ABSTRACT

Women Presidents in American Four-Year Colleges and Universities: An Analysis of Reported Changeable Attributes Contributing to Their Success

Mary Landon Darden, B.A., M.S.Ed.

Mentor: Robert C. Cloud, Ed.D.

Women are grossly under-represented in academic presidencies in the United States, with only 20% of all higher education presidencies, and just 13% at doctorate-granting institutions (The American College President, 2002).

The most significant study of the last century on women in leadership roles is Astin and Leland’s (1999) *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*. *Women Presidents in American Four-Year Colleges and Universities* expands on Astin and Leland’s findings by determining and analyzing the influential characteristics, later identified as specific “changeable attributes,” that contribute to the success of women higher education presidents. This study seeks to provide information to assist more women higher education administrators achieve success, advance in their profession and, ultimately, achieve a more representative proportion of presidential positions.

A preliminary conceptual framework and 21-question interview were designed to elicit changeable attributes that contributed to the success of 18 women presidents from top four-year colleges and universities (as ranked by *U.S. News and World Report*)
The findings conclude with 15 reported changeable attribute categories and 14 recommendations for women administrators, prioritized and described in detail. The first changeable attribute category, Leadership Traits and Characteristics Important to Success in the Presidency, highlights 87 traits that enhance leadership. The 15 categories also include: The Willingness and Courage to Take Risks and Make Necessary Career Changes; Obtaining the Necessary Experience to Prepare, Qualify and Succeed in the Presidency; Seeking Mentors and Positive Influencers; and Developing and Implementing an Effective Leadership Style.

The final Changeable Attributes Model illustrates how these changeable attributes may influence levels of success for women higher education administrators.

Some factors remain constant: There are still too few women in academic leadership roles and those who are make less money and have shorter tenures than their male counterparts. Thus, the programming designed to identify, develop, advance, and support emerging female leaders continues to be crucial (American Council on Education, 2003, p. 16).

Women Presidents in American Four-Year Colleges and Universities presents a detailed “formula for success” for women administrators and future presidents.
Women Presidents in American Four-Year Colleges and Universities: 
An Analysis of Reported Changeable Attributes Contributing to Their Success

by

Mary Landon Darden, B.A., M.S.Ed.

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Approved by the Dissertation Committee

Robert C. Cloud, Ed.D., Chairperson

James L. Williamson, Ed.D.

Deborah L. Johnston, Ed.D.

K. Fred Curtis, Ed.D.

Rosalie Beck, Ph.D.

Georgia A. Green, Ph.D.

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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean
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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my adored husband
Robert Fulton Darden, III.
You are the world’s greatest writer and editor.
You gave and sacrificed enormously so that I could pursue my dreams.
I love you more than could ever be put into words.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

*Background*

The advancement of women in higher education over the past century has been significant, considering that women have only been admitted to some institutions since the late 1800s. Oberlin College was the first to admit women; four were enrolled in 1837 (Rudolph, 1990, p. 310). However, the number of women occupying the highest levels of educational administration, particularly the presidency, has been much more limited. Since women now comprise 40% of faculty and administration in higher education, it seems reasonable to expect at least 40% of higher education presidents would be women (The American College President, 2002). However, with the exception of women’s colleges and a few rare other cases, women did not begin to enter the ranks of the higher education presidency until the 1970s. By 1986, only 9.5% of American higher education presidents were women (The American College President, 2002).

The overall percentage of women college presidents as of 2002 was 21.1%. At two-year colleges, women currently hold 27% of the presidencies, while at doctorate-granting institutions the figure is only 13%. The doctorate-granting figure is, however, up from only 4% women presidents in 1986. (The American College President, 2002).

The American Council on Education (ACE) Women President’s Roundtable held ten roundtables across the United States from 1998-99 which featured both women college presidents and the ACE Office of Women in Higher Education staff discussing the twin topics of “Staying Power and Gender” and “Major Leadership Challenges and
Gender.” These groups made five major recommendations, three of which were pertinent to this study:

- ACE needs to keep gender on its agenda as an important priority and continue to support efforts to increase the number of female leaders at all levels in higher education.

- Mentoring and networking opportunities still need to be strengthened for women leaders, and search consultants can be educated to make the case for candidacy of women presidents who have encountered difficulties in a presidency.

