional, however, she considers that the pathway may be changing to include more prior presidential or other administrative experience.

According to Ullman (2010), experts believe that colleges must start investing in the training and developing of their junior management and support staff to enable them become the next generation of presidents. Specifically, exposing them to all facets of the presidency early in their careers may help them become effective executive leaders.

Campbell, Syed, and Morris (2010) believe that community college leadership development has three strands:

1. The discipline (profession or practice) of community college leadership can be learned through traditional coursework (essential components of any higher education leadership program, such as finance, law, or policy).



2. Inquiry-based rational building can occur through research and data analysis coursework and the dissertation-writing process (also required in traditional program plans).
3. Development of interpersonal competences can be developed through the process of personality and work-style profiling and executive coaching in targeted areas of improvement.

The emotional intelligence (EQ) component of leadership, which has become increasingly significant in leadership, is part of the third strand. EQ involves the attributes of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social interaction. Essi Systems, Inc. (as cited in Cooper & Essi Systems, 2006), which created an integrated EQ Assessment and Individual Profile, describes EQ as “the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, trust, creativity, and influence” (p. 1).

Ullman (2010) noted the importance of emotional intelligence for executive leaders. According to one district chancellor emeritus and leadership consultant Dr. Pamela Fisher (as cited in Ullman, 2010):

A leader can be extremely competent at balancing a budget or writing a memo but still not know how to work with people, and it’s the relationship that gets people through the rough times. Presidents are constantly working with members of the community both on and off campus and positive yet meaningful connections with board members, alumni, and staff is imperative to the advancement of the college and president. (p. 20)

Ullman (2010) also noted that today's community college presidents can spend 35-50% of their time on fundraising efforts. College presidents also have a tremendous impact on shaping educational policy and practice. Leadership development programs will need to support relevant skill development using approaches such as simulations, internships, and mentorship programs (Campbell, 2006). In regard to leadership development among women, Getskow (1996) noted that role models and mentors are particularly important.

In a mixed-methods study of female leaders in the CCC, Blackwood (2011) focused on the effect of mentoring on female leaders' ability to achieve higher leadership positions and their retention in leadership positions. Blackwood found that mentoring had a significant and positive influence on the leaders, and that areas outside of mentoring, such as family dynamics, mobility and retention strategies, interim positions, faith, and the participants' own willingness to mentor others, were also contributors to success.

The themes are consistent across the literature. Ligeikis (2010) interviewed 16 female community college vice presidents in New York State. The interview data yielded five major themes related to leadership development and accession strategies within the community college system:

1. Preparing for the presidency - where participants noted that if women vice presidents wanted to pursue presidency, they could as there is a lack of qualified people able to step into these roles however other factors may contribute to their willingness to pursue presidency;

2. Leadership trends for the 21st century – particularly emerging skills such as leading with political and external focus, the ability for college leaders to plan for succession, and implementing strategies that promote longer and more purposeful leadership roles;
3. A split on perception of gender effects – where participants mentioned that the *good-old-boys* network persists, while others argued that it was an outdated metaphor;
4. Lack of interest in pursuing the presidency – participants’ desire to pursue presidency varied from absolutely no interest to not willing to sacrifice their family or personal life to take on a presidency role;
5. Perceived obstacles affecting female accession – the responsibility of caring for a family was expressed, female leadership traits arose and the existence of the glass ceiling still surfaced. Additionally, participants noted that female leaders would take on traits that match their male counterparts in order to move ahead. Lastly, the inability to gain a terminal degree also surfaced as a factor in ascending into a presidency role.

Similar to the findings of Blackwood (2011), in a multi-case study of five female community college presidents’ professional development experiences, Bello-de Castro (2010) found that mentors were of significant importance in helping female leaders to move up the ranks. Bello-de Castro also found that female leaders needed to be flexible and willing to try new things, specifically by stepping outside of their comfort zones, being visionary, engaging in networking and professional development, and taking on projects outside of their departments. Bello-de Castro also noted that learning how to

deal with budget and technology issues, becoming politically and legally savvy, understanding how to handle faculty and union issues, and being prepared to deal with situations that can arise on campuses are also important to the career advancement of these women. Finally, she noted the importance of professional development programs.

**Leadership development programs.** Leadership development programs for community college leaders are offered through a variety of public and private organizations. According to Boggs (as cited in Krause, 2009), 140 university-based programs exist that include coursework in community colleges and an additional 30 short-term, non-credit leadership development programs are available.

The American Council on Education offers a Fellows Program that identifies and prepares senior leaders of colleges and universities for advanced leadership roles. The AACC offers the Future Leaders Institute, the University of San Diego offers the Community College Leadership Academy, Harvard's Graduate School of Education offers the Management Development Program as well as other leadership programs in higher education, the Association of CCC Administrators offers Administration 101 and 201, as well as a year-long mentor program, and the League of California offers the CEO Leadership Institute and the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar.

***Community College League of California (CCLC).*** CCLC is a non-profit organization that advocates for CCCs and promotes education and leadership development at all levels, including board members, chief executive officers, and staff, to facilitate continued growth in the areas of programs and services throughout the system (CCLC, n.d.). CCLC has a volunteer membership of 72 California community college districts. CCLC is comprised of the California Community College Trustees (CCCT) and

the Chief Executive Officers of the California Community Colleges (CEOCCC). Affiliates of CCLC include the Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA) and the California Community College Classified Senate (CCCS).

CCLC's CEO development includes a CEO Leadership Institute, CEOs in Conversation, and two major conferences each year. The focus of these seminars is on participation in decision making or shared governance, establishing priorities, board and CEO relations, and structuring of the organization (CCLC, n.d.). AACC's Future Leader Institute covers such topics as leading institutional change, assessing leadership style, building and motivating teams, dealing with conflict and challenging people, understanding legal issues, building community through diversity, ensuring access and inclusion, sustaining an ethical culture, understanding and using technology, and visioning with a global perspective (AACC, n.d.).

***Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA).***

ACCCA is a professional organization whose mission is to develop and support CCC administrators through advocacy, professional development, and networking (ACCCA, 2010c). ACCCA offers a mentorship program, which is a yearlong professional development course for selected individuals who are interested in expanding their leadership roles within the system. Also offered by ACCCA are the Administration 101 (Admin 101) and Administration 201 (Admin 201) programs. Admin 101 is a 5-day seminar that focuses on the basics of administration such as ethics, governance, instruction and student services, budget and finance, human resources, and legislation.

Admin 201 is a yearlong program of four multi-day modules that focus on transformational leadership by integrating change (ACCCA, 2010a, 2010b).

***University of San Diego, Community College Leadership Academy.*** In 1982, the University of San Diego (USD) initiated an Ed.D. program in Leadership Studies, which later expanded into a Ph.D. program (University of San Diego, n.d.). The program paved the way for the Community College Leadership Development Initiative program (CCLDI), which was funded by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation (“Hewlett Foundation announces \$72.24 million in new grants,” 2005). The program originally focused on developing community college leadership across institutions, but in 2009, program leaders determined that emerging leaders required a new set of skills. As a result, the curriculum was updated, and the name was changed to the Community College Leadership Academy (CCLA). CCLA’s purpose is to provide foundational training for individuals who are interested in pursuing opportunities in community college leadership (University of San Diego, n.d.).

***Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar.*** The Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar, often referred to as Asilomar, was created by the AAWCC and the Yosemite Community College District. Since 1984, Asilomar has prepared female leaders in California to take on leadership roles that involve increasing responsibility. Asilomar is offered annually in Pacific Grove, California. The goal of Asilomar is to identify, recruit, inspire, and encourage women to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility. Since its inception, more than 2,200 competitively selected women have completed the seminar (CCLC, 2011a), which is described as an

intensive four-day experience that focuses on the issues facing women who have made a commitment to community college administration, either in their current position or as a future goal... The purpose of the seminar is to provide information, strategies, contacts, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. The expected outcome is that participants will be able to acquire and successfully accept expanded leadership responsibilities within their own or other California community colleges. (p. 1)

Participants of Asilomar range from classified staff to management and include members of boards of trustees. Applicants go through an extensive application process, which includes the application, a cover letter with stated career goals, a resume, an authorization form signed by the college president or chancellor, and a letter of recommendation from college leadership. Facilitators of Asilomar include current and past college presidents and chancellors who have participated in the seminar during their tenure within the CCC system (Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar, 2012).

Seminar topics focus on key issues such as emotional intelligence, budget and finance, cultural proficiency, leading change, leadership ethics, finding balance, campus politics, career choices and paths, governance, position applications, and job interviews. Each topic is covered within the larger context of being a woman and leading institutions within the CCC (Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar, 2012).

As noted, the goal of Asilomar is to identify, recruit, inspire, and encourage women to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility. According to Dr. Pamila Fisher, Founder and Director of Asilomar, "If women do not perceive themselves as capable of doing it, or are not encouraged and inspired to do it, they may

never take those next steps” (P. Fisher, personal communication, June 21, 2011). As part of its commitment to promote leadership development at all levels of community colleges, CCLC offers Asilomar (CCLC, 2011a).

**Development program analysis.** Table 1 presents the themes drawn from the literature on the areas that are essential to female leadership development and success along with leadership development programs. The table reflects the eight emerging themes: (a) preparation, (b) trends, (c) obstacles, (d) mentoring, (e) work life balance, (f) budget and finance, and (g) political and legal issues as they relate to higher levels of leadership. These themes were then compared to the topics covered in the available programs that were also described previously.

Table 1

*Leadership Development Program Analysis*

Program	Preparation	Trends	Obstacles	Mentoring	W-L Balance	Budget/ Finance	Political/ Legal
FP	X	X		X		X	X
FLI	X	X	X				X
MDP	X	X				X	
CCLA		X		X	X		
Admin 101/201		X				X	X
Mentor Program	X			X			
CEO LI	X	X	X	X			
Asilomar	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

*Note.* FP = Fellows Program; FLI = Future Leaders Institute; MDP = Management Development Program; CCLA = Community College Leadership Academy; Admin 101/201 = Administration 101 and 201; CEO LI = CEO Leadership Institute; Asilomar = Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar.



Although many of the programs currently offered cover the topics that are deemed as most important for aspiring female leaders, Table 1 suggests that Asilomar covers each of the emerging topics; therefore, studying how, if at all, its past participants have been affected by participation is noteworthy. As further noted previously, at Asilomar each topic is covered within the larger context of being a woman and leading institutions within the CCC system (Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar, 2012).

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The two frameworks that guide this study are Feminist Theory and Critical Theory. “Feminism draws on different theoretical and pragmatic orientations, different national contexts, and dynamic developments” (Olesen, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 25). Feminist research places gender at the center of the research by using it as the “lens that brings into focus particular questions” (Fox-Kellery, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 26). The goal is to “correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women’s unequal social position” (Lather, 1991 as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 26). For the purposes of this study, feminism was the lens used to examine the literature and how it pertains to the disproportionate numbers of female leaders within the community colleges system and to uncover the barriers and challenges that persist within the community college structure.

Critical theory involves the “study of social institutions and their transformations through interpreting the meanings of social life; the historical problems of dominations, alienation, and social struggles; and a critique of society and the envisioning of new possibilities” (Creswell, 2007, p. 27). For the purposes of this study, critical theory was used to examine the literature and to identify and reveal how gender has affected the

lived experiences of female leaders within community colleges as they ascended into higher levels of leadership.

### **Summary**

This chapter addressed the CCC system, its history, the current fiscal crisis, and the impending leadership gap. Further described were the leadership pathways, challenges, and professional development related to this study. An examination of the literature provided context and framework to this study, which were examined through the lenses of Feminist Theory and Critical Theory.

CCC represents the largest higher education system in the United States, serving the educational needs of over 2.7 million students each year. Comprising 112 colleges within 72 districts, the system represents nearly 24% of all community college students nationwide. However, the system is currently undergoing a major shift as the current fiscal crisis warrants a new way of focusing on student success. These factors, along with the impending leadership gap, create a need for prepared and qualified leaders to step into advanced leadership roles.

The AACC has noted that CEOs are required to have the leadership skills necessary to progress in these nebulous times. As mentioned previously, the AACC outlined six competencies for community college leaders: organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism. Each of these competences is of great importance, now more than ever. CEOs must find effective ways to navigate in each of these areas and new leaders stepping into these important roles will need to focus on their development in these key areas.

While some leadership preparation programs may include the six competencies, as outlined by AACC or other relevant aspects of leadership, there is also need for emphasis on the issues that women leaders face today. One can postulate that many of the leadership preparation programs that are specifically designed for community college leaders do an effective job in preparing the next generation of leaders. However, it is still unclear how these programs influence the next generation of female leaders to take on these advanced roles. As the need for executive leaders at the community college level continues to grow, this mixed methods study delved into Asilomar and provided a detailed description of the program and its history of leadership development for women in the CCC system.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents the methodology used in the study. The chapter begins with the research design, followed by the participants and human subject considerations, instrumentation, data collection and recording, and data reporting and analysis. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Research Design**

This study used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Generally, a mixed-methods approach is used when aspects of the research question cannot be addressed with a single method or when one method complements the other (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Richards & Morse, 2007). Mixed-methods research provides a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon.

The study involved Asilomar past participants from 2005-2011, which is a subset of the more than 2,200 past participants over the seminar's 27 year history. Data were collected from past participants of Asilomar during the 2011-2012 academic year. Data were gathered using an online survey and 10 volunteer interviews conducted with past participants.

**Quantitative component.** As discussed in more detail in the Instrumentation section, the researcher developed a 27-item Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey (Appendix A) that contains a combination of closed-ended, open-ended, and rating items that directly relate to the purpose, problem, and research question (Edwards, Thomas, Rosenfeld, & Booth-Kewley, 1997; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Survey items were developed to capture the nature of the seminar's impact, if any, on its participants.

**Qualitative component.** Qualitative research focuses on the patterns of meaning that emerge from words, actions, and records (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). In this study, participant interviews comprised the qualitative component. The first 10 survey respondents who indicated a willingness to participate in the interview portion of the study were contacted, and a telephone interview was scheduled. The interviews concerned how, if at all, their Asilomar experience inspired and or encouraged their career preparation, advancement, or enhancement.

Interviews are a form of phenomenological inquiry, which draws from philosophy, psychology, and education. Van Manen (as cited in Creswell, 2007) describes phenomenological inquiry as a means to “reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence...a grasp of the very nature of the thing” (p. 58). Moustakas (as cited in Creswell, 2007) described this approach as transcendental and as less focused on the interpretations of the researcher than on the description of the experiences of the participants.

### **Participants**

Creswell (2007) noted that purposeful sampling strategies are important in selecting individuals with direct experience related to the area of study. Purposive sampling involves choosing a sample based on the researcher’s knowledge or experience of the group (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). This study involved Asilomar past participants from 2005-2011, which includes an adjusted total of 200 individuals. This subset from the more than 2,200 past participants over the past 27 years was selected based on the CCLC’s most recent database, which included email addresses. These participants may have been more clearly able to recall their experience than women who had taken the

seminar earlier than 2005. Participants from 2005-2011 represent 98 different community colleges/districts, with a few from the University of California and California State University.

### **Human Subject Considerations**

Verbal and electronic permission from the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar to conduct the study was sought for, and granted by, Dr. Pamila Fisher, Founder and Director of Asilomar, and from the Director of Meetings and Events at CCLC. Human subject considerations for both the survey and the interviews are presented in the following sections.

**Survey.** As discussed previously, informed consent was presented in the survey portion of the study. Participants were informed that their names and corresponding survey results would be held in confidence by the researcher and that the results would not be individually identifiable; rather, the results would be used to provide understanding of the impact of Asilomar on the participants as a group. Participants were informed that their participation in the study, whether in the survey or interviews, was strictly voluntary, and they would be able to withdraw their participation at any time by simply closing the web survey tool or asking to discontinue the interview.

Participants were prompted in the survey to acknowledge their agreement to participate and that they fully understood the letter of informed consent. Participants had to agree to this portion of the survey before moving forward. Those who did not accept were not be able to begin the survey and could close the survey if they wished. Because informed consent was provided in the survey, no signatures were collected.

Participants were advised of the option to request a summary of the research results by checking the box at the conclusion of the survey. All survey participants were invited to participate in a three-question telephone interview to discuss their Asilomar experience. Participation in the telephone interview portion of the study was also voluntary.

The identity of participants was not anonymous to the researcher, as participants indicated their acceptance to be interviewed, which involved inputting their email address into the survey tool. Nevertheless, confidentiality was assured, and each individual who supplied an email address was assigned an identification code, beginning with Survey\_001.

A spreadsheet database was provided via email from the CCLC's Director of Meetings and Events. A total of 267 email addresses of past participants of Asilomar was included. These addresses were securely stored in a password-protected file in the researcher's home office computer until they were used to email the survey instrument through the web survey platform (SurveyMonkey, n.d.).

As previously mentioned, participants' responses were collected through the web survey tool. Response data were compiled through the system's administration process, downloaded by the researcher, and saved to a password-protected file on the researcher's home office computer. Printed files are currently being stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office and will be saved for 3 years. Saved files will be deleted, and printed files will be shredded by the researcher at the end of the 3-year period.

