

# **Branch Campus Leadership: Like Running a Three-Ring Circus?**

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## **Abstract**

*Members of National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA) have spent three years crafting a survey instrument for assessing the leadership abilities and skills of branch administrators. In pursuit of the goal to investigate four leadership dimensions: diagnosing, implementing, visioning, and entrepreneurial, a pilot survey was distributed at the 2010 NABCA conference in the official packets for attendees. Results show predictive relationships between many activities and tasks, paving the way for future analysis and refinement of the assessment instrument.*

In the circus, a good ringmaster is “one of the most distinctive and key features” (Smith 2010). Keeping everything and everyone where they should be, moving forward in an orderly flow, and improvising when the unexpected happens (Circus Acts and Attractions 2010; Circus Ringmaster 2010). Growing up, going to the circus was an annual event for our families, one that each of us eagerly anticipated. Before the performance began, the ringmaster walked through each ring, checking ropes and props, and answering audience questions. He was our host; trained, or apprenticed to be a “guide for the performances” (Circus Ringmaster 2010; Smith 2010). Once the performance began, the audience sat in the darkened hush, heads swiveling back and forth, watching events in the three circus rings. Disappointed groans sounded when something exciting happened in the ring we weren’t watching, as the audience vainly tried to keep their eyes on all three rings at once.

Throughout the magical event, the ringmaster promoted the show, handled emergencies, and kept our attention on the performance (Circus Acts and Attractions 2010; Circus Ringmaster 2010; Smith 2010). Years later, as a branch campus administrator and branch faculty member, respectively, we frequently have the sensation of being ringmasters. How do we keep everything and everyone where they should be, moving forward and progressing? How do we remain aware of academic, student, and operational needs and issues at the same time? Where do we find time to promote our academic programs and do outreach in our communities? Like a ringmaster, does learning to do these and other branch administrator activities require training, or at least apprenticeship (Circus Ringmaster 2010; Smith 2010)?

During a recent address to the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, University System of Georgia Chancellor Erroll B. Davis Jr. described differences in progression and development of leaders between the commercial and academic worlds. He described commercial organization employees focusing on “working in increasingly diverse teams and learning skills of negotiation and problem-

solving.” “After some time and training,” Davis continued, “you may get the chance to manage people” (Davis 2008, 64). Davis goes on to stress continuous performance feedback and increasing responsibilities potential leaders receive in commercial organizations. He contrasts the same fourteen-year experience for an academic as essentially ending with “a person with tremendous knowledge, in one area—and not a lot more than that” (Davis 2008, 64). Davis was not condemning the academic world; he wasn’t implying that the commercial world was perfect, either. Instead, his explanation paints a vivid picture of the absence of intentional leadership-development in most of the higher education world, in general. In the same fashion, branch campuses (branches) cannot avoid the pinch caused by lack of leadership-development and progression, either.

Leadership-development and administrator succession are issues facing higher education across the nation (Leubsdorf 2006; Mead-Fox 2009). In 2016, the first members in the baby boomer generation will reach age seventy. “Some human-resources consultants say many colleges are poorly prepared to replace the administrators who will soon depart” (Leubsdorf 2006, 51). The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that between 2008 and 2018, more than 40,000 higher education administrators will be needed to fill positions created through natural attrition, retirement, and expansion (U.S. Department of Labor 2010). In light of the “proliferation [of branches] around the country” (Fonseca and Bird 2007, 1), we are especially interested in leadership-development and administrator succession at branches.

## **Higher Education, Branches, and Leadership**

“Virtually all innovation in the leadership-development arena has come from outside higher education” (Mead-Fox 2009, 2). Mead-Fox’s statement could be taken as an indictment of the higher education system or as a wake-up call. We, and many branch administrators affiliated with National Association of Branch Campus Administrators (NABCA), are taking it as a wake-up call. We are sharing effective practices and have begun establishing a research agenda that includes organization structure, student services, leadership-development, academic performance, funding, and others (Bebko, pers. comm.). Higher education administrators must be able to determine “where and when … to open [the] next branch campus” (Fonseca and Bird 2007, 1),