- An intensive leadership academy for aspiring women presidents should be developed, as well as a weekend workshop for new women presidents at the conclusion of their first year. (American Council on Education, 2000, pp. 1-4)

Of the numerous studies of women in leadership, some specifically involving women in higher education presidencies, none is more influential than Astin and Leland’s (1999) *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*. This is an excellent, comprehensive study of three groups of women in high leadership positions in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s (Astin & Leland, 1991). Astin and Leland performed an intensive qualitative study of seventy-seven women leaders from academia, politics, and business and found that they had many similar attributes that may have contributed to their success. *Women Presidents in American Four-Year Colleges and Universities: An Analysis of Reported Changeable Attributes Contributing to Their Success* sought to identify influential attributes and expand the earlier findings of Astin and Leland, particularly in how these attributes impact the success of women higher education presidencies. It was hoped that the results of this study would shed light on ways to assist more women in both preparing for and succeeding in higher education presidencies.
Conceptual Framework

There are a number of related “leadership” and “role” conceptual frameworks which are covered in more detail in the Review of Literature chapter. For the purpose of this study, a framework has been developed from research and a review of other conceptual frameworks which specifically relates to the focus areas of the study. This “attributes framework” was designed to identify the influence of changeable contributing and inhibiting attributes on representative women presidents in American higher education (Appendix A, Figure 1).

As seen in Figure 1, it was theorized that certain attributes exist which may contribute to, or inhibit, the rise of an individual into a presidential position. The diagram divides attributes into four categories including changeable attributes which contribute to success, changeable attributes which inhibit success, unchangeable attributes which contribute to success, and unchangeable attributes which inhibit success. The first division in categories is between changeable and unchangeable attributes. Since certain unchangeable attributes, such as race, are set and cannot be manipulated to impact change, this study focused on changeable attributes, or those attributes which may be changed to impact any potential success. Changeable attributes, such as characteristics, experiences, beliefs, accomplishments, skills, and habits, were further divided into two categories, those attributes which contributed to success and those which inhibited success. Although inhibiting attributes were included, the study focused on contributing changeable attributes, those attributes which the author believed could directly aid in the successful attainment of, and possibly longevity in, a higher education presidential position.
Statement of Problem

At the time of this study, women were under-represented in academic presidencies, holding only twenty percent of these positions while representing forty percent of membership in the academy, and more than fifty percent of undergraduate enrollment and the world population. This study sought to identify and analyze changeable attributes which contributed to women achieving and succeeding in higher education presidencies. One of the goals of this study was to provide information that may assist more women higher education administrators achieve success and advancement in their profession and ultimately move to fill a more representative proportion of presidential positions.

Research Questions

Research Question I

What are the changeable attributes that appear to contribute to women becoming successful presidents in higher education?

Research Question II

What are the changeable attributes that appear to inhibit or act as barriers to women becoming successful higher education presidents?

Research Question III

What may be gleaned from the data collected that may contribute to more women attaining and becoming successful at higher education presidencies?
Methodology

This was a qualitative study, utilizing the “grounded theory” approach, of women college presidents of higher education institutions. Eighteen women presidents were interviewed by the researcher. Data were analyzed using the method of “constant comparison.”

Participants

Participants were selected from four-year universities and colleges listed in the most recent edition of *U.S. News and World Report*. The women presidents were identified and listed in order of the *U.S. News and World Report* rankings from highest to lowest. Six presidents were interviewed from each of the main three Carnegie institutional levels including: Doctoral I and II, Masters I and II, and Bachelors. The women presidents were contacted, again, beginning from the top of the *U.S. News and World Report* and in descending order until a sample of eighteen agreed to participate in the study. In categories where there were less than six presidents who agreed to participate in the study, the few remaining participants were found through referrals.

Purpose of the Study

- To learn more about what contributes to women achieving a presidency in a higher education institution
- To discover possible changeable attributes that may contribute to achieving and succeeding in a presidency in a higher education institution
- To identify information that may help train and prepare women to be successful presidents
- To discover obstacles to the success and longevity of women in higher education presidencies
Significance of the Study

There had not been a study focused on changeable attributes of women presidents prior to this study. Therefore, a study to explore changeable attributes of women presidents should reveal valuable information, particularly for rising women practitioners. Additionally, since there is still a significant disparity between the proportions of male and female higher education presidents, with women constituting only 21.1% of all American college presidents, it was thought to be helpful to discover attributes which contribute to or inhibit women’s success (The American College President, 2002).