The risks to the participants included potential discomfort when answering questions about themselves, their jobs, and their experiences. The fear of professional

exposure may have caused participants to answer questions in a socially desirable way. To alleviate such risks, participants were provided with informed consent during the first portion of the survey. Additionally, to avoid the social pressure to participate in the study, participants were able to complete the survey at a time and location of their choosing and therefore they could choose to participate in the survey at home.

Compensation in the form of a drawing was used as a means to encourage survey participation. The random drawing resulting in the awarding of five \$20 e-gift cards to participants who completed the survey. Participants may have felt pressure to participate to be eligible for the drawing. The drawing was optional; those who wished to participate selected a box at the conclusion of the survey. Space for the participants to disclose their preferred contact email address was provided for those interested in participating in the drawing, receiving research results, or indicating their interest in participating in the interview section of the study. If no email address was indicated, participants were excluded from participating in the drawing, receiving research results, or participating in the interview section of the study. A disclaimer, which informed participants that the email addresses provided to the researcher would be held in confidence and would be known only to the researcher, accompanied this portion of the survey (Appendix B). Additionally, it was stated that this information would be used solely for the purposes of sending drawing winners their e-gift cards, sending the requested research summary, or contacting participants to conduct an interview, if selected. Finally, participants were informed that their email addresses would not be included as part of the findings.

**Interviews.** Following the survey participants' noted interest in being interviewed, an introductory email was sent to the individuals as a means to schedule the



brief telephone interview at a mutually agreed-upon time (Appendix C). Informed consent was provided to participants at the time of their survey participation. Participants were informed that their names and corresponding interview results would be held in confidence by the researcher and the results would not be individually identifiable; rather, the results would provide an understanding of the impact of the Asilomar seminar on the participants as a group. Participants were informed that their participation in the interview was strictly voluntary and that they would be able to withdraw their participation at any time by simply informing the researcher of their request. Participants also were advised of the option to request a summary of the results by indicating their desire at the conclusion of the interview. As noted, participants were asked to acknowledge their agreement to participate and their full understanding of the letter of informed consent to which they agreed at the time of completing the survey.

The researcher asked permission to audio record the interviews before beginning the interviewing process. Participants were informed that they could ask the researcher to turn off the recording equipment at any time. To remove any potential risks to the subjects' social, academic, or professional status, only the researcher knew the identity of the participants.

Participants' responses collected via audio files were securely saved on a device kept in a secure location in the researcher's home office and saved in a password-protected file on the researcher's home office computer to which only the researcher has access. Responses were then transcribed to text. The researcher maintains the transcribed data files, as well as any research notes, in a locked file cabinet in a secure location in the researcher's home office. Data are stored in a locked file cabinet in the

researcher's home office or stored in a password-protected file in the researcher's home office computer. Files will be stored securely for 3 years and will then be destroyed or deleted unless the researcher is granted permission by Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board for further exploration of the data within the 3-year period.

Potential risks to the participants include potential discomfort when answering questions about themselves, their job, and their experiences. The fear of professional exposure may have caused participants to answer questions in a socially acceptable way. To alleviate such risks, participants were provided with informed consent during the first portion of the survey and reiterated at the time of the interview. Further, interviews were brief to minimize any inconvenience.

To meet Pepperdine University's compliance requirements with federal guidelines for the protection of human subjects and following the acceptance of this proposal, the researcher submitted an application for exempt review through the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This request was based on minimal, if any, potential risk to human subjects involved in this study, and approval was granted by the IRB. The researcher also has completed the Human Participants Protection Education for Researchers online course, sponsored by the National Institute of Health.

### **Instrumentation**

**Survey.** Because an appropriate and validated instrument did not exist, the researcher needed to develop a survey instrument that related to the purpose, problem, and research question of this study (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Edwards et al., 1997). The 27-item Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey (Appendix A) contains a combination of closed-ended, open-ended, and rating questions that were developed to

capture the nature of the seminar's impact, if any, on its participants. The items relate to the themes found in the literature on female leadership pathways, challenges, and development programs, as well as on Asilomar. Administration of the survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey, a web-based survey tool (SurveyMonkey, n.d.), and took approximately 20 minutes. As discussed in more detail later, informed consent was provided to participants as the first question of the web survey. Table 2 presents the relationship between the survey items and the literature.

Table 2

*Relationship Between Survey Items and the Literature*

Theme	Survey Items	Cited Research
Career Preparation	Asilomar <i>inspired</i> me to consider leadership roles with increasing responsibility.	Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Jeandron, 2006; Munoz, 2008; Carter, 2009; Campbell, Syed, and Morris, 2010; Krause, 2009; Ullman, 2010; Carter, 2009
	Asilomar <i>encouraged</i> me to consider leadership roles with increasing responsibility.	
	How, if at all, did Asilomar affect your career preparation?	
Career Advancement	Asilomar <i>inspired</i> my career advancement.	Bello-de Castro, 2010; Blackwood, 2010; Ligeikis, 2010; Carter, 2009; Krause, 2009; Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010; Campbell, Syed, and Morris, 2010; Getskow, 1996
	Asilomar <i>encouraged</i> my career advancement.	
	How, if at all, did Asilomar affect your career advancement?	
Career Enhancement	Asilomar <i>inspired</i> my career enhancement.	Jeandron, 2006; Bello-de Castro, 2010; Blackwood, 2010; Krause, 2009; Ligeikis, 2010; Munoz, 2008; Campbell, Mueller, & Souza 2010; Shaffer, 2009;
	Asilomar <i>encouraged</i> my career enhancement.	
	How, if at all, did Asilomar enhance your career?	

Construction of the survey began with 27 potential questions or statements as related to the purpose of the study. These items were based on the literature, the researcher's experience with Asilomar, input from individuals who were experienced in research design, and a review of artifacts such as agendas, exercises, PowerPoint presentations, and other documentation gathered from the researcher's own Asilomar participation in 2009.

***Expert review.*** To ensure content validity and alignment with the relevant research question, three graduate faculty members from Pepperdine University, an administrator from the CCC system, and a researcher at the community college level, reviewed survey questions, as well as content experts, who included the Founder and Director of Asilomar, and two past Asilomar participants. Content review included screening for wording, overlap, and ambiguity (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). As a result of the review, several items were modified to further align the survey with the purpose of the study. The extensive review process yielded meaningful suggestions on content and helped to solidify the time period needed to complete the survey. The final survey consisted of 27 items that took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

***Survey pilot.*** Once the survey was developed, the researcher contacted two content experts to pilot the survey. Expertise was determined based on their participation in Asilomar. Piloting the survey allowed the researcher the opportunity to solicit further feedback on the survey items. These content experts determined whether the survey items were clear, unbiased, and measurable. Piloting also helped to determine the time needed to complete the survey. Both participants took approximately 20 minutes to

complete the survey and both determined that the survey items were reasonable and appropriate, with minor changes to wording for clarity.

**Interview.** The interview protocol (Appendix D) consisted of three semi-structured interview questions. Follow-up interview questions were developed as the interviews progressed and were based on the interviewees' responses.

Interviews provided an opportunity to attain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and how they related to career preparation, advancement, or enhancement. The semi-structured nature of the questions allowed participants to reflect upon their experiences and to respond freely in their own words. This approach also allowed the researcher the flexibility to probe for additional details (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

The interview questions correlate with the research question and literature. Common themes found in the literature on female leadership pathways, challenges, and development programs, as well as the literature on Asilomar, provided context for this portion of the study. Table 3 presents the relationship between the interview questions and the literature.

**Expert review.** To ensure content validity and alignment with relevant research question, interview questions were reviewed by three graduate faculty members from Pepperdine University, an administrator from the California community college system, and a professional researcher at the local community college, as well as content experts, which included the Founder and Director of Asilomar, and two past participants. Content review included screening for wording, overlap, and ambiguity (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). The extensive review process provided meaningful suggestions on content. The

process yielded a three-item interview protocol that took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Table 3

*Relationship Between Interview Questions and the Literature*

Theme	Interview Questions	Cited Research
Career Preparation	In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar encourage and/or inspire you to pursue leadership roles with increasing responsibility?	Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Jeandron, 2006; Munoz, 2008; Carter, 2009; Campbell, Syed, and Morris, 2010; Krause, 2009; Ullman, 2010; Carter, 2009
Career Advancement	In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar affect your career advancement?	Bello-de Castro, 2010; Blackwood, 2010; Ligeikis, 2010; Carter, 2009; Krause, 2009; Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010; Campbell, Syed, and Morris, 2010; Getskow, 1996
Career Enhancement	In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar contribute to your career enhancement?	Jeandron, 2006; Bello-de Castro, 2010; Blackwood, 2010; Krause, 2009; Ligeikis, 2010; Munoz, 2008; Campbell, Mueller, & Souza 2010; Shaffer, 2009;

***Interview pilot.*** Once the interview questions were developed, the researcher solicited two experts to pilot the interview and provide feedback on the interview protocol. Expertise was determined by past participation in Asilomar. These content experts help to clarify whether the questions were clear, unbiased, and measurable. Additionally, the pilot interviews allowed the researcher to solicit further feedback on the questions and to help determine the actual time it would take to participate. Both experts participated in the survey pilot before participating in the interview portion. This provided the researcher with simulations of the full research process. Both experts determined that the interview questions were reasonable and appropriate and took less than 20 minutes to complete.

**Validity and reliability.** Validity, as described by Richards and Morse (2007), is the accurate, appropriate, and fully justifiable representation of what is being studied. It is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

In Spring 2011, the researcher participated in qualitative research coursework in which she conducted two interviews, similar to the interviews conducted in this study, with past participants of Asilomar. In addition, a professional researcher from the local community college reviewed the interview questions during this same timeframe to provide feedback on the questions.

This exercise provided an experience in data collection, transcription, familiarization, coding, and analysis, and served as a primary validity check for the interview questions used in the formal study. Through the exercise, the questions were reviewed, and modifications were made. The knowledge gained from the exercise assisted in the refinement of survey items for the quantitative component of the study.

Reliability refers to the consistent results of an instrument when the character that is being measured has not changed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). In this study, the researcher collected the data and interviewed participants. According to Creswell (2007), designing and using an interview protocol is essential for refinement of interview questions and establishing procedures for effective interviews. To maintain reliability of analysis, established criteria were utilized while coding the results.

### **Data Collection and Recording**

This mixed-method study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection and recording. During the data collection process, the researcher shared the

purpose of the study with participants. The researcher also described the intent of the survey and interviews and the time involved, in addition to assuring the confidentiality of the responses. Further, the researcher remained available via email to all participants for the duration of the study.

**Survey overview.** Survey research was the first data collection method used in this study. The survey was comprised of 27 items that consisted of a combination of closed-ended, open-ended, and rating questions that directly related to the purpose, problem, and research question. Survey items were developed to capture the nature of the seminar's impact, if any, on its participants (Appendix A).

Data collection occurred during the 2011-2012 academic year via the administration of the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey in the form of a web survey. To capture current contact information, the researcher updated the list of past participants prior to administering the survey. To ensure the validity of the study and its findings, a high response rate was desired. All surveys were distributed during the same period to maintain internal consistency.

Participants were provided with an introductory communication via email that was sent out one day prior to the survey distribution. The introductory communication (Appendix E) informed participants of the researcher's identity, contact information, and a summary of the purpose of the study. The communication encouraged participation in the survey. Participants were informed that their involvement in the survey portion of the study would be limited to the amount of time to complete the 27-item survey, approximately 20 minutes, that the survey could be completed at a location and time that was most convenient for them, and that they had 2 weeks in which to complete the



survey. Participants also were informed that they had the option to participate in a brief three-question telephone interview. To encourage participation, individuals were informed of the option to participate in a drawing that awarded five randomly selected survey respondents with a \$20 e-gift card to be sent to the winning email addresses that were made available by the participants. The communication also contained a statement from Dr. Pamila Fisher, Asilomar Founder and Director, encouraging participation and extending her support of the study.

The following day, the web survey was administered. Participants who did not complete the survey within 1 week were sent a reminder notice that reiterated the expectation of completion within the 2 weeks. The drawing was held after the survey closed, and notification was sent to the five winners via a message including the e-gift card information.

Due to low participation, at the end of the 2-week period a 1-week extension was implemented. A second reminder notice was sent out to those who had not yet participated encouraging their participation during the extension period. Additionally, advertising to promote participation in the study through the use of social media was used. As the survey response rate did not reach the desired minimum of 33% within the described window, a second launch of the survey portion of the study was implemented in early 2012 in order to boost the response rate. An identical survey protocol was followed but was limited to those participants who had not yet participated in the survey portion of the study.

**Survey administration.** The study population consisted of past participants in Asilomar from 2005-2011. The list of participants was obtained from the CCLC and

included all seminar participants from the noted time period. In late November 2011, the list of participants was updated for accuracy. Each listed participant was researched online through a search using the participant's name and listed college to verify a current email address. Forty-two updates were made through the verification process.

Data collection commenced on December 1, 2011 with a letter of introduction sent to the entire study population, and on December 2, 2011 with the launch of the online survey to an adjusted number of participants. On December 1, 2011, a letter of introduction (Appendix E) was sent to 267 participants from the updated list informing them of the purpose of the study and encouraging their participation and response. Twenty-four of the emails were returned as undeliverable, either bounced back due to retirement, returned as invalid, or other unknown reasons. Email addresses that were unable to be corrected were removed from the participant list. Additionally, five contacts were automatically excluded by the online survey platform as they had previously opted out of participating in these types of surveys. Also removed from the survey list were the researcher, the seminar director, and the event coordinator.

Following the launch of the letter of introduction, one participant returned an email to the researcher indicating that her college and college district had a strict policy with regards to research. It was advised that the researcher submit paperwork to that particular college or district for review and approval. The researcher removed these 18 seminar participants from the district's colleges, and as planned, launched the survey link the next day, December 2, 2011, to the remaining 217 participants.

While the survey was being administered online, the researcher consulted Pepperdine University's IRB and the researcher's chair for advisement on the one

district's request. With support, the researcher submitted all pertinent research paperwork to the requested college district for review. After review by the college district, on December 19, 2011, the researcher received notification of approval to move forward. Due to the impending CCC system winter break, the researcher planned a second launch of the survey in the spring 2012, after a modification request and approval from Pepperdine University's IRB.

Following the approval of the IRB modification, a second survey launch took place on January 17, 2012 in an effort to boost the response rate of those participants who had not yet responded to the survey and to reach out to the 18 participants who were not included in the first launch due to the required research review by their college district. Data collection ended on January 31, 2012.

**Survey analytics.** On December 2, 2011, the survey was launched via SurveyMonkey with a 2-week window of participation. The invitation was emailed to the 217 participants notifying them of the survey's publication and web link. The initial survey launch resulted in 29 responses. A reminder notification was sent out after 1 week to those who had not yet responded. The reminder yielded 21 additional responses. On day 14, to encourage participation, the researcher sent a 1-week extension notification out to those who had not yet responded. The extension generated an additional seven responses. Data collection for the study closed 21 days after the initial survey link was emailed, with 14 days representing the expected survey completion time and a 1-week extension for late survey submissions. With only 57 of 217 (26%) responses received at the time of the survey completion, coupled with the inability for the researcher to reach out to the 18 participants from the one college district that was pending review, the

researcher submitted a modification form to IRB requesting approval for a second launch of the survey in early spring 2012. The second launch included all participants who had not yet responded to the survey as well as the 18 participants who had not previously received the survey. Additionally, the modification approval integrated the ability to encourage participation in the survey through the use of social media, including postings on the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar's LinkedIn group page.

On January 13, 2012, the researcher received approval for study modification and launched for the second time on January 17, 2012 as well as posted on the Asilomar LinkedIn group page. The second launch resulted in eight additional responses and after 1 week, the researcher then sent a reminder notification to those who had not yet participated and posted a reminder on LinkedIn. Data collection for the survey portion of the study concluded on January 31, 2012 and garnered an additional 14 responses for a total of 79 total responses (34%).

**Survey nuances.** In order to accurately represent respondents' years of participation, question 2 asked what year the participant first participated in the seminar. These responses were cross-referenced with the provided participant list and the available seminar yearbooks. Eighteen responses were identified and updated to reflect the actual year of Asilomar attendance. It may have been unclear to the respondents whether the survey was asking for the annual year or the academic year.

One respondent indicated that she first attended the seminar in 2000 and answered *no* to question 3 where it asked if the participant first participated in Asilomar during the years 2005-2011. Due to skip logic used in the survey, the respondent was prompted to the end of the survey at which point no survey data was collected. However, the

participant contacted the researcher through unsolicited email to inform the researcher that she had indeed participated in 2007, but that she also attended in 2000. In the email, the participant noted that it was her Asilomar experience in 2000 that triggered her thoughts about achieving her doctorate degree. The participant attributed her initial thinking to the seminar and to her interactions with one of the college presidents at the seminar. She has since earned her doctorate and now holds a dean position within the CCC. She is the only known participant who has attended the seminar twice.