In 1817, Thomas Jefferson provided a blueprint for the first branch system in higher education. He envisioned a district-college system that had locations “within a day’s ride” of every household (Jefferson 1817, ME 15:155). Today, “most [branches] have a primary goal of providing access to students who would not otherwise be able to participate in higher education” (Dengerink 2001, 7), hopefully, within a thirty-minute drive of every household (Fonseca and Bird 2007). These branches have many names—for example, satellite location, off-site center, extended site, and more; and no two are the same (Fonseca and Bird 2007). One branch only offers two-year transfer programs. Other branches, like our own, offer upper-division bachelor, master, and doctorate degree completion. While many types of branches exist at the two-year, four-

year, and university levels, they share some characteristics, like providing higher education access to students, having local economic impact, and providing community-related academic innovation (Dengerink 2001, 8).

“Branches, by [definition and] their nature, are not the central activity of the institution, and they most certainly are not ‘right in front’ of the main campus administration” (Bird 2010b). Yet, effective branch administrators flourish in an environment where relationships are built with local business, industry, and civic leaders to identify unmet academic needs. Still others thrive on the challenge of figuring out how the entire institution can better serve the adult learner population. Regardless of which activities he or she prefers, branch administrators are responsible for academic programming, student services, and operations. Unlike main campus counterparts—Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and University Affairs—branch administrators are hybrids. Many administrators excel on a branch nestled and intermingled within the community as easily as one next to an all-night convenience store. Creatively and effectively, branch administrators guide academic programming, adult student services, and operations where something exciting is always happening in each area, usually at the same time.

## **Branch Organization**

Branch administrators and staff must regularly act as masters of ceremony for academic, student, and operational issues. Like a circus ringmaster, we must be “familiar and comfortable” (Smith 2010) in each environment. Most branch administrators don’t have someone whose sole responsibility is academic faculty, curriculum, library, admissions, and other functions associated with a vice president of academic affairs, or provost. The branch organization also doesn’t usually include a vice president of student affairs and multiple departments, which are responsible for student government, career services, health and wellness, and other student areas. Few have a vice president of university affairs to manage maintenance, budgets, information technology, or other operational functions. Branch administrators provide academic, student, and university affairs functions. They improvise, adapt, and keep all three areas moving forward. These responsibilities can indeed seem similar to a ringmaster hosting three-rings of professionals doing their jobs and performing effectively.

For example, developing an expertise in determining course schedules based on “understanding … the local market and [having] a deep appreciation of the outreach mission” (Bird 2010b) is one activity of branch administrators. Unfortunately, there is no abundance of branch academic program best practices, branch organizational structures, or suggestions for current and future branch administrators. “The core problem is that branches developed ‘under the radar,’ … if you go looking for best practices … you will be sorely disappointed” (Bird 2007). Because there are few resources available to teach strategic course scheduling, branch administrators become adept at developing relationships with main campus colleagues to gain academic program and schedule support. At this crossroad, relationships with business and

community members become even more critical for branch success. Administrators gain critical knowledge about which work-related skills and abilities community members need from graduating students.

We have frequently discovered community-related academic program needs at a Chamber of Commerce monthly breakfast, during a fund distribution meeting for a charitable agency, or at a meeting of the local Workforce or Economic Development organization. This discovery might happen during a formal presentation, during an informal chat, or as the result of asking, “How’s it going?” in greeting. Being at the networking table is a relational strength branch administrators must have to be successful. We must know the local industry landscape and keep a finger on the pulse of the community. This insight helps us know what academic programs our community needs and lets us identify opportunities for student internship or volunteer service because these “private and public endeavors become important, real-life laboratories for students” (Dengerink 2001, 8). At our branch, knowing the academic program and working schedules in our community also helps us recommend course scheduling. The right courses, offered at the right time of day and the right day of the week, helps promote our branch’s growth. Veteran branch administrator Charles Bird said it best, “The surest formula for discouraging branch growth is to deny branches the ability to develop a course schedule that meets the needs of their students” (Bird 2010b).