As seen in the “Background” section above, many leaders have identified the need to work towards greater equity in the upper levels of higher education. As mentioned, the Presidents’ Roundtable of the American Council on Education has emphasized that:

- Gender needs to remain on the agenda as an important priority and a basis for supporting efforts to increase the number of female leaders at all levels in higher education.

- An intensive leadership academy for aspiring women presidents should be developed

Although many studies have been conducted on women higher education presidents, there has been no past study of this exact nature. As determined in the study of women leaders by Astin and Leland, there appeared to be changeable attributes which may either contribute to or inhibit the success of women in leadership positions. This study only researched and interviewed successful women presidents of four-year institutions, and only women currently serving in higher education presidencies. It was
hoped that this new information would contribute significantly to the existing knowledge base on the American college presidency, particularly as it relates to women.

**Delimitations**

The focus was narrowed to provide only information related to the research topic of the attributes of women presidents in higher education. The study explored whether there are common attributes among the most successful women presidents, addressing the purpose of the study. Delimitations included studying participants who were:

- Women higher education presidents, and not men
- Women identified as higher education presidents in the United States

Additionally, the focus was only on changeable attributes, including characteristics, experiences, beliefs, accomplishments, skills, and habits, and not on unchangeable attributes, such as gender, race, and birth-order.

**Limitations**

There were several limitations related to this study including the following:

- The sample was not a random sample; it was obtained from the ranking list from *U.S. News and World Report* and, as needed, from referrals by other presidents participating in the study.
- Because the sample did not include all women presidents, it is possible that some of the most successful women presidents did not choose to be included in the study.
• There are no previous studies exactly like this study. This raised issues of validity and reliability, which was partly addressed by reviewing studies with similarities to this study.

• Self-assessment, rather than a more objective form of assessment, of success is a limitation.

Assumptions

Some assumptions made in this study include the following:

• Women presidents of most universities and colleges in the United States are successful.

• Some attributes may influence success in higher education presidencies.

• Some attributes may be changed to impact the success of a potential college president.

• Variables could emerge from this study that could potentially help more women achieve and succeed in higher education presidencies.

• Variables could emerge from a study of eighteen women higher education presidents that will generalize and may potentially be helpful to other women pursuing higher education presidencies.

• The interviewed presidents answered questions thoroughly and honestly.

• More women want to be presidents.
Definition of Terms

The terms were defined mostly on the basis of information gathered in the Review of Literature. Most terms have been defined in relation to their general meanings in *Women of Influence, Women of Vision* by Astin and Leland (1999).

- **Accomplishments**: any definable achievements as identified by the participant

- **Attributes**:
  - **Changeable attributes**: attributes including characteristics, experiences, beliefs, accomplishments, skills and habits which may be changed or influenced at will
  - **Unchangeable attributes**: attributes including characteristics, experiences, beliefs, accomplishments, skills and habits which may not be changed at will

- **Bachelors**: Carnegie classification for bachelor’s degree-granting higher education institutions

- **Beliefs**: relates to values, principles, ethics and faith, ideals and inner motivators, the forces that direct the participants and give meaning to their lives

- **Characteristics**: includes personal traits and personality characteristics, including those found in women leaders studied by Astin and Leland, such as, physical vitality, energy, loyalty, commitment, flexibility, courage, confidence, commitment, and high self-esteem

- **Constant comparison technique**: Constant comparison is the data analysis technique for grounded theory qualitative research, which “…involves the constant comparison of identified data and concepts to determine their distinct characteristics so that they can be placed in different and appropriate categories. As each new concept or piece of data is identified, it is compared to existing categories” (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 233)

- **Doctoral**: Carnegie classification for doctoral I & II degree-granting higher education institutions

- **Experiences**: includes what the participants believe are key contributing events, relationships and influences in their lives

- **Grounded theory**: Initially developed and described in by Glaser and Strauss in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, this research mode is more briefly
defined by Denzin as a “general methodology for developing theory that is
grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed” (1994, p. 273). In this
study, data is gathered from earlier studies and is compared and expand through
additional data collection and analysis

- Habits: voluntary personal and professional routines, such as walking,
  preventative medicine, punctuality, nutrition, reading, or organizational habits

- Higher education presidents: women presidents of four-year American colleges
  and universities