It is also interesting to note that one research participant indicated in her responses that Asilomar had no impact on her career preparation, career advancement, or career enhancement. However, at the conclusion of the interview portion of the study, she indicated that her participation in Asilomar had very little to do with her career. Instead, she had already reached the peak of her specialized profession within the CCC and as a result was looking for more of the relationship piece of the experience. Her experiences on a personal level after the sessions ended each day and since, with several women in her group, that has had the most meaningful impact on her. She noted, “Regrettably, for the purposes of your survey Asilomar did not specifically benefit my career, but on a personal and professional and human level, stellar! Absolutely stellar!”

Presenters that were included on the participant list were included in the email launch of the letter of introduction. Those indicating through email that they were retired or were presenters were removed from the survey launch, if requested. However, those who entered the survey indicated their first year of participation in question 2 and in question 3 were asked if they first participated between the years 2005-2011. Eleven presenters indicated *no* to question 3 and, due to skip logic utilized in the survey, were

prompted to the end of the survey where they were able to request a summary of the results. One presenter indicated *yes* to question 3 and her responses were collected. However, during data analysis, only actual 2005-2011 participant responses were analyzed. For the purposes of this study, her responses did not meet the criteria as she did not first participate in Asilomar from 2005-2011. Therefore, her responses were filtered out of the data analysis. However, since her experience was identified, her responses could provide a basis for further recommendation and or study.

Four survey respondents participated between 2005-2011, but indicated that they attended prior to 2005. Therefore, their data were not collected and included in analysis.

**Interview overview.** The qualitative portion of the research involved semi-structured interviews with 10 female leaders within the CCC system who previously participated in Asilomar from 2005-2011. Interviews were conducted to capture the responses of participants in their own words as directly related to the study's purpose, problem, and research question. Interviewees were recruited from the online survey respondents who agreed to be interviewed. The first 10 respondents to survey item number 26 who agreed to be interviewed were selected for this purpose. Each interview consisted of three questions:

1. In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar encourage and/or inspire you to pursue leadership roles with increasing responsibility?
2. In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar affect your career advancement?
3. In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar contribute to your career enhancement?

A final question asked whether the interviewees wished to receive a copy of the research results of the study.

The volunteer participants were contacted via email to schedule the interaction, and participants were informed that they had a total of 2 weeks in which to participate in the interview. A copy of the semi-structured interview questions was attached to the communication to allow time for participants to review the questions and consider their answers. Participants who did not participate in the interview portion within 1 week were sent an email reminder notice that reiterated the expected completion within the 2-week time frame.

Interviews were conducted over the telephone, with the exception of one interview where the interviewee submitted her responses via email. Every effort was made to conduct the telephone interviews in a setting free from disruptions. The established interview protocol was followed so that procedures were the same for each interview. Participants were asked the same questions, and follow-up questions varied depending on the participants' responses.

The informed consent was presented in the survey portion of the study and was reiterated during the interview protocol. Participants were informed that their involvement in the interview portion of the study was limited to the amount of time to complete the three-item interview, approximately 20 minutes. Upon verbal agreement, the interview commenced. The researcher reviewed the purpose of the interview and reminded each participant that her identity would be kept confidential.

The researcher asked permission to audio record the interview before beginning the interview. The participants were informed that they could ask to turn off the recording equipment if they so desired. The audio files were securely stored in a password-protected file in the researcher's home office computer following each

interview. Audio recordings of each interview were transcribed to text and coded for analysis. Additionally, the researcher took notes during the interviews in case the audio recording device did not work. Transcribed audio files and interview notes were saved in a password-protected file in the researcher's home office computer.

Once interviews were completed and data were collected, participant responses were analyzed for common themes within the context of the research question. Interview data and themes were reviewed by experts to prevent researcher bias and to increase research credibility. Follow-up thank-you emails were sent to each interviewee, along with the interview transcripts for review of accuracy of representation (Appendix F).

**Interview administration.** Interview participation was sought during the survey portion of this study and was requested in survey item 26. On December 5, 2011, after 10 survey respondents agreed to be interviewed, a scheduling email was sent out soliciting an interview appointment time along with the interview protocol and interview questions attached (Appendices C and D). Interviews were conducted between December 5 and December 16, 2011. Each interview was conducted over the phone with the exception of the one where the participant submitted her responses in writing.

Each interview was transcribed to text and interview transcripts were sent to each interviewee for review for accuracy of representation. Each interviewee had 1 week to review the transcripts from her interview and to respond with any modifications she deemed necessary. Of the 10 interviews, two responded with minor edits for clarification and two responded with their approval. The remaining six interviewees did not respond with edits and therefore, it was assumed that they concurred with the transcripts.



Interview transcripts were sent to four volunteer trained coders, each of whom had earned a doctoral degree and had prior coding experience. Each coder independently coded interview transcripts and the coded data were returned to the research for further analysis. Interview transcripts were coded by related subcategories used in survey items 19, 20, and 21 respectively. Additional codes were used for *no effect* and *other*. Coders were also asked to note any other emerging themes.

It is interesting to note that during the coding process, one volunteer coder cross-referenced the coding matches among the three overarching themes as well as had emerging themes develop such as identity and or gender connection and new knowledge. Additionally, the researcher coded interview transcriptions and examined all coded data. Subcategories and frequency are described in this chapter.

**Interview nuances.** After the 10 volunteer interviewees were identified, the scheduling email and interview protocol with questions were sent via email. One interviewee responded to the email with written responses to each of the interview questions. She indicated that the time period for interviewing was during a busy time in her work schedule, so she decided to submit her responses in her email.

### **Data Reporting and Analysis**

**Survey.** Quantitative data analysis is achieved through statistical analysis and reported in terms of descriptive and analytic statistics (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). SurveyMonkey (n.d.) was the online survey platform used to conduct the survey and provided multiple reporting capabilities for the purposes of analysis.

Analyses were made and conclusions were drawn for each individual question and for the overall findings of the survey. In the event that additional analysis was

needed, the researcher had the ability to export the survey results from the web software tool into a customizable Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

**Interview.** Qualitative study data analysis, which involves searching for themes and categories, is subjective and uses inductive reasoning. Findings are represented in words, narratives, and a personal voice (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Following the interviews, all data, including interview notes, were coded and analyzed for themes within each interview question. To prevent researcher bias and to increase research credibility, summaries of the interview data, themes, and assertions were reviewed by professional colleagues with expertise in the area. Interview data were analyzed against the survey data to gain an overall perspective of how, if at all, Asilomar affected its past participants.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the methodology that was used to address the purpose and research question of the study. The study used a mixed-methods research approach to determine how, if at all, the Asilomar experience relates to career preparation, advancement, or enhancement of female CCC leaders who participated in the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar from 2005-2011.

The study involved two types of research designs: descriptive and phenomenological. Past participants of Asilomar were solicited to participate in this study in order to provide an understanding of the program and its impact, if any, on participant career preparation, advancement, or enhancement. Two hundred thirty-five past Asilomar participants from 2005-2011 were solicited to participate in a 27-item quantitative and qualitative web survey. Additionally, survey respondents were further solicited to

voluntarily participate in a brief three-question qualitative interview conducted over the telephone; one interview took place via email. The 10 interviewees were provided an opportunity to describe the Asilomar experience in their own words and in greater depth. The adjusted group of 200 participants, a subset from the more than 2,200 past participants who have participated in Asilomar since its inception (Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar, 2012), was selected based on the most recent changes in the Asilomar program that began in 2005 that these participants have experienced in common and the availability of these participants' contact information via the CCLC's most recent database.

It is anticipated that the program founder, past participants, donors, and future participants will benefit from the research findings, as it uncovers a clear portrait of how it has contributed to its past participants and the CCC system overall. Furthermore, the findings of this study will help those within the CCC system understand Asilomar and perceptions about the program from those who have participated.

Informed consent was garnered during the survey portion of the study and rolled over to the interview portion of the study. Participants were notified that the results were intended to provide an overall view of Asilomar and its impact, if any, on its participants. Participants were informed that their participation in the study, whether via the survey or interviews, was strictly voluntary. While voluntarily responding, participants were able to withdraw their participation at any time by simply closing the web survey tool or asking to discontinue their participation in the interview.

Participants' survey responses were collected through SurveyMonkey, a web survey tool. Response data were compiled through the system's administration process,

downloaded by the researcher, and saved to a password protected file on the researcher's home office computer. Files will be saved for a total of 3 years and then will be deleted and or shredded by the researcher.

Participants' interview responses were collected via audio files and securely saved on a device that was kept in a secure location in the researcher's home office and saved in a password protected file on the researcher's home office computer, to which only the researcher has access. Responses were transcribed to text and the researcher maintained the transcribed data files, as well as any research notes, in a locked file cabinet in a secure location at the researcher's home office. Data were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office and in a password protected file on the researcher's home office computer. Files will be stored securely for 3 years and will be destroyed or deleted after a 3-year period. Interview data were analyzed against the survey data to gain an overall perspective of how, if at all, Asilomar affected its past participants.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this mixed-methods research study was to explore the career preparation, career advancement, and career enhancement of women who participated in the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar from 2005-2011. More specifically, this study investigated the perspectives of women leaders within the CCC system as to the impact, if any, that 2005-2011 participation in Asilomar had on their career preparation, career advancement, and career enhancement. The following research question guided this study, How, if at all, has Asilomar affected the career preparation, advancement, and enhancement of women who participated in the leadership seminar from 2005-2011?

This chapter summarizes the study research design, reports the study findings in two sections, and concludes with a summary of overall key findings. The first section of findings addresses the survey data that was collected. The second section of findings analyzes and reports the interview data.

#### **Research Design**

This study used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The study involved Asilomar past participants from 2005-2011, which is a subset of the more than 2,200 past participants over the seminar's 27-year history (Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar, 2012). Data were collected during the 2011-2012 academic year from past participants of Asilomar. Data were gathered from the results of an online survey and from 10 volunteer interviews conducted with past participants.

**Survey response rate analytics.** The response rate as displayed in Table 4 reflects the response outcomes of the overall population as listed on the provided participant list.

Table 4

*Response Outcome, Overall Population*

Category	Result	Description of category
Participant list	267	Number of contacts on list.
Updates to list	41	Number of updates of contact information made to list prior to survey launch.
Letters of introduction sent	267	Number of letters of introduction sent out via email.
Letters of introduction returns	24	Number of emails undeliverable, bounced back due to retirements, invalid email addresses, or other unknown causes.
Contacts pulled	3	Number of pulled contacts: the researcher, the seminar director, and the event coordinator
Survey tool returns	5	Number of those who had previously opted-out of Survey Monkey surveys and were automatically excluded by the system.
Surveys launched	235	Number of population who were successfully contacted from the total population.
Response rate	79/34%	Number/Percentage of actual survey responses received from overall participant list.

The response rate, as displayed in Table 5, reflects the outcomes of the adjusted population to reflect only participants from 2005-2011.

Table 5

*Response Outcome, Adjusted for 2005-2011 Participants Only*

Category	Result	Description of category
Surveys launched	235	Number of population who were successfully contacted from the total population.
Presenters listed	28	Number of presenters who were listed on the participant list but whose survey participation was excluded from data analysis.
Disqualified	3	Number of disqualified responses due to abandonment of survey or limited participation in the seminar due to medical emergency.
Total adjusted 2005-2011 population	200	Number of 2005-2011 participants included in this study.
Adjusted response rate	71/36%	Number/Percentage of 2005-2011 participant responses compared to adjusted population
Uncollected data	4	Number of respondents indicating year of participation was prior to 2005 but who actually participated during 2005-2011. No data was collected.
Final response rate	67/34%	Number/Percentage of completed responses compared to adjusted population

At the conclusion of the survey portion of the study, 235 total surveys were launched with 79 (34%) responses received. Of the 235 surveys sent out, 28 were verified as presenters and were excluded from the population total and data collection analysis portion of the study. Three responses were disqualified due to reasons outlined in Table 5 and four responses were not collected due to human error in entering the correct year of

participation as also indicated in Table 5. Therefore, the adjusted 2005-2011 population totaled 200, with 67 (34%) completed survey responses from the specified population.

Table 6 reflects the contact rate, cooperation rate, and response rate against the total population of the participant list received.

Table 6

*Response Rate per Category for Overall Population*

Category	Result	Description of category
Contact rate	88% (235 of 267)	Percentage of the population who were successfully contacted from the total population list of past participants.
Cooperation rate	34% (79 of 235)	Percentage of surveys completed from the population list of past participants who were successfully contacted.
Response rate: Total population	30% (79 of 267)	Percentage of the completed responses compared to the entire population list of past participants.

**Survey findings.** Descriptive and analytic statistics were used for the quantitative data analysis of the online survey responses (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

**Data.** The total number of survey responses received was 79. Responses for those who participated from 2005-2011 as identified and verified by year totaled 71. Four respondents attended the seminar during 2005-2011 but selected a year prior to 2005 for question 3, where they were asked if they first participated in Asilomar during the years 2005-2011. Due to the skip logic used in the survey tool, their survey responses were not collected. Survey item 2 asked each respondent to identify the year they participated in Asilomar. Figure 1 reflects their responses with most of the respondents participating in 2009. The year in which the fewest respondents participated in Asilomar was 2005.



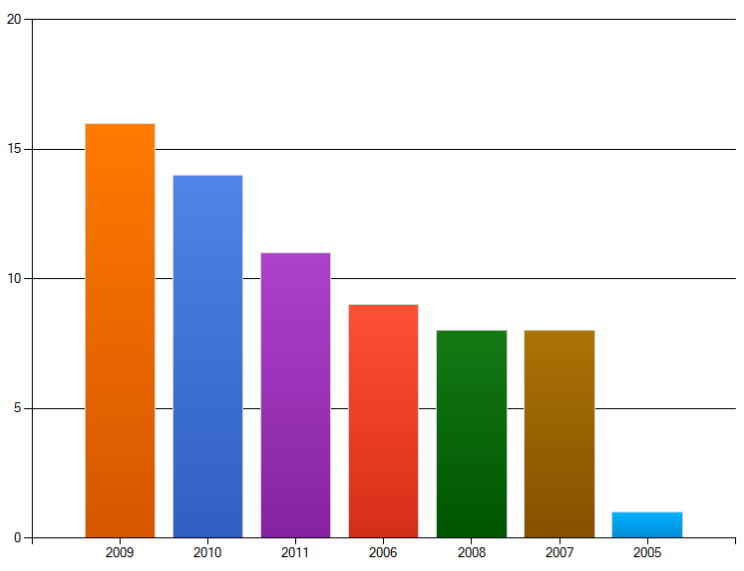


Figure 1. Participants' years of participation. Note. Figure 1 is limited to those participants who completed the survey portion of the study,  $N=67$ .

Survey item 4 asked respondents to identify the number of years they have worked in CCC system. Figure 2 reflects the responses to this question. The majority of respondents (37%) have worked in the system for 6-10 years, with the least amount of respondents working in the system for over 26 years.

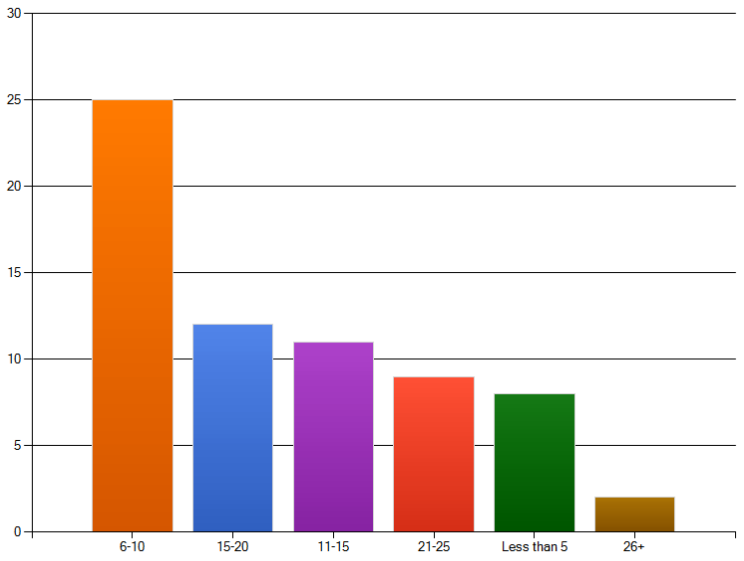
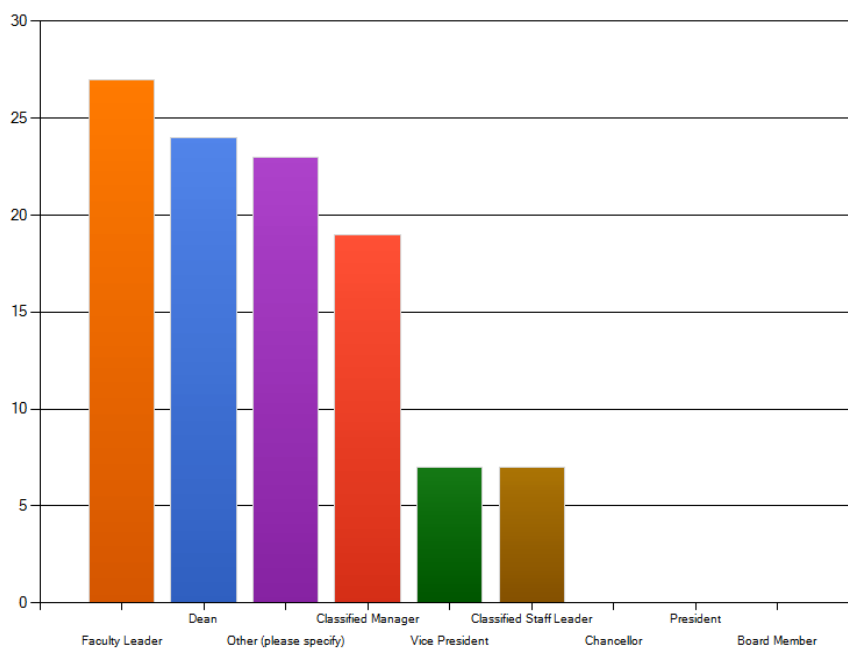


Figure 2. Participants' number of years in the CCC system.