Another example of branch administrator improvisation and adaptation relates to funding. Branch administrator relationships, community outreach, and student recruiting consist more of behaviors and attitudes that are reflective of a mind set in which funding is either scarce, nonrecurring monies, or provided on a sliding scale relative to main campus operations. During the last ten years, informal conversations with branch administrators at NABCA and with other branch professionals revealed nuances of branch funding practices. Some branch administrators have long been aware of the difference between state funded and state supported higher education; others have recently acquired that realization. Some of our administrator colleagues operate with a budget base from tuition revenue (Shaw 2009). These branch administrators retain all revenue above an overhead paid to the main campus. Building and funding programs, while keeping the captured revenue, can inspire administrator innovation and entrepreneurship for supporting the academic mission of the entire institution. Other branch administrators get sliding scale operational funds from academic affairs based on branch enrollment or other data (Bird, pers. comm.). Still other branch administrators use revenue sharing models with academic departments and tuition sharing with the provost.

However funded, branch administrators need funding structures that empower them to respond in a timelier manner to commercial and industry academic-programming needs. “Assuring that revenue flows from the branch campus to the main campus, ... is an important tool to help everyone understand the financial benefit of having branches.”. Bird concluded, “if you are making what I consider to be the most

elementary of mistakes, and placing some or all of the funding for branch instruction in the budgets of your academic units, stop it” (2010b).

## **Branch Administration**

Who spends their higher education career planning or training to serve at a branch? Probably none of the administrators where adult learners attend started on that career path. It's hard to study branch administration or organization; research coffers do not show a depth and breadth of publications on these issues (Fonesca and Bird, 2007). Degree or certification programs could not be found and there are only a few places to locate “best practices to help ... [an administrator] establish ... [a] branch campus” (Bird 2007). For branch administrators, the paths to leadership are varied and somewhat different from our commercial and academic counterparts. For one of us, the question, ‘How did you come to branch administration?’ can never be answered in a single sentence, or easily. Informal conversations with branch administrators at a recent NABCA conference, revealed that, for some administrators, the academic institution identified access-related needs in a neighboring community, county, or city. Administrators often mentioned their own interest in meeting the needs of that potential adult learner population. Usually, colleagues began by providing one or two academic services, teaching night classes, or providing advising services on a military base. One of our paths was by way of special education teacher, management consultant, corporate supervisor, consulting business owner, and higher education adjunct. The other’s path began as a university adjunct then visiting instructor, academic advisor, student services administrator, and finally, graduate program faculty. In various ways, these activities lead to expanded branch assignments.

Whatever the initial need for some branch administrators, the community and student demand grew to require classrooms, advisors, faculty, and programs. Suddenly, a simple commute to provide one service became a full-fledged administrative assignment at the new branch for their institution. Other branch administrators admitted that they began in the commercial world and found themselves adjunct teaching or serving on academic-advisory committees. From there, getting involved with existing or newly developed branches led to roles that sometimes became administrative and sometimes began that way. Branch administrators who entered higher education from the commercial world brought leadership skills with them. Other administrator career paths began in academic departments, continuing education, or public administration. These transplanted administrators, gain and grow in leadership skills, but often do not pursue scholarly research and writing like their academic department colleagues. However the beginning, every branch administrator was passionate about the community, the services their branch provided, and the adult-student population they served.

## **Branch Students**

Adult students are the fastest-growing population in higher education; primarily the result of zero or reduced high school graduation growth in all but eighteen of the fifty states. Further, only 16 percent of higher education students are traditional eighteen to twenty-two year old, full-time, and residing on-campus (Harms 2010, 9). Students served by branches are typically over twenty-five years old, place bound, changing schools more than once, first generation in college, low income, military affiliated, employed, married, and/or parents (Dougherty 2009, 55; Harms 2010, 9). They've been called nontraditional students, adult learners, working or place-bound students, and more. Regardless what they are called, branch students frequently bring different goals to higher education. Primarily, these students want to improve work performance, earn more pay, or study an area of interest. Others attend for licensing in a field, to change careers, or to complete higher education studies they began in the past (Eduventures 2008). Greek life, weekend on-campus activities, or having things to do in the evenings are not their primary interest (Harms 2010). In other words, branch students seem to require a familiarity with academic, student, and operational areas from branch administrators, faculty, and staff. Like our counterparts at *Metropolitan Universities*, branches and branch administrators purposely serve this growing student population (Dengerink 2001, 7).