- Masters: Carnegie classifications for Master’s I & II degree-granting institutions
  National Universities: U.S. News and World Report category for 248 doctoral
degree-granting institutions, referred to as “doctoral” universities

- Participants: the four-year women presidents selected for the rankings in U.S.
  News and World Report

- Skills: includes leadership, empowerment and communication skills, as well as
  any practiced technical or trained ability. Practiced abilities included computer
  skills, critical thinking, and even golf

- Success: achieving a presidency in a four-year university or college

- Triangulation: “The use of multiple methods, data collection strategies, and/or
  data sources to get a more complete picture and to cross-check information” (Gay
  & Airasian, 2003, p. 593)

**Summary**

The overall percentage of women college presidents as of 2002 was 21.1%. At
doctorate-granting institutions, the figure is only 13% (The American College President,
2002). Despite the fact that the number of women presidents has risen slightly, the
doctorate-granting figure is, however, up from only 4% women presidents in 1986. By
any objective standard, there is still a significant gender disparity in the ranks of college
presidents (The American College President, 2002).

Of the many studies of women in leadership, the most influential continues to be
*Women of Influence, Women of Vision* by Astin and Leland, published in 1999. Astin and
Leland performed an intensive qualitative study of seventy-seven women leaders from academia, politics, and business, and found that they had many similar attributes which may have contributed to their success. *Women Presidents in American Four-Year Colleges and Universities: An Analysis of Reported Changeable Attributes Contributing to Their Success* sought to identify influential attributes and expand the earlier findings of Astin and Leland, particularly in how these attributes impacted the success of women higher education presidencies.

It is hoped that the results of this study would shed additional light on ways to assist still more women in both preparing for and succeeding in higher education presidencies.

In conclusion, the goal of this study is to provide information that will add to the knowledge base that may be used to improve higher education administration.

The remaining chapters in this study include: Chapter Two, a review of literature related to the topic of women higher education presidents that sets the framework for the study; Chapter Three, detailing the methodology for the study; Chapter Four, which describes the findings of the study; and finally, Chapter Five, which discusses recommendations resulting from the findings of this study.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview and summary of the existing literature related to the topic of this study. Many of the terms and definitions used in this study originated from the existing literature, and are mentioned in this chapter.

During the past three decades, women have taken a leadership role in redefining fundamental aspects of our lives—work, family, sexuality, equality, and justice. Women have influenced how we define reality, conceive of knowledge, and exercise leadership. This has happened both through the collective leadership of women as a social force and through the efforts of many individual women giving shape to this movement in its diverse forms. (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. xi).

The advancement of women in higher education over the past century has been substantial, considering that women have only been admitted to some institutions since the late 1800s. Oberlin College was the first to admit women when four were enrolled in 1837 (Rudolph, 1990). Mitchell, who studied seventy years of articles in The Journal of Higher Education related to curriculum recommendations for women, said:

The articles initially encountered in The Journal of Higher Education in the 1930s made no attempt to address the curriculum needs of women in higher education. Instead, these articles were concerned with the adverse effect that higher education would have not only on the female student, but on society at large. They contained lists of social and moral adjustments that the authors feared female students could not make. Since men could never be interested in marrying women who had interests and obligations other than their home and family, the issues from this period included editorials that warned that sending women to college was, in effect, sterilizing the best the country had to offer. (Mitchell, 2000, p. 36)
Despite such opinions, the number of women enrolled in college climbed steadily, but the presence of women in leadership was a rare occurrence until the latter part of the twentieth century. Astin and Leland (1999) reported numerous painful accounts of highly educated women in the 20th century being laughed at, some being offered no more than clerical jobs when they finished their PhDs. Until the 1970s, there were only a handful of women in college and university presidencies outside of the exclusively women’s colleges. With the subsequent rise of the women’s movement came a slight increase in the number of women entering the higher ranks of administration. However, those numbers remained disproportionately low relative to the demographics of the general population. There has been a slight surge in number of women leading colleges since the 1980s, but there remains a significant equity gap, particularly at the top (Astin & Leland, 1991).

