

A STUDY OF CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER PERCEPTIONS OF
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE
EMERGING LOUISIANA COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE SYSTEM

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This qualitative multi-site case study was conducted to investigate current practices, experiences, support, and perceptions as expressed by Chief Academic Officers (CAO) concerning professional development in the seven Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS) community colleges. Criterion sampling was used to select the participants for the questionnaire and interview based on their knowledge of and responsibility for professional development. The participants for the questionnaire were the CAOs at the seven LCTCS community colleges. The participants for the interviews were the CAOs, other key personnel identified by the CAOs, and the President of the LCTCS.

Data were collected through the questionnaires, in-depth interviews, review of institutional and system documentation, and review of the literature. Triangulation was used to validate findings of the data collected. The data were coded, analyzed, and synthesized such that themes developed.

Four themes emerged from the data based on the concept that the human infrastructure of an institution is its most important resource and the foundation of its strength and stability. The first theme, *Building the Human Infrastructure*, comprised the underpinning for professional development through planning and perceptions. The second theme, *Maintenance and Improvement of the Human Infrastructure*, involved providing general support for professional development through policies, encouragement, time, and resources; designating personnel to coordinate professional development; and funding professional development. The third theme, *Maintenance and Improvement of the Human Infrastructure*, encompassed the professional development activities, institutional and LCTCS areas of focus, and evaluation of the faculty and programs to assure effectiveness and achievement of institutional goals. The fourth theme, *Dividends and Returns on Investment in the Human Infrastructure*,

demonstrated the benefits and rewards achieved by providing professional development. The results of the study generally indicated that providing opportunities that encouraged the continued growth and development of professional staff enabled institutions to remain vital and responsive to the rapidly-changing economic, social, technological, and demographic environments of the community colleges in the emerging LCTC System.