## **Dimensions of Leadership**

Warren Bennis, Peter Drucker, and John Gardner, three powerhouses of leadership and management, have, in our opinion, collectively written enough books and articles to fill a small library. They have painted a collective picture of leadership and management that includes Bennis' "Revisionist Theory of Leadership" published in The Harvard Business Review in 1961, Drucker's pivotal work written after consulting with General Motors, "The Concept of the Corporation" in 1964, and Gardner's classic "On Leadership" in 1990. The main construct underlying the works of Bennis, Drucker, and Gardner is a philosophy that leaders are made not born. More specifically, Gardner's work specifically addresses the notion that it is the experiences and context that shape leaders; that is, individuals learn to be effective leaders through their activities and involvement in organizations. Moreover, leaders consider the long term views for an organization, provide vision and values, and set achievable goals (Gardner 1990). Drucker (1964) helped to change the way the upper management of large corporations viewed leadership, relative to interpersonal communication, flow of information, and decision making. Bennis (1999, 1–8) asserts that effective leaders are passionate about their work, in addition to pioneering the notion that leaders should create a democratic and adaptive organization. As with ringmasters, the branch environment demands passionate leadership that meets multiple challenges and opportunities (Bird 2010a; Dengerink 2001, 9; Smith 2010). If Bennis, Drucker, and Gardner are right, then we should at least determine what unique activities effective branch administrators perform and the associated knowledge, skills, and abilities needed.

Beginning with our own experiences as branch students in 2000, through our current positions as branch administrator and branch faculty, we have been intrigued with the concept of leadership-development for branch administrators. In 2007, having the opportunity to restructure our branch organization, we looked for models. As many before us, there was nothing beyond the state statutes describing terms used to classify branches by size. Eventually, we stumbled upon the website for NABCA and a weblog written by Charles Bird, "An Agenda for Branch Campus Research," (2007). Although it did not specifically give us an organizational structure, there were two huge benefits for us. First, we found out about NABCA and one of us has attended conferences and collaborated with other branch administrators since then. The second was discovering an opportunity to do applied research in the area of leadership-development for branch administrators.

At the 2008 conference, the NABCA Executive Committee Officers formed a new research committee to define the research agenda for our organization (Evans 2008). This study is the result of a three-year development and peer review collaboration with each other, research committee members, and branch administrators throughout the United States. Ultimately, we identified four dimensions of leadership for branch administrators, or DIVE: diagnosing, implementing, visioning, and entrepreneurial. The DIVE dimensions evolved through NABCA conference presentations in 2008, 2009, and most recently, 2010. We used peer feedback and input to refine a list of activities most frequently performed by branch administrators; then, we performed task analysis to identify the most enjoyable associated knowledge, skills, and abilities.

In 2008 and 2009, we collected feedback during presentations from NABCA branch administrators. This year, we distributed a pilot survey in the official NABCA conference packets for attendees. Organizationally and personally, we want to discover what it takes to be an effective branch administrator and whether it is different from being a main campus administrator. We, and our colleagues, know what it feels like, but we don't know if that feeling is real or imagined. We know that branch administration feels like being a ringmaster—keeping academic programming, student services, and operations where they should be; moving forward; adapting; improvising; handling emergencies; and keeping everyone focused on performance. Along the way, the research questions evolved and changed based on feedback, our leadership-development research, and our own branch research. What activities are done most frequently; which knowledge, skills, and abilities are most enjoyed; which knowledge, skills, and abilities are least enjoyed; and is there any correlation of activities, knowledge, skills, and abilities for branch administrators? These questions ultimately guided our study and research.