Survey item 5 asked respondents to indicate the leadership positions held during their tenure in CCC. Figure 3 reflects the responses; faculty leader was the most frequent response, and there was no representation in positions such as chancellor, president, and board member. Positions indicated as other included directors, faculty, and associate or vice chancellor positions as well as a variety of uncategorized positions. Forty percent have held faculty positions and 36% have held the position of dean.



*Figure 3.* Leadership positions held during tenure.

Survey item 6 asked how each respondent learned about Asilomar. Figure 4 reflects the responses received. The majority (37%) of participants learned of Asilomar from their supervisor. Of those who indicated *other*, 8 learned of Asilomar from their president and the remaining 5 learned from other sources. Selections such as board member, professional publication, and direct solicitation received no responses.

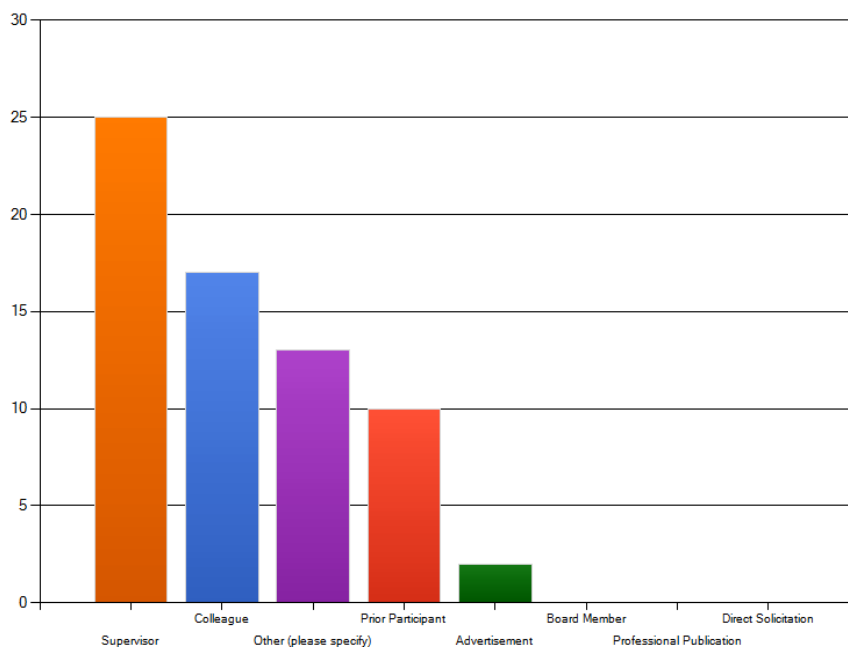


Figure 4. How participants learned about Asilomar.

Survey item 7 asked each respondent to select their top five topics covered during Asilomar. Figure 5 reflects the responses received, with budget and finance surfacing as the most selected and *other responses* generating the fewest responses. The top five topics that emerged from the data were budget and finance, leadership ethics, emotional intelligence, campus politics, and governance. Six *other* responses included four responses describing networking activities.

Survey item 8 asked each respondent who wrote her letter of recommendation for Asilomar. Figure 6 reflects these responses. The president of the organization received, the most responses and classified manager, classified staff leader, and board member received no responses. Other responses included a professional development committee, president emeritus, vice chancellor, and another executive (or another person in an executive role). Twenty-three or 34% of respondents indicated that their direct supervisor wrote their letter of recommendation for Asilomar.

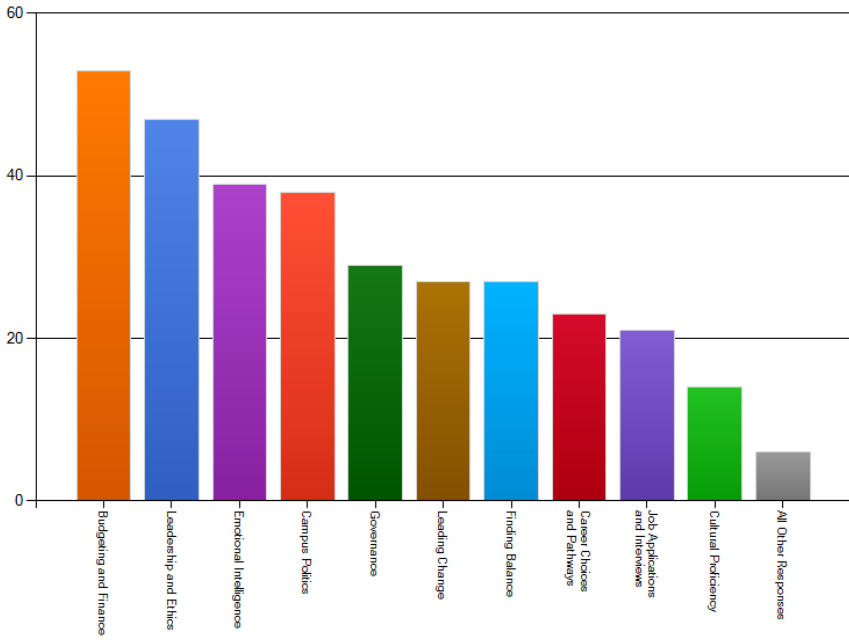


Figure 5. Top five topics covered at Asilomar.

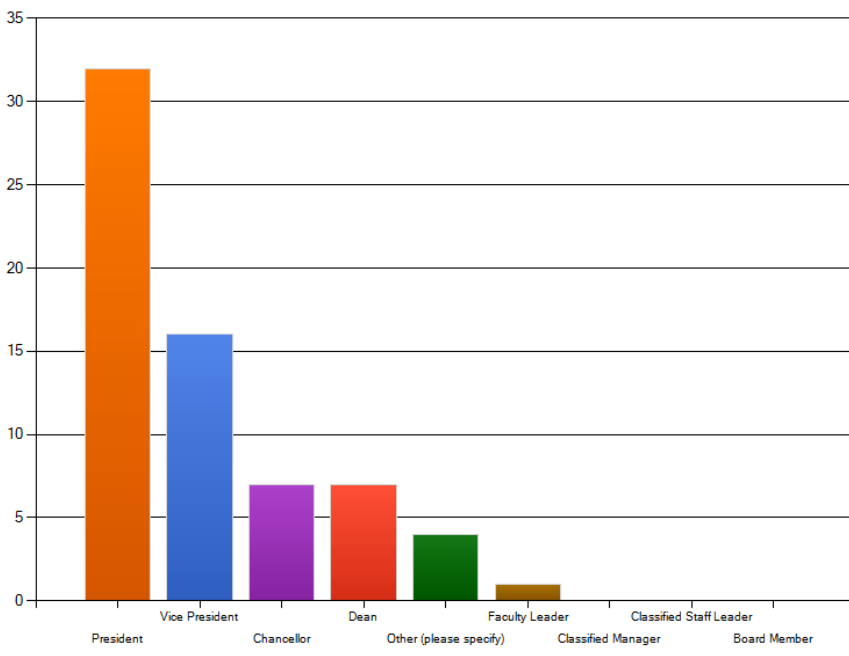
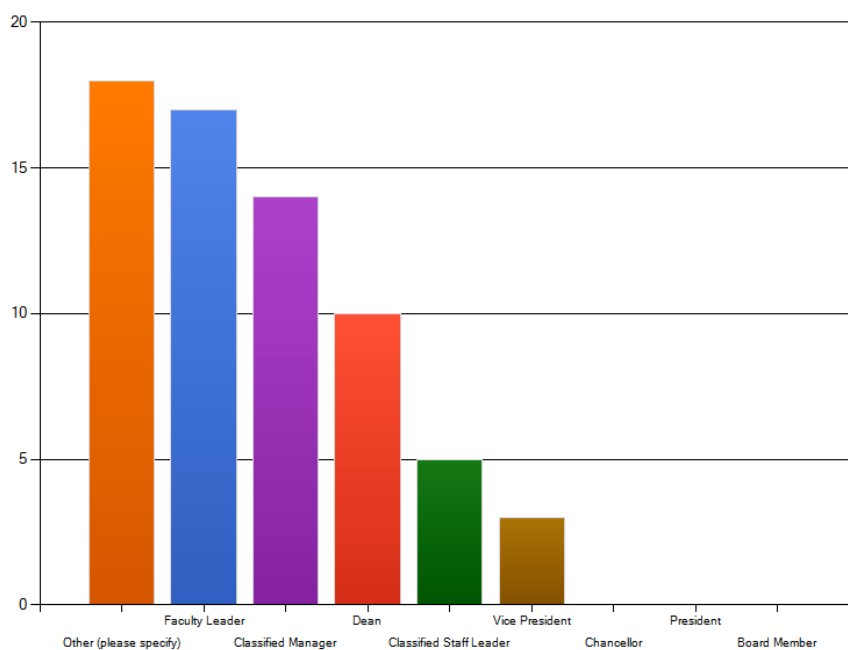


Figure 6. Author of letters of recommendation.

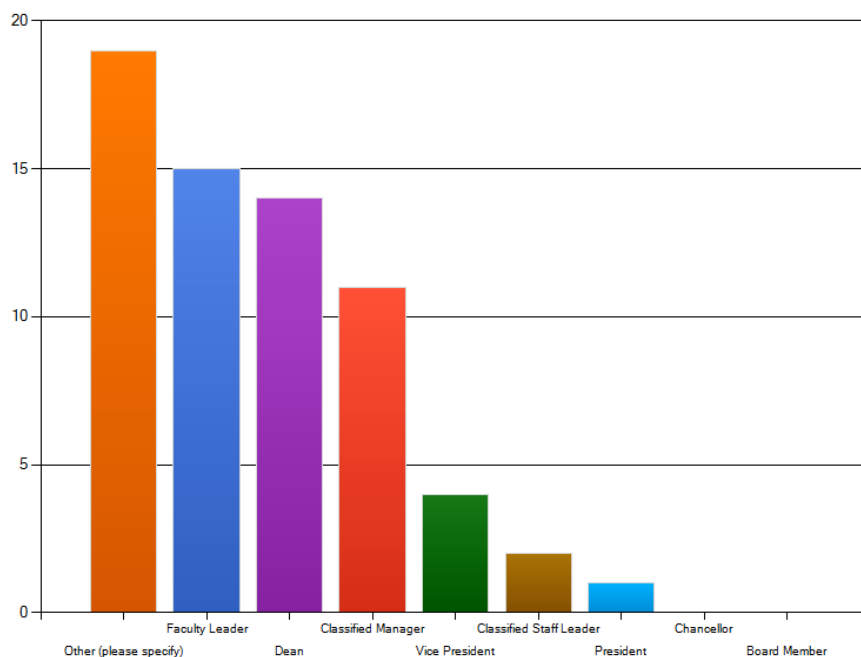
Survey item 10 asked respondents what their position classification was when they first attended Asilomar. Figure 7 reflects the responses received. *Other* received the most responses, including directors, faculty, associate or vice chancellor positions, as

well as a variety of uncategorized positions. Selections such as chancellor, president, and board member received no responses.



*Figure 7.* Position classification at time of Asilomar participation.

Survey item 11 asked what respondents current position classification. Figure 8 reflects the responses received with *other* receiving the most responses and chancellor and board member receiving no responses. One respondent skipped this question. Other responses included classified staff, directors, faculty, associate or vice chancellor positions, as well as a variety of uncategorized positions. Compared to responses to survey item 10 (what respondents' position classification was when they first attended Asilomar, see Figure 7), positions decreased in categories of classified staff leader, faculty leader, and classified manager and increased in the categories of dean, vice president, and president.



*Figure 8.* Current position classification of participants.

Survey item 12 asked what respondents what other leadership programs they have participated in since attending Asilomar. Figure 9 reflects the responses received; *other* received the most responses and the Fellows Program offered by the American Council on Education received no responses. Twenty-nine respondents skipped this question. Other responses included local college or district leadership programs, programs offered by other associations, and advanced degree programs. Four respondents indicated that they did not participate in any other leadership development programs.

Survey item 13 asked respondents to describe their level of agreement with the statement, “Asilomar encouraged me to consider leadership roles with increasing responsibility.” Figure 10 reflects the responses received, with strongly agree receiving with the most responses and strongly disagree receiving no responses. Sixty-six or 99% of respondents agreed that Asilomar encouraged them to consider leadership roles with increasing responsibility.

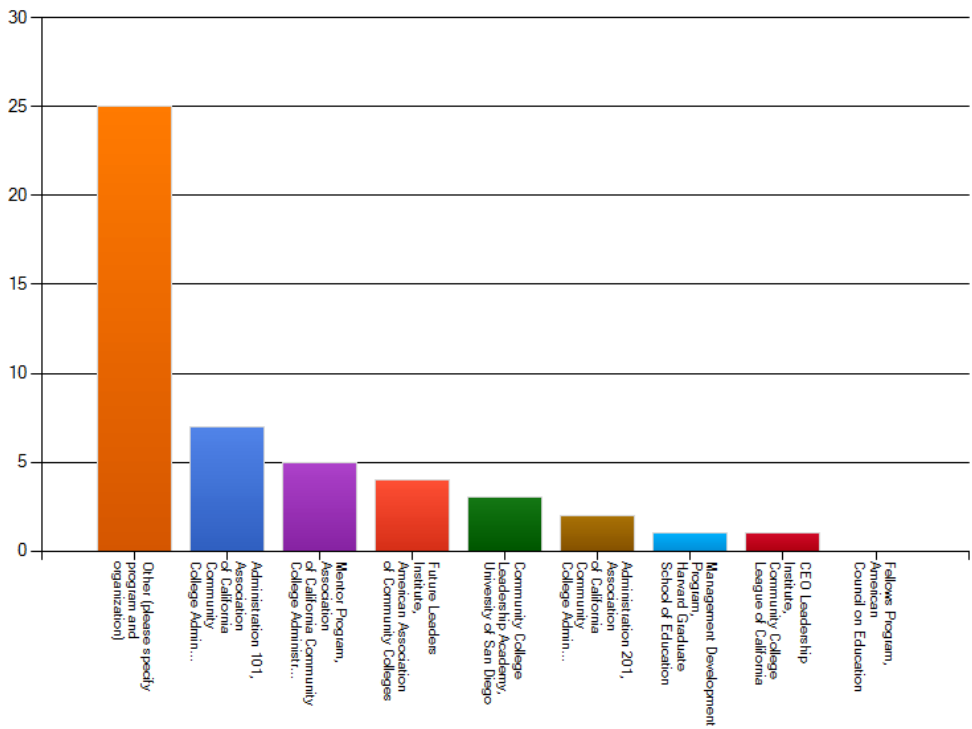


Figure 9. Leadership programs in which respondents have participated since attending Asilomar.