Based on her own administrative experiences in the male-dominated ranks of college administrators, Mendonca was inspired to focus her dissertation study on women presidents and chancellors in public four-year universities as academic pioneers. She noted that a study of this kind would not have been possible prior to 1970, as no women had yet served in that capacity (Mendonca, 1995). Conducting her study in the late 1980s and early 1990s, she reported that approximately 40 women held the highest ranks in public, doctorate granting, and comprehensive universities. Mendonca summarized the influence the study had on her as an administrator, particularly in view of its potential influence on future leaders:

The willingness of these academic pioneers to share their lives with me in written and interview formats allowed me to obtain a sense of the importance of their experiences to future generations of leaders…Almost all of these women were the first of their gender to hold the office of president at their
respective institutions…their experiences are invaluable as shared wisdom for the future. (p. vii)

The education gender gap has nearly disappeared. Men comprise less than 45% of all undergraduates (American Council on Education [ACE], 2000), while comprising nearly 55% of graduate students (Hecker, 1998). However, the same degree of equity has not been realized in the upper ranks of college administration. The proportion of women college presidents as of 2002 was 21.1% (The American College President, 2002). The percentage of women college presidents was up from 9.5% in 1986, however, that rate has slowed to only a 1.8% growth since 1998. At two-year colleges, women hold 27% of the presidencies. At doctorate-granting institutions the percent is 13.3, up from only 4% women presidents in 1986. Although the percentage is climbing, it is still not representative of the women who comprise 40% of all faculty and senior staff positions in higher education (The American College President, 2002).

Additionally, John C. Stockwell, Chancellor of the University of South Carolina – Spartanburg said, “There is a major issue of staying power [for women presidents] that must be addressed” (ACE, 2000, p.1). He reported that women presidents typically hold their positions for less time than their male counterparts, and that while male presidents are generally supported and even praised for implementing change, women presidents are not likely to receive that support and are often forced out of office for implementing change (ACE, 2000).

As indicated earlier, the community college system has changed more rapidly than four-year institutions as it relates to gender equity. George R. Boggs, President and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), stated, “While the majority of community college presidents are male and Caucasian, the profile is
changing. More than 34% of presidents hired between 1995 and 1998 were female and 15.7% were members of a minority group” (Campbell, 2002). Boggs added that there is a great need to encourage and prepare the best people in higher education for leadership roles (Campbell, 2002, p. vii).

According to a 2001 survey conducted by AACC, “forty-five percent of community college chief executive officers will retire within the next six years, and another 34 percent will be retiring within the next seven to ten years” (Campbell, 2002, p. 3). Additionally, Campbell pointed out that most of the next line of administration, those who would normally be stepping into presidencies, will also be retiring during this time period. Campbell believes that this will leave an enormous leadership gap in upper administration. It would appear that these conditions may now provide a unique opportunity for women to move into higher leadership roles and begin to balance the equity scales.

In recent years, women have filled the presidency/CEO positions of such colleges as Princeton, MIT, Colgate, Duke, Brown, Michigan State, Ohio State, University of Michigan, the University of Pennsylvania, and many more top U.S. universities. Progress is being made, but there is still a need for more work to achieve a real gender balance at the top. In researching the perspectives of women college presidents, Gillett-Karam stated, “It occurred to me as it did to others in university research (Twombly, Amey, Sagaria, Townsend, Pancrazio, Duvall, Desjardiens, Moore, Keim) that women’s leadership needed a boost” (Gillett-Karam, 2001, p. 167).

There are currently several national organizations of women in higher education administration, including the Office of Women in Higher Education (OWHE), which is a
subdivision of the American Council on Education (ACE). ACE and OWHE both have an advisory commission, the Commission on Women in Higher Education (CWHE), which advises them on policy and programs related to women in academia. I have contacted OWHE for input and advice on this research topic. ACE has a Women Presidents’ Roundtable, which brings together women presidents from approximately 20% of the colleges with women presidents to explore the challenges of Leadership and Gender (American Council on Education, n.d.). Additionally, there is a division of the AACC, the American Association for Women in Community Colleges (AAWCC), which also acts as a networking system for women in community college administration (American Association of Women in Community Colleges, n.d.).

The ACE Women President’s Roundtable held eight roundtables from 1998-99 with women college presidents and the OWHE staff throughout the United States to discuss “Staying Power and Gender” and “Major Leadership Challenges and Gender.” These groups made five major recommendations, three of which are pertinent to this study:

- ACE needs to keep gender on its agenda as an important priority and continue to support efforts to increase the number of female leaders at all levels in higher education.

- Mentoring and networking opportunities still need to be strengthened for women leaders, and search consultants can be educated to make the case for candidacy of women presidents who have encountered difficulties in a presidency.