## **Branch Leadership Survey**

The NABCA 2010 conference packets included a copy of the Branch Campus Leadership Survey for the fifty attendees. Thirteen attendees returned completed surveys for this pilot study (~25 percent). Of the thirteen respondents, seven are

female, and twelve are over the age of forty. Twelve respondents hold master or doctoral degrees. Half the respondents have been branch administrators for five or more years, and all are employed at public institutions. Eleven respondents were administrators for at least one branch site and six are employed at university level institutions. Twelve respondents' institutions have between one and six branches and only one respondent reported having one branch with multiple locations.

The Branch Campus Leadership Survey has three sections that include demographics; tasks and activities (activities); and knowledge, skills, and abilities (skills). In section one, participants described themselves in terms of age, gender, degrees held, type of institution, years at a branch, number of branches, and number of branch locations. Section two lists ninety-three activities typically done by branch administrators.

Participants used a Likert scale (1 = Not really, 2 = A little, 3 = Much of the time, and 4 = Just about always) to indicate how often they did each activity. The list represented each of the four DIVE dimensions and included items such as (a) Recognizing problems (Diagnosing), (b) Building trust within the organization (Implementing), (c) Recognizing community needs (Visioning), and (d) Responding to changing needs (Entrepreneurial).

During the 2009 NABCA conference, Charles Bird suggested that, as leaders, we tend to be better at doing the things that we enjoy (Bird, pers. comm.). Section three of the 2010 survey incorporates this suggestion using a Likert scale (1 = I let someone else do it; 2 = I'll avoid it if possible; 3 = I don't mind, but I am not excited; and 4 = I find it energizing) to indicate enjoyment of the seventy-skill items. The list of associated skills also represented each of the four DIVE dimensions and included items such as (a) Define performance gaps (Diagnosing), (b) Achieve goals (Implementing), (c) Be big picture oriented (Visioning), and (d) Identify resources (Entrepreneurial).

## **Results and Discussion**

We separated participant responses for section two (activities) and section three (skills) into the four DIVE dimensions. We considered mean scores of 3.0 or higher to indicate activities done most frequently and most enjoyed skills. We considered mean scores below 3.0 to indicate infrequently done activities and skills that are avoided or more likely to be delegated to a direct report.

In terms of the DIVE dimensions, of the ninety-three activities performed by branch administrators, twenty activities (1-Diagnosing, 10-Implementing, 5-Visioning, and 4-Entrepreneurial) were done much of the time or always, as shown in the list below. The five items with the highest mean scores include (a) Influence others (Visioning); (b) Recognize community needs (Visioning); (c) Internal communication (Entrepreneurial); (d) Respond to changing needs (Entrepreneurial); and (e) Balancing academic, student, and operational needs (Implementing). It is no surprise that several of the most frequently done activities involve communication and need identification. Branch administrators must be willing and able to build bridges and close need gaps for all constituents at their branch, in the local community, and at the main campus.

Moreover, branch administrators must be aware of and responsive to stated and unstated needs of students, personnel, institution, and community.

Frequently Done Branch Administrator Activities	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Diagnosing			
Recognize problems	13	3.08	.954
Implementing			
Balancing academic, student, and operational needs	13	3.23	.832
Building trust	13	3.08	.862
Execute strategies	13	3.08	.760
Help people become effective	13	3.08	.641
Horizontal communication	13	3.15	.555
Mentor personnel	13	3.00	.816
Provide consistency	13	3.15	.801
Solidifying key relationships	13	3.00	1.080
Solidifying organizational culture	13	3.15	.801
Respond to personnel needs	13	3.15	.899
Visioning			
Find solutions for complex problems	13	3.08	.862
Influence others	13	3.38	.768
Rally others for vision	13	3.00	.816
Recognize community needs	13	3.31	.855
Secure commitment and support	13	3.08	.954
Entrepreneurial			
External communication	13	3.15	.899
Internal communication	13	3.31	.630
Respond to changing needs	13	3.31	.751
Strategic planning	13	3.00	.816

Of the seventy associated skills, in terms of the DIVE dimensions, all were enjoyable except for seven skills (3-Implementing, 1-Visioning, and 3-Entrepreneurial) that were identified as let someone else do it or avoid it if possible, as shown in the list below. The five most avoided or delegated skills included (a) Use salesmanship (Entrepreneurial), (b) Delegate (Implementing), (c) Form alliances (Implementing), (d) Financially savvy (Entrepreneurial), and (e) Show cost benefit (Entrepreneurial).