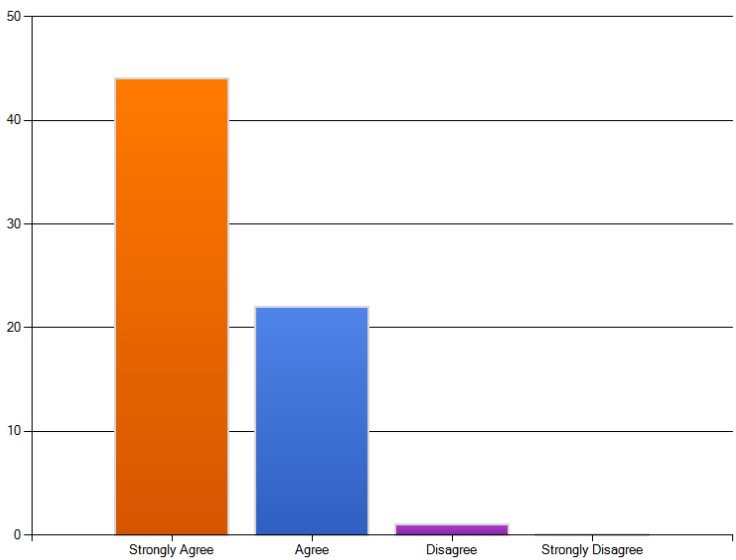
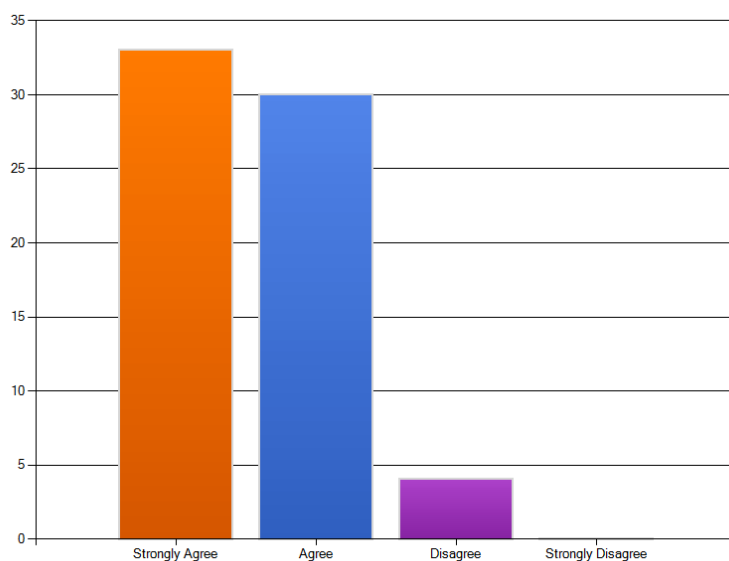


Figure 10. Participants' agreement that Asilomar encouraged them to consider leadership roles with increasing responsibility.

Survey item 14 asked respondents to describe their level of agreement with the statement, “Asilomar inspired me to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility.” Figure 11 reflects the responses received. Strongly agree received with the most responses (63 respondents or 94%), and strongly disagree received no responses.

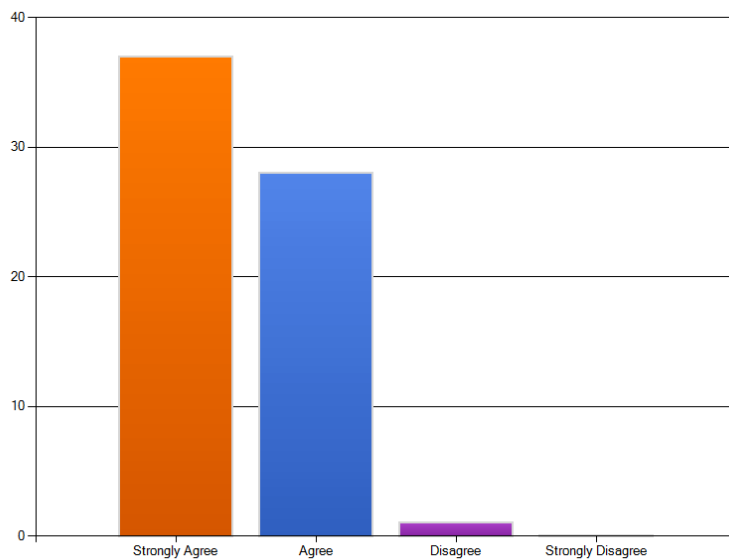


*Figure 11.* Participants’ agreement that Asilomar inspired them to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility.

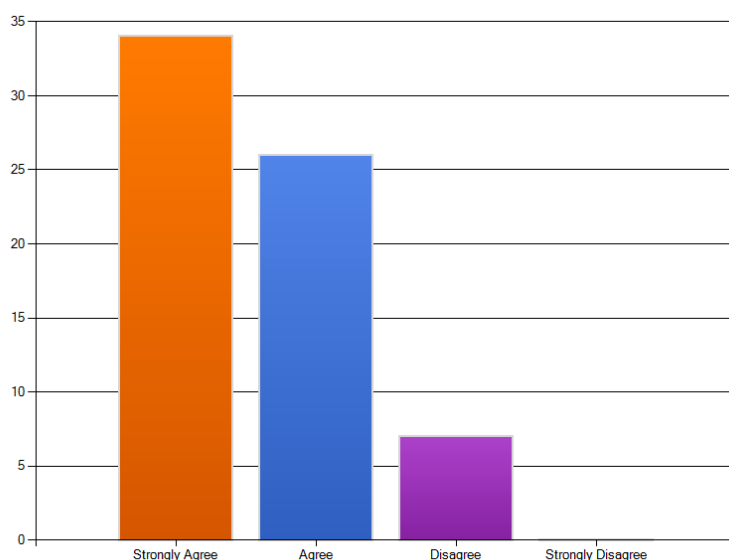
Survey item 15 asked respondents to describe their level of agreement with the statement, “Asilomar encouraged my career advancement.” Figure 12 reflects the responses received. Strongly agree received the most responses (65 respondents or 97%), and strongly disagree received no responses. One respondent skipped this question.

Survey item 16 asked respondents to describe their level of agreement with the statement, “Asilomar inspired me to take the next steps in advancing my career.” Figure 13 reflects the responses received. Strongly agree received the most responses (60 respondents or 90%), and strongly disagree received no responses.





*Figure 12.* Participants' agreement that Asilomar encouraged their career advancement.



*Figure 13.* Participants' agreement that Asilomar inspired them to take the next steps in advancing their career.

Survey item 17 asked respondents to describe their level of agreement with the statement, "Asilomar encouraged my career enhancement." Figure 14 reflects the responses received. Strongly agree received with the most responses (65 or 97% of respondents), and strongly disagree received no responses. One survey respondent skipped this question.

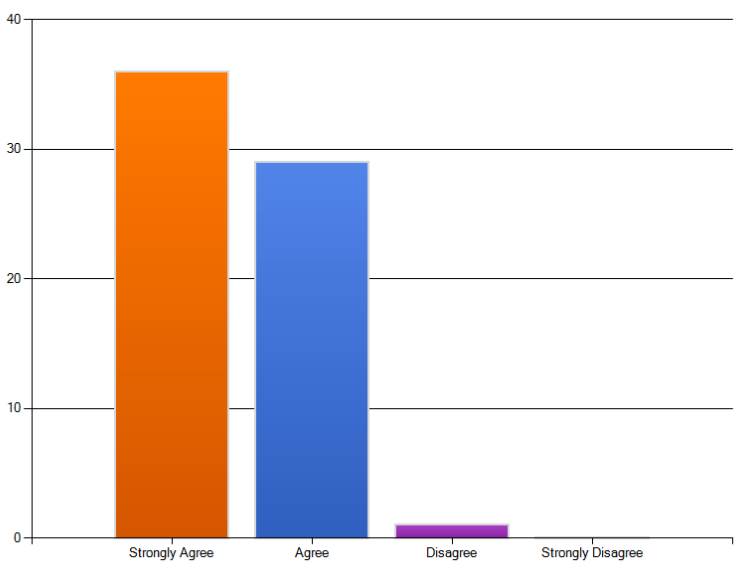


Figure 14. Participants' agreement that Asilomar encouraged their career enhancement.

Survey item 18 asked respondents to describe their level of agreement with the statement, "Asilomar inspired me to further enhance my career." Figure 15 reflects the responses received. Strongly agree received with the most responses (62 or 93% of respondents), and strongly disagree received no responses.

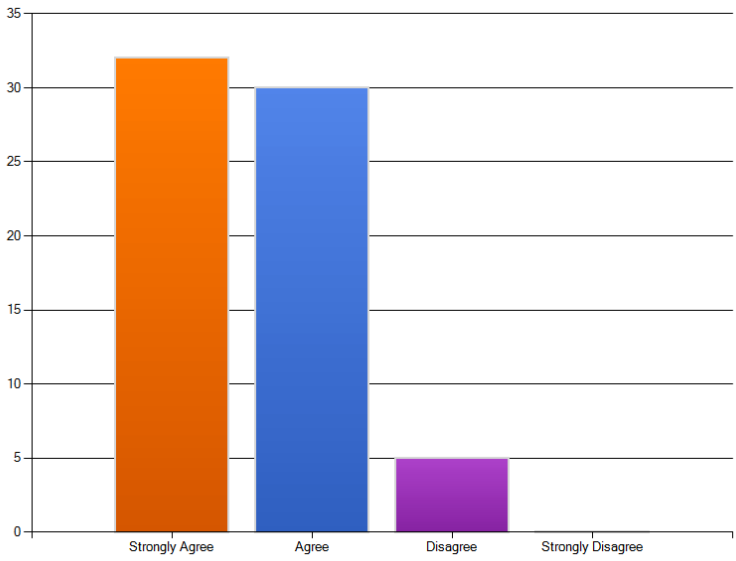
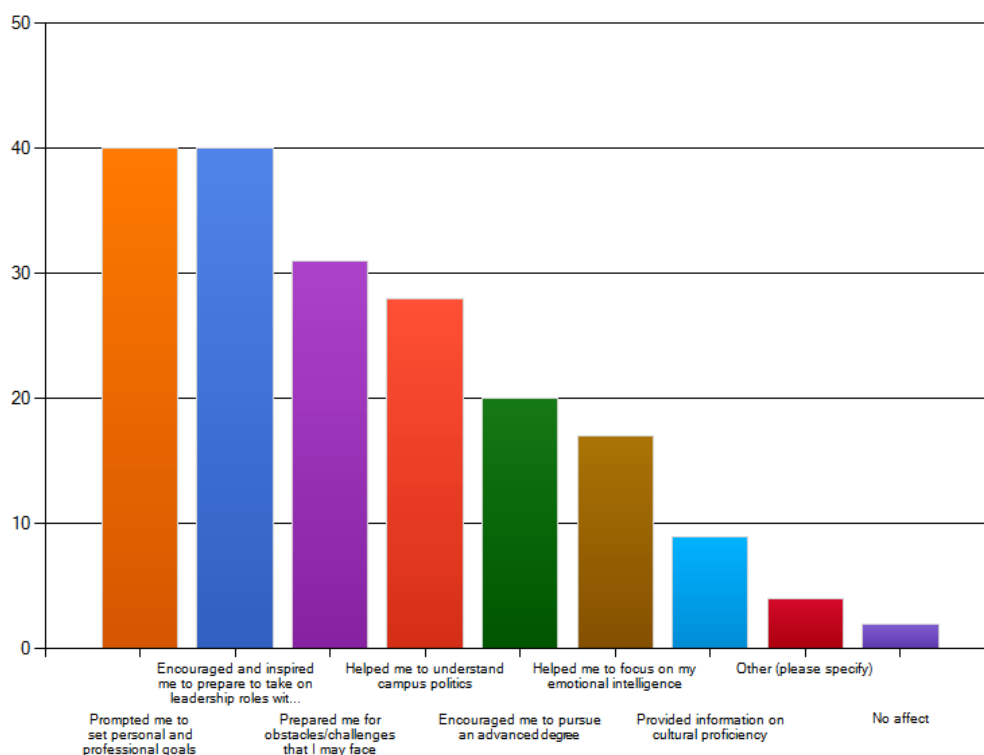


Figure 15. Participants' agreement that Asilomar inspired them to further enhance their career.

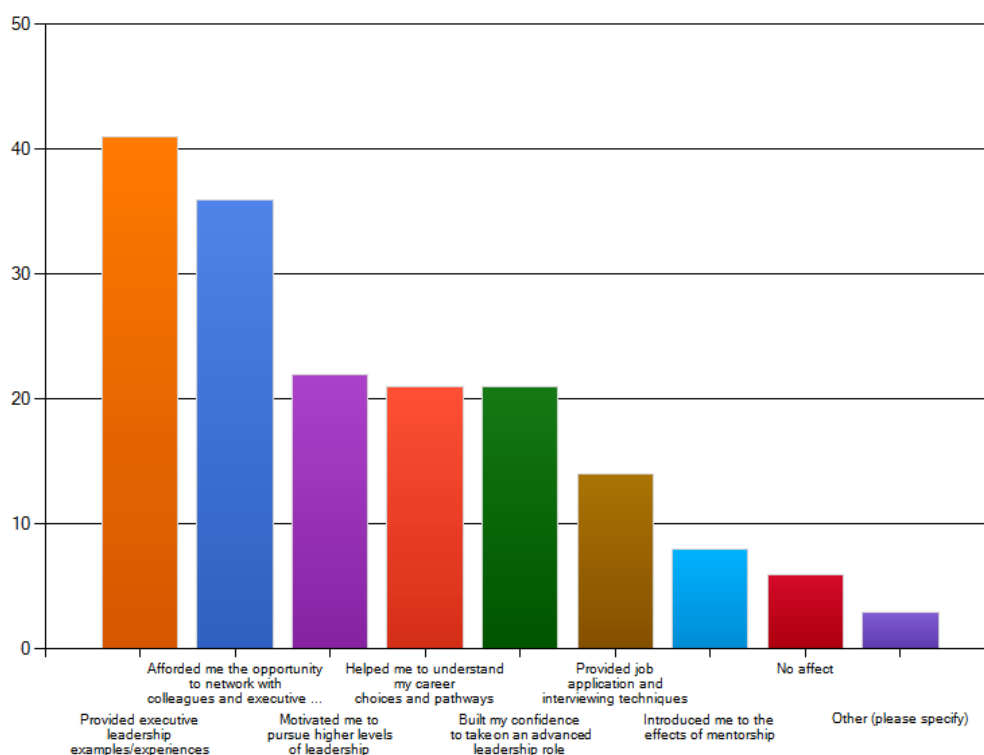
Survey item 19 asked respondents to indicate how, if at all, Asilomar affected their career preparation. 9 selections were available. Figure 16 reflects the responses received. The top two selections indicated that Asilomar prompted them to set personal and professional goals as well as encouraged and inspired them to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility. Respondents were given instructions to choose up to three areas; however, some respondents choose fewer areas than three, while others choose more than three. Other responses included increased self-confidence and preparation for job interviews.



*Figure 16.* Areas in which respondents felt Asilomar affected their career preparation.

Survey item 20 asked respondents to indicate how, if at all, Asilomar affected their career advancement. 9 selections were available. Figure 17 reflects the responses received. The top two selections indicated that Asilomar provided executive leadership examples and experiences and afforded them the opportunity to network with colleges

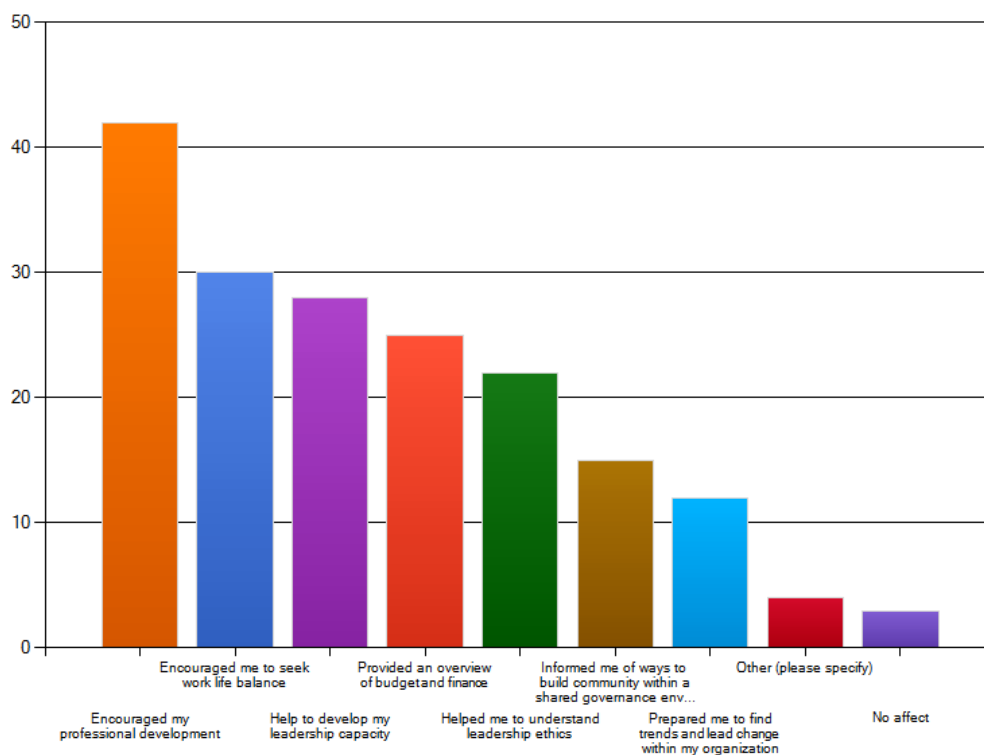
and executive leaders from other colleges. Respondents were given instructions to choose up to three areas, however, some respondents choose fewer than three while others choose more than three. Other responses included that the respondents had not yet had the opportunity to advance their career, and another indicated that she would have liked to have more focus on job application and interviewing techniques. One respondent skipped this question.



*Figure 17.* Areas in which respondents felt Asilomar affected their career advancement.