- An intensive leadership academy for aspiring women presidents should be developed, as well as a weekend workshop for new women presidents at the conclusion of their first year. (American Council on Education [ACE], 2002, pp. 1-4).

The roundtable meetings also revealed the belief that women are expected to obtain all of the necessary leadership skills for a presidency before entering office.
Conversely, the roundtable expressed a consensus that it was acceptable for male presidents to train once they had taken the president’s position. Additionally, there was a common belief that more was expected and less was forgiven of female presidents as compared to male presidents (ACE, 2002). The ACE women president’s roundtable appears to continue to hold deep concerns related to equity issues in their field.

There have been many studies of women in leadership, some specifically on women college presidents. To define the parameters for the remainder of this review of literature, because of the enormous amount of literature available in the general areas related to leadership and academic presidencies, I have chosen to delimit initial research to studies specifically involving women in the role of higher education presidents. Additionally, there will be a focus on the attributes of these presidents, particularly changeable attributes. Thus, this review of literature will emphasize the attributes which – through their change or impact – appear able to assist women in achieving presidencies and success in those roles. There may be other, unchangeable, attributes mentioned. This will primarily be to provide background and enhance understanding of the more general realm of influences. The bulk of the information reported, however, will be related to attributes involving choice, preferences, accomplishments, and beliefs. These are the attributes that may vary within a single individual and may ultimately alter a career outcome. This approach will minimize such attributes as race or birth order, as these are not attributes of choice, nor are individuals able to change these attributes.

Many of the variables, definitions, as well as a significant part of the structure and methodology of this dissertation, have been directly influenced by a study by Astin and Leland, *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*. This book is based on one of the first in-
depth studies of women in leadership roles from across the United States. Most of these seventy-seven women were from academia, however, there were also several from the political and business arenas. Astin and Leland focused on three generations of women. The first group, the “Predecessors,” consisted of women who moved into leadership prior to the women’s movement in the 1950s. This group recounts the hardships these women faced in a patriarchal society, often enduring painful discrimination and unjust obstacles, many times to become the only woman in the upper levels of administration and seldom reaching the top. The next generation Astin and Leland studied they named the “Instigators,” a group of women responsible for significant social change through the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The last group, the “Inheritors,” was composed of women rising in power from the 1970s into the 1980s. This group inherited the social changes, organization, and special programs formulated by the earlier leaders. They also inherited the more subtle forms of discrimination, such as unequal pay and the pressures to be a “superwoman,” as well as the burden of having to perform at higher levels in order to compete with existing male-dominated leadership (Astin & Leland, 1999).

The authors performed a qualitative study, chose their sample by referrals from known women leaders, and focused on five main areas:

1. The Positional Role of Leadership
2. The Macro-Level Analysis of Leadership (particularly in social change)
3. The Origins and Motives for Leadership (based on histories and experiences)
4. Leadership Succession (identification, nurture and development of leaders)
5. The Nature of Shared leadership (networks, support systems, the process of empowerment (Astin & Leland, 1999, pp. 6-7).

From many hours of interviews and background surveys, Astin and Leland found a number of common threads within their sample. Among the key influences was family
background. Although the respondents were from highly varied backgrounds, most had strong identifications with their fathers, as well as having the influence of other self-actualized women in their lives. There was common fostering of values, including individual independence, along with belief in a strong work ethic, human rights and social justice. The majority of women in the sample were “firstborns.” Grandparents often played an influential role in the lives of these leaders. Most had mentors who gave them “permission to aspire and act… to transcend prescribed gender roles” (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 47). Many had educational experiences in either girls’-only high schools or women’s colleges – half graduated from women’s colleges. Early leadership was also common, with many of the subjects holding class president, student council, and school newspaper editor positions, to name a few.

Women of Influence, Women of Vision offers valuable insight into the history, special talents, struggles, and future challenges of women in leadership roles. It is a well-written, scholarly work which identifies common goals and specific tools that may be beneficial to any leader, male or female.

Clark Kerr, former President Emeritus of the University of California said, “Astin and Leland go beyond rhetoric and statistical compilations to actual hands-on experiences and accomplishments,” and Distinguished Professor of Business Administration at the University of Southern California Warren Bennis called the book by Astin and Leland, “The single best book on women and leadership (Astin & Leland, 1999, back-cover).” Some of Astin and Leland’s findings and instruments were used in designing this study (Astin and Leland, 1999).
With the occasional exception of certain particularly relevant past studies, the emphasis for this review of literature has been placed on studies completed within the past twelve years.