Avoided or Delegated Branch Administrator Skills	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Implementing			
Delegate	13	2.85	.689
Form alliances	13	2.92	.480
Visioning			
Obtain resources	13	2.94	.760
Entrepreneurial			
Financially savvy	13	2.92	.760
Show cost benefit	13	2.92	.760
Use salesmanship	13	2.77	1.013

The list of branch administrator activities that are frequently done suggests that when we revise the survey we should also include a scale to assess the perceived importance of each activity. Just because an activity is infrequently done doesn't mean that it is not important. For example, there are several activities, like strategic planning, branch administrators don't do frequently but are very important for branch growth. The list also gives us a good starting point for comparing leadership activities for branch administrators with general higher education and existing commercial leadership programs to find activities or skills that are unique to branches.

## Correlations

To determine what branch administrator activities significantly correlated with skills, we conducted  $\alpha = .05$  significance level, Pearson r correlational analyses within and between each DIVE dimension. The twenty frequently done activities and sixty-three enjoyed skills were also analyzed to identify significant correlations. The results show positive correlations, found in the tables below, between several branch administrator activities and associated skills for Implementing (see Table 1), Visioning (see Table 2), and Entrepreneurial (see Table 3) DIVE leadership dimensions. When we examined the relationships between the twenty most frequently done activities and the sixty-three enjoyed skills, we found interesting correlation patterns that mesh nicely with a common-sense understanding of human behavior.

For example, the activity mentoring personnel in Table 1, showed significant correlations with skills appropriate for serving as a mentor. We would expect that, to be an effective mentor, a branch administrator would find the associated skills of empathy, harmony, hope, and guiding to be enjoyable not ones to be delegated. Although these skills are not unique to branch administrators, our results indicate that we should explore the unique aspects of performing mentoring associated skills as we move forward. Future item analysis should extract steps to do the activities so we can identify unique performance aspects related to branch administrators. Further, when a branch administrator works to solidify organizational culture, it is not surprising that the associated skills of being detail oriented and impact aware are more enjoyable.

**Table 1: Frequently Done Branch Administrator Activities – Enjoyed Skills**

Activities	Implementing		
	r2	.sig	Skills
Identifying potential in others	.733**	.044	Be detail oriented
Mentoring personnel	.618*	.024	Be empathetic
Mentoring personnel	.618	.024	Build harmony
Providing consistency	.569*	.042	Build hope
Mentoring personnel	.787**	.001	Collaborate
Mentoring personnel	.590*	.034	Guide others
Responding to personnel needs or issues	.626*	.022	Implement new processes
Solidifying key player relationships	.723**	.005	Providing consistency
Solidifying organizational culture	.709**	.007	Be detail oriented
Solidifying organizational culture	.643*	.018	Be impact aware
Solidifying organizational culture	.569*	.042	Build hope
Responding to personnel needs or issues	.693**	.009	Build hope

Note: \* = significant at .05    \*\* = significant at .01

Of the activities and skills addressed by the Visioning leadership dimension, there was only one high, positive correlation, as shown in Table 2, indicating a strong predictive relationship. Successfully finding solutions for complex problems would most certainly require a branch administrator to be, at the very least, perceptive. We would also expect an administrator in business to be perceptive. Additional examination of the between dimension results for this pair might also show areas of overlap for both activities and skills. If further explored, this overlap may lead to a more specific list of related activities and skills in the Visioning leadership dimension.

**Table 2: Frequently Done Branch Administrator Activities – Enjoyed Skills**

Activities	Visioning		
	r2	.sig	Skills
Finding solutions for complex problems	.861**	.000	Be perceptive
Note: * = significant at .05    ** = significant at .01			

For the Entrepreneurial leadership dimension, the most interesting aspect is that the only two frequently done activities that significantly correlated with enjoyed skills were internal and external communication (see Table 3). Also of note, there were only two skills, be self-motivated and develop strategies that correlated with communication activities. These results, in conjunction with a between variable examination of communication, might reveal that external and internal communication is so highly correlated they can be merged into a single activity—communication. The predicated relationship between communicating internally and externally with self-motivation and

strategy development are not necessarily an intuitive connection unless we consider the environment in which branch administrators operate. The role of branch administrator is often a solitary position. Internal and external communication may require a degree of strategy development and motivation beyond what is required of administrators in fields where they are not as solitary or isolated.

