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## Cultural Influences of Resource Dependence: Community College Administrator Perceptions of Implementing Initiatives Related to Tennessee's Performance Funding Model

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to describe the cultural influences of resource dependence for community college administrators responsible for the implementation of initiatives related to Tennessee's new performance funding program. Tennessee's funding formula, considered one of the most aggressive and robust in the country, is among a second generation of performance funding programs commonly referred to as performance funding 2.0. Cultural influences of resource dependence were defined as values, beliefs, and customs that influence administrator efforts to improve institutional outcomes and acquire additional resources through performance funding.

A top performing community college in terms of the performance funding formula was selected because resource dependence theory suggests that a college succeeding under performance funding would be one that is adapting to improve outcomes and acquire state appropriations. Data were gathered from interviews with 10 administrators responsible for the implementation of initiatives related to Tennessee's new performance funding program. Data were also gathered from 3 observations and 144 documents.

Findings indicated 4 themes: (1) Students Come First (values), (2) Pathway Mentality: Benefits and Conflict (beliefs), (3) The College Way: Be First, Be the Best (customs), and (4) Building on Foundation, Maintaining Momentum (changes). Overall, cultural influences of resource dependence for administrators responsible for implementing

initiatives related to performance funding appear to be limited. Data suggest administrators are influenced by multiple cultural influences such as personal values, sense of community, faith in leadership, belief in the purpose of community colleges, and personal and institutional pride.

Although data indicate resource dependence has some influence, data also indicate that the power of performance funding's influence appears connected to the vision and narrative it embodies. The study is significant because it contributes to the body of knowledge related to performance funding 2.0 programs. The study also provides rich understanding of cultural influences of performance funding and addresses the relationship between culture, organizational behavior, and organizational change.