Survey item 21 asked respondents to indicate how, if at all, Asilomar affected their career advancement. 9 selections were available. Figure 18 reflects the responses received. The top two selections indicated that Asilomar encouraged their professional development and encouraged them to seek work life balance. Respondents were given instructions to choose up to three areas, however some respondents choose fewer than three, while others choose more than three. Other responses included campus politics,

networking, job interview preparation, and that the respondent had not yet had the opportunity to enhance her career.



*Figure 18.* Areas in which respondents felt Asilomar affected their career enhancement.

Survey item 22 asked respondents to describe, in 50 characters or fewer, what aspects of Asilomar, if any, contributed most to their leadership success. Sixty respondents described their perspectives and 7 respondents skipped this question. All received responses were compared to the 21 subcategories used in survey items 19, 20, and 21. Two additional codes were used: one to indicate *no effect* and the second to indicate *other*. The top two selections indicated that Asilomar provided executive leadership examples and experiences (19, 29%) and afforded them the opportunity to network with colleagues and executive leaders from other colleges (16, 26%). Both areas that surfaced were subcategories under the overarching theme of career advancement.

One participant described her experience with regard to executive leadership examples and experiences as the aspect of Asilomar that contributed most to her leadership success. She noted that

Having the opportunity to have a no-holds barred discussion with experienced, women leaders from the California Community College system was powerful. I appreciated their candor and the opportunity to hear first-hand from competent, accomplished women leaders what it is like in leadership roles and what it takes to succeed.

Survey item 23 asked respondents to describe, in 50 characters or fewer, the most valuable aspect of Asilomar. Sixty-three respondents described their perspective while 4 respondents skipped this question. All received responses were compared to the 21 subcategories used in survey items 19, 20, and 21. Two additional codes were used: one to indicate *no effect* and the second to indicate *other*. The top two selections indicated that Asilomar afforded them the opportunity to network with colleagues and executive leaders from other colleges (32, 50%) and provided executive leadership examples and experiences (23, 35%). Both areas that surfaced were subcategories under the overarching theme of career advancement and were the top two selections that surfaced in survey item 22, however, they manifested in opposite order for this question.

One participant described her most valuable experience at Asilomar thusly, “The networking opportunities were amazing. I still have contact with some of my Asilomar sisters. We share ideas and concerns.” Another participant stated that “the opportunity to hear from experienced women leaders, and to develop a network among peers in the system” are among her most valuable aspects of Asilomar.

Survey item 24 asked respondents to describe, in 50 characters or fewer, any other comments they had about their Asilomar experience. Fifty-one respondents described their perspectives and 16 respondents skipped this question. All received responses were compared to the 21 subcategories used in survey items 19, 20, and 21. Two additional codes were used: one to indicate *no effect* and the second to indicate *other*.

Thirty-eight (73%) comments stated that Asilomar had a positive impact on them. Comments included, “This was the greatest mentoring, training, networking experience for future women leaders,” “Dr. Pamela Fisher has provided a wonderful and safe environment where participants can meet and learn from inspiring female leaders who continue to provide mentoring and guidance,” “Asilomar is a wonderful opportunity for women to learn from one another and get the support they need to move ahead and pursue their dreams,” and “I appreciated the systematic approach to working on your entire leadership self. It was introspective, practical, and inspirational all at the same time. I loved coming away with a book list of great reading, too!”

The top selection made from the subcategories list was *other*, with 19 (36%) responses. Other responses included suggestions of a second seminar for past participants, information on how past participants have recommended the seminar to others, respondents volunteering to return as a presenters, and constructive comments on the seminar’s structure and expectations. Participant responses included, “I wish there was an Asilomar II or some advance seminar once advancement in education or position is achieved. I cherish the experience and would love to attend again in a new capacity,” and “I really loved the program and highly recommend it. I also think it is a great

opportunity for participants to disconnect from everyday life and responsibilities and focus on themselves.”

The second subcategory that surfaced with 11 (21%) responses included comments on how respondents were afforded the opportunity to network with colleagues and executive leaders from other colleges. One response indicated, “I appreciated the many opportunities to interact with other women faced with similar circumstances. I have recommended Asilomar to many other women within the CCC every year the announcement for applications is released.”

The Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey presented respondents with three optional items for completion, located at the end of the survey. The first item invited participants to enter into a drawing for one of five \$20 e-gift cards. The second item asked respondents if they would like to participate in a brief three-question telephone interview regarding their Asilomar experience. The third item asked respondents if they would like to receive the results of the research at the end of the study.

Forty-one respondents indicated that they wanted to participate in the \$20 e-gift card drawing, 22 indicated that they did not want to participate in the drawing, and 4 respondents skipped this question. The raffle awarded five randomly selected participants with \$20 Starbucks e-gift cards, which were electronically sent to the participants’ email addresses and were available for use at any Starbucks location. The raffle was held following the survey’s final completion.

To select raffle winners the researcher used the online website Random.org. The website states, “Random.org offers true random numbers to anyone on the Internet. The randomness comes from atmospheric noise, which for many purposes is better than the



pseudo-random number algorithms typically used in computer programs” (Random.org, n.d., para. 1).

The total number of opted-in respondents was entered into Random.org’s online form and the website generated five randomly selected numbers. Each generated number was cross-referenced with the coinciding number in the online survey platform, which reflected the survey respondents in order of their participation in the survey. Five email addresses emerged and were identified as the winners.

Forty survey respondents agreed to participate in the brief three-question telephone interview regarding their Asilomar experience, 24 respondents indicated that they did not want to participate in the interview portion of the study, and 3 respondents skipped this question. The first 10 respondents were contacted for interviews; these data are discussed in the latter part of this chapter. Fifty-four respondents indicated that they wanted to receive the results of the survey research, 11 respondents indicated that they did not want to receive the results of the survey research, and 2 respondents skipped this question.

**Interview findings.** The interview responses were examined for themes and subcategories. (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Ten survey participants were given the opportunity to take part in the interview portion of the study in an effort to describe their Asilomar perspective in their own words. Following the interviews each response was coded and analyzed for themes within each interview question. Four coders and the researcher independently coded each of the interview transcripts by related subcategories used in survey items 19, 20, and 21 respectively. Two additional codes were used: one to

indicate *no effect* and the second to indicate *other*. Coders were also asked to note any other emerging themes.

Multiple codes were used as necessary to code individual responses while some interview responses warranted only one code. Tables 7 through 9 represent the codes used by coders for each interview question. Analysis of codes was conducted against each interview response and across each coder's findings. The number of coded responses reflected in the following tables identifies the codes that surfaced from two or more coders.

Interview question 1 asked, "In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar encourage and or inspire the participants to pursue leadership roles with increasing responsibility?" The top three major subcategories that emerged from the data were personal and professional goals, emotional intelligence, and increasing responsibility, as represented in Table 7. First, interview respondents indicated that Asilomar affected them in that it prompted them to set personal and or professional goals and were indicated through examples given in responses. One interviewee stated that Asilomar "influenced a decision that I had made a long time ago to myself for self-improvement, personally and professionally and it was the catalyst to really move me along that path." Secondly, respondents cited specific examples of how Asilomar encouraged and or inspired them to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility. One interviewee noted, "when I left [Asilomar] I felt supported to be able to take chances in leadership, that I had never considered before." Thirdly, respondents cited examples of how Asilomar affected their emotional intelligence. One interviewee responded,

I think it definitely inspired me in terms of meeting so many amazing women and to feel, I don't know, I felt special, I guess that so many presidents took the time to attend and make this a part of their commitment to our future. So really I think that is what it is most of all, it provided the inspiration, the opportunity to network with other colleagues, and just to feel like someone is out there supporting me.

Table 7

*Asilomar Encouraged and or Inspired Participants to Pursue Leadership Roles With Increasing Responsibility*

Subcategories	Number of Coded Responses
Personal/Professional Goals, PG	9
Emotional Intelligence, EI	5
Increasing Responsibility, IR	5
Advanced Degree, AD	1
Campus Politics, CS	1
Cultural Proficiency, CP	1
No effect, NE	1
Obstacles/Challenges, OC	1
Other: <i>Identity Connection, IC and Gender Connection, GC: surfaced from only one coder.</i>	0

Interview question 2 asked, "In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar affect their career advancement?" The top three subcategories that emerged from data analysis were motivation, confidence, and leadership examples and experience. Table 8 notes each of the multiple areas that emerged from the interview responses with regard to how their

career advancement was affected. Interview responses noted that Asilomar provided motivation for their career advancement. Examples cited included,

[Asilomar] made me more interested in pursuing fundraising, which was one of the responsibilities I had, and then shortly after participating in Asilomar, I took a full-time job at another college doing grant writing and fundraising full-time as opposed to before I was doing other things as well.

Table 8

*Asilomar Affected Participants' Career Advancement*

Subcategories	Number of Coded Responses
Motivation, MO	6
Confidence, CO	5
Leadership examples/experiences, LE	5
Career choices and pathways, CC	4
Mentorship, ME	3
Job application/interviewing techniques, JA	2
No Effect, NE	2
Networking, NW	1
Other: <i>New Knowledge – surfaced from only one coder.</i>	0

Leadership examples and experiences were among the interview responses received from interviewees. One interviewee noted,

I had been a Vice President for, I believe it was, 3 years at that time and had not received some of the training that was provided to me there regarding the financial system. It's just that the system is so complex with 110 community

colleges and the California system in general and I was from out of state, and so, many of the teachings involving administration enabled me to look at things differently when I returned to my campus and to have a better understanding of how to provide inside mentorship and get some things done that I hadn't even thought of let alone, knew that I wasn't aware of. It immediately launched me into a higher level of proficiency.

Increased confidence was found in a number of interview responses. One interviewee described her movement into a more administrative and leadership role thusly,

I don't know if it was specifically because I attended Asilomar because I think that if I had not attended Asilomar and this opportunity had come up, I probably would have done it anyway but I think it was more of my movement into that position, I think I was more cognizant that I wanted to do it because I was more cognizant of wanting to do more leadership types of roles.

Interview question 3 asked, "In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar contribute to the career enhancement of these past participants?" The top three subcategories that emerged from data analysis were leadership capacity, professional development, and leading change, as shown in Table 9. Career enhancement to these participants revolved mainly around helping them to develop their own leadership capacity. One interviewee noted that Asilomar "provided me the internal motivation to move forward and kind of firmed up my commitment to the community college system, which I was not fully sure I wanted to stay with."

Table 9

*Asilomar Contributed to Participants' Career Enhancement*

Subcategories	Number of Coded Responses
Leadership capacity, LC	9
Professional development, PD	7
Leading change, LG	4
Other: <i>Identity Connection/Cultural Awareness – surfaced from two or more coders.</i> <i>Motivation – surfaced from two or more coders.</i> <i>Confidence – surfaced from two or more coders.</i>	3
Budget and finance, BF	2
Leadership ethics, LE	2
Shared governance, SG	2
No Effect, NE	1
Work-life balance, WB	1

Statements of professional development were also heavily noted in the interview responses. One interviewee stated that Asilomar inspired me to be a better person and leader. Hearing what it is like to be a woman of color attempting to advance their career. The struggles they faced brought cultural awareness to the forefront. The emotional intelligence section was fabulous. The budgeting section was very helpful for me. All of this prepared me for the Dean position I am currently in.

Another interviewee described Asilomar's impact on her decision to advance her education thusly:

A Ph.D. program was something that was a life goal for me and it was something that I always said, Oh, I want to do this, I want to do this, but after I attended those four days...it was really the boost to really make me decide to finally stop talking about it and just do it.

### **Comparison of Survey And Interview Findings**

In analyzing the survey and interview data collected in this study, the research question was examined through the following triangulation.

**Career preparation.** Data from survey items 13, 14, and 19, along with coded and analyzed themes from interview question 1, were compared to understand how participation in Asilomar from 2005-2011 affected participants' career preparation. Career preparation was deemed as being positively affected by participation in Asilomar, and both personal and professional goal setting and taking on leadership roles with increasing responsibility surfaced from the triangulated data as common themes. Survey data revealed that preparation for obstacles and challenges emerged in the top three affected areas, while emotional intelligence surfaced in the coded interview data as one of the top three areas.

**Career advancement.** Data from survey items 15, 16, and 20, along with coded and analyzed themes from interview question 2, were compared to understand how participation in Asilomar from 2005-2011 affected participants' career advancement. Career advancement was deemed as being positively affected by participation in Asilomar, and both leadership examples and experiences along with motivation to pursue higher levels of leadership surfaced from the triangulated data as common themes. Survey data revealed that networking with colleagues and other executive leaders

emerged in the top three areas affected, while confidence surfaced in the coded interview data as one of the top three areas.

**Career enhancement.** Data from survey items 17, 18, and 21, along with coded and analyzed themes from interview question 3, were compared to understand how participation in Asilomar from 2005-2011 affected participants' career enhancement. Career enhancement was deemed as being positively affected by participation in Asilomar, and both encouragement of professional development and developing leadership capacity surfaced from the triangulated data as common themes. Survey data revealed that encouragement to seek work-life balance emerged in the top three areas affected, while leading change surfaced in the coded interview data as one of the top three areas.

### **Summary of Data Findings**

Thirty-seven percent of survey participants in this study have worked in the CCC system for 6-10 years. Forty percent have held faculty positions and 36% have held the position of dean. The majority of participants learned about Asilomar from their supervisor, with the president of the institution writing most of the letters of recommendation for participants to attend. Leadership programs that participants have attended post-Asilomar varied, including: local college or district leadership programs, programs offered by other associations, and advanced degree programs.

In the area of career preparation, Asilomar prompted participants to set personal and professional goals, encouraged and inspired them to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility, and positively influenced participants' emotional



intelligence. In the area of career advancement, Asilomar provided executive leadership examples and experiences, afforded participants the opportunity to network with colleges and executive leaders from other colleges, and increased participants' confidence. In the area of career enhancement, Asilomar provided professional development and personal leadership capacity building and encouraged participants to seek work-life balance.

The aspects of Asilomar that were perceived as contributing the most to participant success were the executive leadership examples provided by the seminar leaders and the opportunity afforded to network with colleagues and executive leaders from other community colleges. The top five Asilomar topics that emerged from the data were: budget and finance, leadership ethics, emotional intelligence, campus politics, and governance. Participants have recommended the seminar to others, volunteered to return as presenters, and provided constructive comments on the seminar's structure and expectations.

## **Conclusions**

Analysis of the data findings resulted in the generation of the following conclusions:

1. The Asilomar Leadership Seminar had a significantly positive impact on the career preparation, advancement, and enhancement of California Community College women who participated in the seminar from 2005-2011.
2. Aspiring community college women executive leaders need and benefit from the opportunity to interact and learn from women executive leader role models and mentors in order to prepare for, advance, and enhance their professional careers. Women encouraging, supporting, and promoting other women in their

career preparation, advancement, and enhancement is inspiring and motivating to aspiring community college leaders. Such interaction promotes professional ties and continued association with Asilomar, and results in new referrals for Asilomar participation.

3. Personal leadership, finance, and governance/policy are priority areas of leadership interest and knowledge/skill development for aspiring community college executive leaders.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The purpose of this mixed-methods research study was to explore the career preparation, career advancement, and career enhancement of women who participated in the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar from 2005-2011. More specifically, this study investigated the perspectives of women leaders within the CCC system as to the impact, if any, participation in Asilomar, from 2005-2011, had on their career preparation, career advancement, and career enhancement. The following research question guided this study: How, if at all, has Asilomar affected the career preparation, advancement, and enhancement of women who participated in the leadership seminar from 2005-2011?

This chapter presents an analysis of the study's findings and the conclusions, recommendations for policy and practice, recommendations for further study, and final thoughts. The purpose of this study was achieved by examining the experiences of Asilomar participants from the years 2005-2011, which is a subset from the more than 2,200 past participants over the seminar's 27-year history. Data were collected during the 2011-2012 academic year.

This mixed methods research study engaged 67 past participants of Asilomar in an online survey consisting of 27 items: a combination of closed-ended, open-ended, and rating items that directly relate to the purpose, problem, and research question. Survey items were developed to capture the nature of the seminar's impact, if any, on its participants (Appendix A). Subsequently, the first 10 online survey respondents who agreed to be interviewed were interviewed using a protocol that asked three questions. The interview was designed to capture the responses of participants in their own words

directly related to the purpose, problem, and research question. A final question interview question inquired about whether the interviewees' wished to receive a copy of the results of the study.

Data were gathered from the results of the online 27-item survey and from 10 volunteer interviews conducted with past participants. With a response rate of 34%, this study was determined to be representative of past participants from the stated time period. In analyzing the survey and interview data collected in this study, important findings were discovered.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

Thirty-seven percent of survey participants in this study have worked in the CCC system for 6-10 years, 40% percent have held faculty positions, and 36% have held the position of Dean. The majority of participants learned about Asilomar from their supervisor, with the president of the institution writing the greatest number of letters of recommendation for participants to attend. Leadership programs that participants have attended post-Asilomar varied, including: local college or district leadership programs, programs offered by other associations, and advanced degree programs.