**Table 3: Frequently Done Branch Administrator Activities – Enjoyed Skills**

Activities	r2	.sig	Skills
Communicating externally	.696**	.008	Be self-motivated
Communicating externally	.592*	.033	Develop strategies
Communicating internally	.614*	.026	Be self-motivated
Communicating internally	.643*	.018	Develop strategies

Note: \* = significant at .05    \*\* = significant at .01

To determine if significant correlations exist for frequently performed branch administrator activities and skills that are avoided or delegated within each leadership dimension, Pearson r correlational analyses were conducted. Using  $\alpha = .05$  significance level, the results show significant correlations, (see Table 4) for Implementing and Visioning. These results provide an important consideration for both future studies of the DIVE leadership model and for future assessment of branch administrator activities and skills. Also of note, only two frequently performed activities showed relationships with avoided or delegated skills.

In our first examination, some of the significant, positive relationships seemed counterintuitive. The results from this pilot study show that a branch administrator who frequently recognizes community needs is more likely to find the skill obtaining resources less enjoyable, perhaps even frustrating, and is then more likely to delegate or avoid it. Similarly, a branch administrator who frequently mentors personnel is more likely to find the skill helping people become more effective less enjoyable and is more likely to delegate it to a direct report or avoid it altogether. Initially, this made no sense to us; until we put the results in context with our own experiences as branch administrators. Efforts and plans to obtain resources for branch academic program expansion, student service needs, or operational growth is usually a long and frustrating process. This is especially true for branch administrators who do not have well-established funding structures or revenue capturing processes (Bird 2010b). So, although we frequently recognize a need in our community, finding and obtaining the resources to meet the local need is not always an enjoyable skill for branch administrators to use. This, and other frequently done but not enjoyed pairs may be more the result of unique leadership skills required for branch administration. As we continue to examine these activities and skills, relative to different leadership environments we hope to further clarify these findings.

**Table 4: Frequently Done Branch Admin. Activities – Least Enjoyed or Delegated Skills**

Activities	r2	.sig	Skills
Building trust within the organization	.576*	.037	Helping people become more effective
Mentoring personnel	.741**	.004	Helping people become more effective
Finding solutions for complex problems	.646*	.017	Obtain resources
Rallying others in pursuit of a vision	.672*	.012	Obtain resources
Recognizing community needs	.553*	.050	Obtain resources

Note: \* = significant at .05    \*\* = significant at .01

To evaluate relationships between branch administrator demographics, activities, and skills, Pearson r correlation analyses were conducted using all items. At ? = .05, the results show significant correlations between years as a branch administrator, number of branches, age, degrees held, and institution type demographics with six activities and eight associated skills (see Table 5). The results shown in Table 5 reveal both negative and positive correlations between several of the demographic, activity, and skill variables.

**Table 5: Branch Administrator Demographics, Activities, and Skills**

Demographics	r2	.sig	Activities
Years as branch administrator	-.632*	.028	Horizontal communication
Years as branch administrator	-.763**	.004	Defining management systems
Years as branch administrator	-.603*	.029	Solidifying organizational culture
Number of branch campuses	-.602*	.028	Solidifying organizational culture
Number of branch campuses	-.677*	.011	Hiring to fill staffing needs
Number of branch campuses	-.603*	.029	Providing consistency
Number of branch campuses	.654*	.015	Influencing others
Demographics			Skills
Years as branch administrator	-.575	.050	Build harmony
Number of branch campuses	-.716**	.006	Be empathetic
Age	-.655*	.013	Solve problems
Degrees held	.663	.014	Develop strategies
Degrees held	-.904**	.000	Use intuitive insight
Degrees held	.569*	.043	Be innovative
Institution type	.561*	.046	Listen
Institution type	.624*	.023	Differentiate

Note: \* = significant at .05    \*\* = significant at .01

We found moderate to high negative correlations between three branch administrator activities and the number of years as a branch administrator demographic. That means, for this pilot group, the more years they have spent as a branch administrator, the less frequently they (a) participate in horizontal communication, (b) define management systems, and (c) solidify organizational culture. We found several possible interpretations.

The results may simply be specific to the respondents for this study. In future studies, we may find that time spent as a branch administrator decreases willingness to communicate horizontally, define management systems, and solidify organizational culture. It could also be that after being a branch administrator for five years (mean number of years for participants in this study), management systems and organizational culture have been established for the branch and don't need defining or solidifying—only maintaining. We also discussed the possibility that as a branch administrator, there really is no one to communicate with horizontally. Branches are usually not large enough to have departments, so there are no other administrators at the branch. These, and many other aspects of demographics, activities, and skills were revealed for us to explore further.

When we looked at the number of branches an administrator keeps an eye on, pilot results again showed moderate negative correlations with three of the four activities. Specifically, administration of more than one branch predicts a decrease in how frequently the branch administrator solidifies organizational culture, hires to fill staffing needs, and provides consistency. Influencing others is positively predicted by administration of more than one branch, which makes intuitive sense. Leading more branches at an institution of higher education enables branch administrators to more frequently influence a wider group of stakeholders.

The negative correlation between age and problem solving suggests that the older a branch administrator is, the less he or she enjoys solving problems and is more likely to delegate it to a direct report. It could also mean that an older branch administrator knows problem solving is a skill that should be learned by staff members. In this case, the branch administrator delegates problem solving as a mentoring activity. Again, the correlation gives us very interesting suggestions for further research.

Two correlations for the number of degrees held are moderate and positive for strategy development and innovation. This suggests that for our pilot group, the higher the degree level, the more they enjoy developing strategies and being innovative. This could be a result of increased critical thinking and problem solving skills developed through completing master or doctoral degrees. Conversely, there is a high, significant, negative correlation between the level of degree attainment and intuitive insight. This suggested that perhaps increased education might also stifle the enjoyment of intuitive thinking.

Respondents who had more years in service as a branch administrator also reported less enjoyment of harmony building, as shown by the moderate, negative correlation. Moreover, respondents who kept their eye on more than one branch found being empathetic less energizing, shown by the high, negative correlation. Again, this could be attributed to sheer numbers of people for whom the branch administrator is responsible.

Lastly, there were moderate, positive correlations between the type of institution and branch administrators' enjoyment of listening and differentiation skills. Specifically, listening and differentiation are most predicted by a branch administrator's employment at universities, then four-year institutions, and lastly by two-year institutions. It's possible that these demographic results are specific to this pilot group. Future studies can help us identify what abilities and skills are best predicted by the most important demographics to leadership-development for branch administrators.

## **Summary**

Far from frustrating, we are excited about the results from our first attempt to identify activities and skills for branch administrators. The results refined possibilities for our exploration. We are also excited about further analysis of our pilot data and the ways it will help us focus the survey instrument and compare our list of activities and skills to those of general higher education administrators and commercial managers. We look forward to collecting data from other branch administrators. Like the circus ringmaster, our task is not over once the performance has ended; we must do promotion, outreach, and find ways to encourage others to join us (Circus Ringmaster 2010).

Members of NABCA want to define branch organization models, determine effective student service delivery, compare branch and main campus academic performance, and provide administrator professional development (Bepko, pers. comm.). These research areas align with our professional organization's mission to "promote the interests of and understand the opportunities and issues particular to branch campuses" (NABCA 2008). Because branch campuses, like those served through the scholarship showcased in *Metropolitan Universities*, frequently provide the only access to higher education for adult learners, without strategically placed and effectively administered branches, this population would have limited or no options for college and graduate education. NABCA members hope this initial exploration and study of branch administration will lead to professional certification standards and perhaps to a curriculum. We urge you to send us your comments and join us in research.

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