In the area of career preparation, Asilomar prompted participants to set personal and professional goals, encouraged and inspired them to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility, and positively influenced participants' emotional intelligence. In the area of career advancement, Asilomar provided executive leadership examples and experiences, afforded participants the opportunity to network with colleagues and executive leaders from other colleges, and increased participants'

confidence. In the area of career enhancement, Asilomar provided professional development and personal leadership capacity building and encouraged participants to seek work-life balance.

The aspects of Asilomar that were perceived as contributing the most to participant success were the executive leadership examples provided by the seminar leaders and the opportunity to network with colleagues and executive leaders from other community colleges. The top five Asilomar topics that emerged from the data were: budget and finance, leadership ethics, emotional intelligence, campus politics, and governance. Participants have recommended the seminar to others, volunteered to return as presenters, and provided constructive comments on the seminar's structure and expectations.

## **Conclusions**

Related to the research question, findings from the study support the following three conclusions.

**Conclusion one.** The Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar had a significantly positive impact on the career preparation, advancement, and enhancement of California Community College women who participated in the seminar from 2005-2011. Ninety-four percent to 99% of survey respondents agreed that Asilomar impacted their career preparation, 90-97% of survey respondents agreed that Asilomar affected their career advancement, and 93-97% of survey respondents agreed that Asilomar encouraged and inspired their career enhancement.

As related to the literature in Chapter 2, leadership development programs, networking, and mentoring are key components of support for female leaders in executive leadership positions (Carter, 2009; Krause, 2009). Traditional leadership pathways within the CCC generally begin at the faculty level and progress to presidency (Carter, 2009; Krause, 2009). Although the pathways do not differ by gender, the literature suggests that female leaders need the help of other factors to progress through these traditional pathways. Yet, because female leaders historically have not filled advanced leadership positions, many do not have the needed job experience to be competitive. Particularly important to their advancement is their academic preparation, nontraditional but related work experience, professional networks, terminal degrees, and professional development (Carter, 2009; Krause, 2009). Therefore, the literature suggests that building on professional networks and participating in professional development programs such as Asilomar can further prepare aspiring female leaders to take on advanced leadership roles.

Fong-Batkin's 2011 qualitative study of 13 women administrators within the CCC system asserted that leadership programs are useful ways to recruit and train future administrators. Fong-Batkin noted that Asilomar provides strategies, contacts, and opportunities for personal and professional growth, along with helping participants expand their leadership responsibilities on their own campuses and districts or within the CCC system overall. Fong-Batkin's study noted that along with the ACCCA Mentor Program, Asilomar was the leadership program most mentioned by participants.

Asilomar contributed to past participants by helping them develop their leadership capacity and provided a means of professional development. Several participants cited specific examples of how Asilomar helped develop their leadership capacity and

provided a means of professional development. One participant stated, “What Asilomar did for me was made me a better leader. It inspired me to be the best I can and made me aware of the difficulties leaders face in their career.” Another stated, “the biggest thing that happened for me is that it broadened my perspective of community colleges altogether...that was encouraging and I liked the networking and the sisterhood that happened.” Making the connection to the Asilomar experience and to what makes one valuable as an administrator, one participant stated, “Friendships, alliances, understanding of how other colleges do things...the connections, that’s very, very important especially as an administrator, because that will make you very valuable.” One participant specifically noted enhancing her career based on the shared examples:

Career enhancement for me is that the things I’m doing to really try to make something more of my career and I think sitting on the committees has helped. But I think the role modeling I saw [at Asilomar] with the Presidents, seeing female presidents and listening to the chancellors...it was a really wonderful experience because they really let their guards down...I am enhancing my career based on several of the stories I heard from the chancellors there.

**Conclusion two.** Aspiring community college women executive leaders need and benefit from the opportunity to interact and learn from women executive leader role models and mentors in order to prepare for, advance, and enhance their professional careers. Women encouraging, supporting, and promoting other women in their career preparation, advancement, and enhancement is inspiring and motivating to aspiring community college leaders. Such interaction promotes professional ties, continued association with Asilomar, and results in new referrals for Asilomar participation.

Research data revealed that the aspects of Asilomar that contributed most to participants' leadership success and were additionally noted as the most valuable aspects of Asilomar included the fact that the seminar provided female executive leadership examples and experiences and that it affords the participants the opportunity to network with female colleagues and executive leaders from other colleges.

Krause's (2009) study noted that leadership development programs, networking, and mentoring are key components of support for female leaders in executive leadership positions. Similarly to the findings of Blackwood (2011), Bello-de Castro (2010) found that mentors were of significant importance in helping female leaders move up the ranks. Valeau and Boggs (2004) pointed to prior research noting that mentoring is a viable way to counter the residual effects of racism and sexism in the work environment. Further, Valeau and Boggs discuss that within the community college, researchers argue that mentoring is essential in the advancement of females and minorities. Valeau and Boggs describe mentoring and access to terminal degrees as "the intergenerational transfer of essential skills, knowledge, and behaviors" (p. 49). Bello-de Castro (2010) also noted that learning how to deal with budget and technology issues, becoming politically and legally savvy, understanding how to handle faculty and union issues, and being prepared to deal with situations that can arise on campuses are also important to the career advancement of these women.

As found in the present study, Asilomar provided participants an opportunity to explore a number of topics while also exposing them to real-life experiences from those in advanced leadership positions who shared their stories and provided information about practices that worked and those that did not. This informal mentorship may have helped



aspiring female leaders to see themselves in these roles and may have furthered their understanding of the challenges that come with these leadership positions

The literature points out that female leaders face a number of barriers to advancement, including the fact that, historically, leadership positions have been filled by men and, as such, the job descriptions were more suited to them (Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). Women who entered these positions had a difficult time navigating these new roles as they lacked the requisite experience. Additional challenges such as power struggles specific to the expectations of the position where female leaders have had less experience, mind-set of boards of trustees pre- and post- hire as related to gender issues, the issue of work-life balance, and societal perceptions are additional barriers to advancement for female leaders (Ebbers et al., 2000; Persyn, 2006; Shaffer, 2009; Tedrow & Rhoads, 1999). Additionally, women have to balance family obligations along with their professional duties. Although the same holds true for their male counterparts, societal perceptions with regard to the work-life balance for female leaders place additional pressure on women. Persyn (2006) stated, “Balancing motherhood, family, and academic obligations complicates the pursuit of presidency” (p. 1). Through Asilomar, networking with other female colleagues encourages, supports, and promotes understanding for aspiring women in their career preparation, advancement, and enhancement. Such interactions promote professional ties, continued association with Asilomar, and result in new referrals for Asilomar participation as participants have recommended the seminar to others, volunteered to return as presenters, and provided constructive comments on the seminar’s structure and expectations.

One Asilomar participant in the study stated the following about the leadership examples and experiences that were shared:

I think one of the biggest encouragements to me was to be around women leaders in the community college system over an extended period of time and what that provided was a sense of how normal they are...I think I had been more intimidated by the idea of people who were in higher levels of leadership roles and to be at Asilomar with presidents, and chancellors, and vice presidents who were women and they were so accessible and down to earth helped me relate to the positions.

Another participant noted,

So the accessibility of the positions became more real I think to me, that was probably the biggest encouragement. And they were themselves encouraging; they were cheerleaders to everyone who was there and they really believed in the potential of the participants.

Yet another participant went on to say,

It was incredibly inspiring; the majority of people who have been involved in Asilomar have been for a while and have known each other for so long from the initial days of women being involved in administration in the community college leadership ranks and some of the stories that they shared and their experiences and how they tread ground for everyone else was not only inspiring but also very, very enjoyable...I definitely went back with a new found energy.

**Conclusion three.** Personal leadership, finance, and governance/policy are priority areas of leadership interest and knowledge for skill development for aspiring

community college executive leaders. The top five Asilomar topics that emerged from the data were budget and finance, leadership ethics, emotional intelligence, campus politics, and governance. One Asilomar participant noted that Asilomar “definitely helped me be prepared for where I want to go.” Another participant stated, “overview seminars gave me exposure to a bigger picture to sort of give context to the kind of information I would really need to know as a Dean.” With regards to educational and professional advancement, one participant specifically noted,

When I was nudged to go to Asilomar, I was a technician, so a classified service employee but I was also the classified senate president. My superintendent nudged me...The next year finished my masters of business administration and was given an interim appointment of the director...and now I am in that chair two and a half years later as a permanent member of the district in administration... So I think Asilomar gave me a lot of tools to expand leadership.

On the topic of emotional intelligence, one participant stated,

[Asilomar] encouraged me because I saw women who had been there, women that looked like me, and women who can share their experiences. Because most of the administrators where I work are white male, so there was no kind of connection and it was nice to be in one room and to get that kind of information exchanged.

According to the literature, experts believe that colleges must start investing in the training and developing of their junior management and support staff to enable them to become the next generation of presidents (Ullman, 2010). Specifically, exposing them to

all facets of the presidency early in their careers may help them become effective executive leaders.

Campbell, Syed, et al. (2010) believe that community college leadership develops in strands. The discipline (profession or practice) of community college leadership can be learned through traditional coursework (essential components of any higher education leadership program, such as finance, law, or policy). Inquiry-based rational building can occur through research and data analysis coursework and the dissertation-writing process (also required in traditional program plans).

Interpersonal competences can be developed through the process of personality and work-style profiling and executive coaching in targeted areas of improvement. The emotional intelligence component has become increasingly significant in leadership development and involves the attributes of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social interaction (Ullman, 2010).

Further, Bello-de Castro (2010) found that female leaders needed to be flexible and willing to try new things, specifically by stepping outside of their comfort zones, being visionary, engaging in networking and professional development, and taking on projects outside of their departments. Leadership development programs must support relevant skill development using approaches such as simulations, internships, and mentorship programs (Campbell, 2006). Getskow (1996) noted that role models and mentors are particularly important, and Naisbitt and Aburdene (1992) identified behaviors that characterized women's leadership and clustered them into behaviors that empower, restructure, teach, provide role models, encourage openness, and stimulate questioning.

The areas of personal leadership, finance, and governance/policy are identified priorities of leadership interest and knowledge for skill development of aspiring community college executive leaders and are found in the Asilomar structure. As noted, Asilomar encouraged and inspired its participants in their career preparation, advancement, and enhancement. Furthermore, post-Asilomar leadership development programs for participants included local college or district programs, programs offered by other associations, as well as advanced degree programs. These compounding efforts may prompt more female leaders within the CCC system to take on more responsibility and prepare them for the next step on their leadership path.

### **Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

This study was designed to determine how, if at all, Asilomar affected the career preparation, advancement, and enhancement of women who participated in the seminar from 2005-2011. The findings from this study can be used to inform leadership development practices as well as to inform policy surrounding the implementation of similar programs in other states where the need for more female executive leaders persists. Findings and conclusions from the study support the following six recommendations.

**Recommendation one.** It is recommended that Asilomar continue in its methodical approach to serving the female leaders within the CCC system. The nature of the research findings coupled with the positive effect that respondents report that Asilomar has had on their career preparation, advancement, and enhancement outlines the need for such a program.

**Recommendation two.** It is recommended that Asilomar and other female leadership development programs within the CCC system and those extending beyond California continue to provide opportunities for participants to interact and learn from female executive leader role models and mentors in order to prepare for, advance, and enhance their professional careers.

**Recommendation three.** It is recommended that Asilomar and other female leadership development programs within the CCC system and those extending beyond California continue to incorporate personal leadership, finance, governance, and policy priorities into the knowledge and skill development models in order to further prepare aspiring executive leaders.

**Recommendation four.** It is recommended that all colleges within the CCC system look to Asilomar as a means to promote leadership within their local institutions and within the system statewide. As 53% of all CCC students are female, the system may benefit from having advanced leadership positions that are reflective of its student population (CCC Chancellor's Office, 2012b; CCLC, 2011b).

**Recommendation five.** As a means to counter the impeding leadership gap and to promote a more balanced gender representation among the higher levels of leadership within the CCC system, Asilomar should be considered as an optimal choice for female leadership development at all levels of leadership system-wide.

**Recommendation six.** In an effort to continue to study the affects of Asilomar, it is recommended that the practice of regular contact after attendance in Asilomar be implemented in order to continue to study the progress as it relates to the career

preparation, advancement, and enhancement of its participants. The findings of the current study indicate the need for continued study.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The research study represents an initial step in examining the affects of Asilomar on its participants' career pathways. Recommendations for further study were drawn from this study's findings and the interpretation of the findings. These research recommendations are offered in five areas and not presented in order of importance; each area has the potential to become a meaningful study in and of itself.

**Study of Asilomar participants from 1984 to 2012.** Although it may be challenging to acquire the current contact information of all past participants, a study to examine the personal and professional experiences of all past participants of Asilomar since its inception would contribute greatly to this new body of knowledge. As the current study examined participants from 2005-2011, further research would extend out in an effort to measure the seminar's overall impact on a longitudinal scale and capture the history and evolution of the seminar as well as the impact it has had throughout the CCC system since its inception in 1984.

**Study of Asilomar presenters.** The researcher also recommends conducting a study to investigate the lived-experiences of the female leaders who present at Asilomar, specifically those in higher levels of leadership within the CCC system, and to examine the experiences of these leaders and the reasons why they are compelled to participate as presenters. The study could further examine the similarities or differences these women leaders have experienced with regards to their career pathways in an effort to further

inspire and encourage aspiring female leaders who have not yet participated in Asilomar or who are not able to participate.

Although the current study focused on participants, it was noted that 11 presenters entered the survey and were prompted to the end of the survey where they were able to request a summary of the results. Their interest in receiving the results coupled with the one presenter whose responses were collected but were filtered out of the data analysis could provide a basis for further research. It is evident that there is interest in understanding Asilomar's impact and that indeed these female leaders have their own story that should be told.

**Study of the human impact on Asilomar participants.** The researcher also recommends conducting a study to examine the human (personal) impact that Asilomar has had on its past participants. The purpose would be to measure how the relationship piece of Asilomar has affected its participants as they moved along their leadership pathway. As demonstrated by one of the interviewees in the study who did not look to Asilomar to advance her career, its impact on a human level was noted as significant. Thus, further examination of such participant experiences may prove to be of value for potential seminar participants and or an approach to further impact participants on a human level may be implemented.

**Study of the effects of executive level support on female leadership pathways.** A study to examine the affects of executive level support on leadership pathways of aspiring female leaders with the California community colleges system may shed some light on how or why some female leaders persist in advancing their positions at the local



level. The purpose would be to measure if a relationship exists between the support received from those in top-level positions and the advancement of these female leaders.

As those in executive leadership positions wrote the majority of letters of recommendation for Asilomar, 48% by the college presidents and 24% by vice presidents, a study focusing on how this type of support coupled with the benefits of Asilomar encourages and or inspires Asilomar participants to further their leadership pathways may prove valuable.

**Study of female executive leaders throughout the CCC.** A study to explore the lived experiences of current female executive leaders within the California community colleges system as related to their preparation, advancement, and enhancement may expand system-wide knowledge of their pathways. Further exploration can be determined as it relates to the recommendations regarding how more women might be identified, inspired, and encouraged to prepare and pursue either leadership roles in general or more specifically executive leadership roles within the system.

As the current study focused on Asilomar participants it could prove valuable to extend out the research to include all female executive leaders with in the California community college system. The study would include those who participated in Asilomar and those who did not and attempt to further document the pathways and identify the key factors that determined their success.

### **Final Thoughts**

As noted in Chapter 1, currently in California, women fill 25% of district chancellor or superintendent/president positions and 37% of presidential positions (CCC

Chancellor's Office, 2010). There is a need to increase these percentages as a means to counter the impending leadership gap due to projected executive retirements. The Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar was created to identify, recruit, inspire, and encourage women to prepare to take on leadership roles that have increasing responsibility in the CCC system. Many seminar participants have gone on to become executive leaders, with several who returned to share their experiences with incoming participants. Nevertheless, prior to this study, follow-up data had yet to be collected from Asilomar participants to determine how, if at all, their experience inspired and encouraged their career preparation, advancement, or enhancement. Therefore, both an opportunity and a need existed to study the seminar by examining the experiences of its past participants.

The advancement of female leaders within the CCC system is an important means of addressing the needs of CCCs. As noted in Chapter 2, proactive measures should be introduced early in the careers of female leaders within the community colleges system. An early approach may stimulate professional growth among those who may be interested in pursuing advanced leadership positions and those with the potential to take on senior roles. As outlined in the literature review, female leaders need professional development, terminal degrees, hard work, respect for others, academic preparation, job experience, and professional networks in order to compete for advanced leadership positions (Carter, 2009; Krause, 2009). The literature further suggested the following key topics in leadership programs for women in preparation for presidency roles: leadership trends in the 21st century, historical and perceived obstacles to advancement, mentoring, family dynamics, networking, budgeting, and political and legal savvy (Bello-de Castro,

2010; Blackwood, 2011; Krause, 2009; Ligeikis, 2010). This study strengthens these literature findings and confirms that professional development; mentorship, professional networks, and focus on career opportunities are possible ways to address the current needs of the CCC system (Bello-de Castro, 2010; Blackwood, 2011; Krause, 2009; Ligeikis, 2010).

Additionally, this study confirms that the goal of Asilomar to identify, recruit, inspire, and encourage women to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility is being realized and that participants' career preparation, advancement, and enhancement has positively been affected by their 2005-2011 participation in the seminar. As stated by one of the founders, "If women do not perceive themselves as capable of doing it, or are not encouraged and inspired to do it, they may never take those next steps" (P. Fisher, personal communication, June 21, 2011). Asilomar seeks to promote leadership in all levels within the CCC system, giving participants the opportunity to engage with an incredible support system and in activities to help them see themselves in higher levels of leadership. This seminar helps to better prepare them to take on more leadership responsibility and gives them the confidence with which to do so.

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## APPENDIX A

## Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey

**Letter of Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities**

Thank you for your interest in this study. As you are aware from the introductory communication sent yesterday, my name is Estella Castillo-Garrison, and I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University.

As an Asilomar Alum, you are being solicited to participate in research titled "A Study of the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar." This dissertation research is being conducted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy.

I am inviting all individuals who participated in Asilomar from 2005-2011 to participate in this study. Please understand that your participation is strictly voluntary.

The following is a description of what your participation will entail, the terms of participation, and a discussion of your rights as a study participant. Please read this information closely before deciding to participate.

1. Should you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the survey "Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey." Please complete the survey in one sitting.
  2. Although minimal, there are potential risks for participating in this study. These risks may include discomfort with the professional nature of the questions, feelings of social pressure to participate, fatigue, boredom, embarrassment, anxiety, and the inconvenience of taking the time to participate in the study.
  3. To mitigate these risks, if you decide to participate and find that you are uninterested or uncomfortable in participating further, you have the right to discontinue at any point without being questioned about your decision. You also have the right to skip any question on the survey should you wish to do so, with the exception of questions relating to your year of participation.
  4. Your name and corresponding responses will be held in strict confidence and will not be made available to anyone besides the researcher.
  5. Data results will not be individually identified but, rather, will be used collectively to inform the overall study.
  6. To reduce any impositions on your time, the survey may be completed at a time and location that is convenient to you.
  7. You will be provided with an option to request a summary of the survey research results of the study.
  8. Your involvement in the study is limited to the amount of time to complete the 27-item survey, unless you agree to a brief 3-question telephone interview at the end of the survey.
  9. You will have the option to participate in a drawing. A \$20 e-gift card will be randomly awarded to five people who complete the survey. The drawing will take place three days after the survey is closed.
- You will have two weeks to complete the survey. After one week, a reminder email will be sent to those individuals who have not yet completed the survey.

Findings from the study may be presented to professional audiences and or published; however, at no time will information that identifies you be released. Data will be kept in a secure manner for three years, after which time the data will be destroyed.

Should you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. If you have further questions or do not feel that I have adequately addressed your concerns, please contact my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Linda Purrington, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Yuying Tsong, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional School Institutional Review Board, Pepperdine University, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

By selecting the "I Accept" box below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand what your participation entails and that you consent to participate in this study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and for your consideration in participating in this study.

Kindest regards,

Estella Castillo-Garrison

**\*1. I acknowledge that I have read and understand that details described above and consent to my participation in this study.**

I Accept

I Do Not Accept

### Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study and for your honest perceptions and experiences as they relate to the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar (Asilomar).

The entire survey is comprised of 27 items and should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

**\*2. What year did you first participate in the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar (Asilomar)?**

**\*3. Did you first participate in Asilomar during the years 2005-2011?**

Yes

No

**4. How many years have you worked in the California Community Colleges (CCC)?**

Less than 5

6-10

11-15

15-20

21-25

26+

**5. What leadership positions have you held during your tenure in CCC? Check all that apply.**

- Chancellor
- President
- Vice President
- Dean
- Faculty Leader
- Classified Manager
- Classified Staff Leader
- Board Member
- Other (please specify)

**6. How did you first learn about Asilomar?**

**From a:**

- Supervisor
- Colleague
- Board Member
- Professional Publication
- Direct Solicitation
- Advertisement
- Prior Participant
- Other (please specify)

**7. Please select your top five topics covered during Asilomar:**

- Emotional Intelligence
- Cultural Proficiency
- Leadership and Ethics
- Campus Politics
- Governance
- Budgeting and Finance
- Leading Change
- Finding Balance
- Career Choices and Pathways
- Job Applications and Interviews
- Other (please specify)

**8. Who wrote your letter of recommendation for Asilomar?**

- Chancellor
- President
- Vice President
- Dean
- Faculty Leader
- Classified Manager
- Classified Staff Leader
- Board Member
- Other (please specify)

**9. Was the person who wrote your letter of recommendation your direct supervisor?**

- Yes
- No

**10. What was your position classification when you first attended Asilomar?**

- Chancellor  
 President  
 Vice President  
 Dean  
 Faculty Leader  
 Classified Manager  
 Classified Staff Leader  
 Board Member  
 Other (please specify)

**11. What is your current position classification?**

- Chancellor  
 President  
 Vice President  
 Dean  
 Faculty Leader  
 Classified Manager  
 Classified Staff Leader  
 Board Member  
 Other (please specify)

**12. What other leadership programs have you participated in since attending Asilomar?**

- Fellows Program, American Council on Education  
 Future Leaders Institute, American Association of Community Colleges  
 Management Development Program, Harvard Graduate School of Education  
 Community College Leadership Academy, University of San Diego  
 Administration 101, Association of California Community College Administrators  
 Administration 201, Association of California Community College Administrators  
 Mentor Program, Association of California Community College Administrators  
 CEO Leadership Institute, Community College League of California  
 Other (please specify program and organization)



Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

**13. Asilomar encouraged me to consider leadership roles with increasing responsibility.**

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

**14. Asilomar inspired me to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility.**

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

**15. Asilomar encouraged my career advancement.**

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

**16. Asilomar inspired me to take the next steps in advancing my career.**

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

**17. Asilomar encouraged my career enhancement.**

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

**18. Asilomar inspired me to further enhance my career.**

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

Please choose the top three answers that best describes your experience:

**19. How, if at all, did Asilomar affect your career preparation?**

**(Please choose three)**

- Encouraged me to pursue an advanced degree  
 Prompted me to set personal and professional goals  
 Prepared me for obstacles/challenges that I may face  
 Encouraged and inspired me to prepare to take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility  
 Provided information on cultural proficiency  
 Helped me to understand campus politics  
 Helped me to focus on my emotional intelligence  
 No affect  
 Other (please specify)

**20. How, if at all, did Asilomar affect your career advancement?****(Please choose three)**

- Motivated me to pursue higher levels of leadership
- Helped me to understand my career choices and pathways
- Provided executive leadership examples/experiences
- Afforded me the opportunity to network with colleagues and executive leaders from other colleges
- Built my confidence to take on an advanced leadership role
- Provided job application and interviewing techniques
- Introduced me to the effects of mentorship
- No affect
- Other (please specify)

**21. How, if at all, did Asilomar affect your career enhancement?****(Please choose three)**

- Encouraged my professional development
- Help to develop my leadership capacity
- Informed me of ways to build community within a shared governance environment
- Prepared me to find trends and lead change within my organization
- Helped me to understand leadership ethics
- Encouraged me to seek work life balance
- Provided an overview of budget and finance
- No affect
- Other (please specify)

Please describe your experience in your own words:

**22. In 50 characters or less, please describe what aspects of Asilomar, if any, contributed most to your leadership success.****23. In 50 characters or less, please describe the most valuable aspect of Asilomar.**

**24. In 50 characters or less, please briefly indicate any other comments you have about your Asilomar experience.**

Disclaimer:

Email addresses provided will be held in strict confidence, will be known only to the researcher, and will not be included as part of the research findings. This information will be used solely for the purposes of sending drawing winners their e-gift cards, contacting volunteer participants to conduct interviews, if selected, and or sending out the requested survey research summary.

**25. Would you like to participate in the drawing for one of five \$20 e-gift cards?**

Yes

No

If yes, please input your email address:

**26. Would you like to participate in a brief 3-question telephone interview regarding your Asilomar experience?**

Yes

No

If yes, please input your email address:

**27. Would you like to receive the results of the survey research at the end of the study?**

Yes

No

If yes, please input your email address:

## Thank you

This concludes your participation in the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey.

Thank you for your participation.

## APPENDIX B

## Letter of Informed Consent

(Provided Prior to Question 1 of the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey)

Thank you for your interest in this study. As you are aware from the introductory communication sent yesterday, my name is Estella Castillo-Garrison, and I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University.

As an Asilomar Alum, you are being solicited to participate in research titled “A Study of the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar.” This dissertation research is being conducted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy.

I am inviting all individuals who participated in Asilomar from 2005-2011 to participate in this study. Please understand that your participation is strictly voluntary.

The following is a description of what your participation will entail, the terms of participation, and a discussion of your rights as a study participant. Please read this information closely before deciding to participate.

1. Should you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete the survey “Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey.” Please complete the survey in one sitting.
2. Although minimal, there are potential risks for participating in this study. These risks may include discomfort with the professional nature of the questions, feelings of social pressure to participate, fatigue, boredom, embarrassment, anxiety, and the inconvenience of taking the time to participate in the study.
3. To mitigate these risks, if you decide to participate and find that you are uninterested or uncomfortable in participating further, you have the right to discontinue at any point without being questioned about your decision. You also have the right to skip any question on the survey should you wish to do so, with the exception of questions relating to your year of participation.
4. Your name and corresponding responses will be held in strict confidence and will not be made available to anyone besides the researcher.
5. Data results will not be individually identified but, rather, will be used collectively to inform the overall study.
6. To reduce any impositions on your time, the survey may be completed at a time and location that is convenient to you.

7. You will be provided with an option to request a summary of the survey research results of the study.
8. Your involvement in the study is limited to the amount of time to complete the 27-item survey, unless you agree to a brief 3-question telephone interview at the end of the survey.
9. You will have the option to participate in a drawing. A \$20 e-gift card will be randomly awarded to five people who complete the survey. The drawing will take place three days after the survey is closed.

You will have two weeks to complete the survey. After one week, a reminder email will be sent to those individuals who have not yet completed the survey.

Findings from the study may be presented to professional audiences and or published; however, at no time will information that identifies you be released. Data will be kept in a secure manner for three years, after which time the data will be destroyed.

Should you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. If you have further questions or do not feel that I have adequately addressed your concerns, please contact my dissertation chairperson, Dr. Linda Purrington, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Yuying Tsong, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional School Institutional Review Board, Pepperdine University, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

By selecting the “I Accept” box below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand what your participation entails and that you consent to participate in this study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information and for your consideration in participating in this study.

Kindest regards,

Estella Castillo-Garrison

## APPENDIX C

## Interview Scheduling Email

Dear Prospective Interview Participant:

Thank you for your participation in the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar survey and for your willingness to be interviewed. Analysis of the interviews with past participants will help to provide an in-depth perspective on Asilomar's affect, if any, on the career preparation, advancement, or enhancement of its participants. I would like to conduct all interviews within the next two weeks (Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays are preferred). By Wednesday, December 7th, please send me a date, time, and telephone number that is most convenient for you. I will make every effort to be available for your first request. Attached you will find the interview protocol and questions for your review.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research. I look forward to speaking with you and to gaining your perspective on your Asilomar experience.

Kindest regards,

Estella Castillo-Garrison  
Asilomar Alum 2009  
Principal Investigator  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology  
Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

## APPENDIX D

## Interview Protocol and Questions

Date:

Time:

Subject: Telephone Interview No.

Filename: Interview No. <date>

*I will review the following information before we begin the interview:*

- You are one of the first 10 individuals to complete the survey portion of this study and agree to be interviewed.
- The interview component of this study is meant to provide a deeper understanding of the Asilomar experience.
- I will be conducting one 3-question interview with you. I will take notes of our conversation during the interview, and the interview will be audio recorded, with your permission, so that I may transcribe and analyze the data at a later time.
- The summary of key findings from the interview will be provided to you for review for accuracy of representation.
- I assure you that strict confidentiality will be kept, as interview responses will not be connected with individuals; rather, they will be used collectively to inform the overall purpose of the study. Names and corresponding interview responses will be held in strict confidence, known only to me. Each interview will be assigned an identification code, beginning with Interview\_001, to ensure confidentiality. A maximum of three expertly trained coders will be enlisted to review interview findings to further ensure trustworthiness of findings. All documentation and data will be kept in a secure manner for three years, at which time the data will be destroyed.
- Your participation is strictly voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your relationship with me, your college, or your district.
- At the time you participated in the survey portion of the study, you consented to your participation in this study. Your consent continues with this component of the study. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your participation without penalty. Please acknowledge your agreement to participate and confirm that you understand the letter of informed consent to which you agreed.



- You will have the option to request a summary of the results of the study at the conclusion of the interview.
- Do you have any questions before we begin?

*Thank you for participating in this interview.*

### **Interview Questions**

1. In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar encourage and/or inspire you to pursue leadership roles with increasing responsibility? (Career preparation)
2. In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar affect your career advancement? (Career advancement)
3. In what ways, if at all, did Asilomar contribute to your career enhancement? (Career enhancement)

Would you like to receive a copy of the research results of the study?

## APPENDIX E

## Introductory Communication Letter

Dear Asilomar Alum:

As a leader within the California Community Colleges system, you play a crucial role in shaping the lives of our students. I hope that your experience has been a rewarding one and that your tenure has been both meaningful and challenging. I am currently completing the research for my dissertation and would like your assistance.

As a fellow alum and leader within the system, I am interested in learning more about the Asilomar experience from those who know it best. It is for this purpose that I have chosen to study the perceptions and experiences of past participants for my dissertation. My doctorate will be awarded by Pepperdine University in the Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy program. My dissertation chair is Dr. Linda Purrington.

With the support of Dr. Pamila Fisher, Founder and Director of Asilomar and the Community College League of California, I am inviting past Asilomar participants from 2005-2011 to participate in my study, titled “A Study of the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar.”

As you may know, Asilomar was founded in 1984, and the leadership seminar was offered annually thereafter for the purposes of identifying, recruiting, inspiring, and encouraging women to prepare for and take on leadership roles with increasing responsibility in the California Community Colleges system. Follow-up data has yet to be collected from past participants to determine how, if at all, Asilomar inspired and encouraged their career preparation, advancement, or enhancement. Therefore, there is a need to collect these data, which are the focus of my study.

Through this study, you will have the opportunity to share your experience and to participate in this first formal research study on Asilomar. Your participation will help to inform future female leaders who may be considering participation in Asilomar. Please understand that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

Next Steps:

- Tomorrow you will receive an email with a link to a survey through an online web survey tool. The survey is titled “Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey.”
- The survey is comprised of 27 items and will take no more than 20 minutes to complete. You may complete the survey at the location of your choice.
- You will be asked to provide your consent to participate before the first question of the survey is asked.

- The survey will remain open for 14 days between 12-2-2011 and 12-15-2011.
- If you choose to participate in the survey, you will be given the option to participate in a drawing that will result in the awarding of five \$20 e-gift cards.
- You will also be given the option to request a summary of the results of the study at the end of the survey.
- At the conclusion of the survey, you will be asked participate in a brief and confidential telephone interview to further discuss your experience. The first 10 respondents who agree to be interviewed will be contacted. The interview will entail only three questions about your experience. Questions will be sent to you in advance. Should you wish to participate, interviews will take place within two weeks.

You are an integral member of the leadership community within our system, and your experience is valued. For that reason, please take this opportunity to provide me with your perceptions of how Asilomar affected your career preparation, advancement, or enhancement, if at all.

Dr. Pamila Fisher offers this endorsement:

Dear Asilomar Alums: I am thrilled that we are finally going to have some documentation about Asilomar's impact on women's lives. Estella's research will be a valuable contribution not just for those affiliated with Asilomar, but for all those interested in women's leadership. I hope you will take a few minutes from your busy schedule and complete her questionnaire since the more responses there are, the more valid the results. I also hope that all is well with you and that you will continue to keep me or Cherie Savage up-to-date with your career moves so that we may cheer you on as well as contact you for Asilomar related activities such as this!

Thank you in advance for your participation and support of this important study. If you have any questions, please contact me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.

Kindest regards,

Estella Castillo-Garrison  
Asilomar Alum 2009  
Principal Investigator  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology  
Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

## APPENDIX F

## Interview Transcript Review and Thank You

Dear Interview Participant:

Thank you for your participation in my doctoral research on the career preparation, career advancement, and career enhancement of Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar participants.

Please review for accuracy of representation, the attached transcripts from your interview. Please let me know if you have any edits that need to be made to ensure that the transcripts best represent your responses. Should you have any edits, please respond by midnight on Monday, January 23, 2012.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research. It was a pleasure speaking with you and gaining your perspective on your Asilomar experience.

Kindest regards,  
Estella Castillo-Garrison  
Asilomar Alum 2009  
Principal Investigator  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology  
Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

## APPENDIX G

## Social Media Postings

## 1st Post

Attention 2005-2011 Asilomar Participants!

Check your email and take the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey Today!

## 2nd Post

Asilomar participants from 2005-2011!

Remember the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar Survey closes January 31st. Share your experience today!