There have been a number of studies on other topics related to women in presidencies. Most of these studies fall into the following general categories: leadership, career paths, and experiences or profiles. Sometimes these topics intertwine. In an attempt to best isolate the specific variables or attributes, they will be initially divided into two categories, “unchangeable attributes” and “changeable attributes.” The changeable attributes will be the focus of this study, however, a brief exploration of unchangeable attributes will provide a better sense of background, context, and an overall more complete picture of the study.

Unchangeable Attributes

Certain important influences are beyond an individual’s ability to control--the unchangeable attributes of gender, race, and birth order. A brief discussion of these factors will help build a more comprehensive foundation for the more specific focus of this study, the changeable attributes.

Gender

Gender is certainly a factor in determining one’s life course. Gender may have both positive and negative effects, depending on the situation. Women may experience various forms of discrimination during their lifetime, as did the women in the Astin and Leland study who entered leadership between the 1950s and 1970s. One respondent told of coming to Harvard after receiving a degree from Swarthmore and being told that
Harvard only admitted women students to keep the junior faculty happy. She was also
told that women were going to have children, so it was a waste of their time to train them.
Many women, as a matter of course, were fired or silenced when successful. One
woman, upon receiving her PhD, applied to a college only to be taken to an area for a
typing test, being told that the only jobs available for women at that college were
secretarial. Activism arose from this kind of pain and injustice and many women worked
tirelessly in both the Civil Rights and Women’s Movements (Astin & Leland, 1999).

Race

Because race is such an enormous area for study in and of itself, and because
there have been many studies on race as it relates to higher education administration, it is
probably too ambitious to attempt to tackle this attribute. It is, however, important to
mention that there are fewer minority presidents than women presidents. Since 1986,
minority presidents have increased from 8.1% to 12.8% of the higher education president
population in the United States. As with women presidents, the rate of increase for
minority presidents has dropped to only 1.5 percent since 1998 (American College
Presidents, 2002). Additionally, attitudes related to race are changeable, and worth
exploring to help improve racial equity in higher education.

Birth-Order

Birth-order and early family relationships were among the many common threads
identified from the hours of interviews and background surveys of women in leadership
in the Astin and Leland study. Although the respondents were from highly varied
backgrounds, most had strong identifications with their fathers. The majority of the women in the sample were “firstborns.”

*Changeable Attributes*

The questionnaire guideline instrument for this study was designed to collect a substantial amount of information related to the identified study “attributes” of each of the participants: characteristics, experiences, beliefs, accomplishments, skills and habits. These attributes were selected primarily because of the relevant related findings in Astin and Leland’s qualitative study, *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*. Astin and Leland are experts in the field of women in leadership and have studied many of the described attributes among women leaders from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Although they were more general in their interview approach, Astin and Leland uncovered numerous specifics related to the items defined as “attributes,” which emerged throughout their study. The focus was narrowed further, to attempt to reveal more information about particular identifiable aspects that could contribute to success, even to the highest levels of success found in women higher education presidents.

*Characteristics*

In defining the “attributes” to be examined, the researcher first studied certain “characteristics.” In the Astin and Leland study, characteristics which emerged included personal traits and personality characteristics, such as “physical vitality,” “energy,” “loyalty,” “commitment,” “flexibility,” “courage,” “confidence,” and “commitment,” all receiving the highest positive ratings as personal traits. “High self-esteem” was universal
in all three of the study groups as well (Astin & Leland, 1999). Characteristics were also explored from the participant’s perspective.

Experiences

“Experiences” included what the participant believed were the key relevant events, relationships and influences in their lives that have contributed to their success in higher education presidencies.

Mentors. Most of the leaders interviewed in the Astin and Leland study had the influence of other self-actualized women in their lives. Most had mentors who gave them “permission to aspire and act… to transcend prescribed gender roles” (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 47). Many had affirming educational experiences in either girls’ high schools or women’s colleges (Astin & Leland, 1999).

Education. The Astin and Leland study revealed that most women leaders in the variety of fields included in their study had extensive formal academic backgrounds. Nearly all participants held graduate degrees, with the majority holding doctorates. Half of the leaders from the 1960s and 1970s graduated from women’s colleges (Astin & Leland, 1999).

Beliefs

“Beliefs” included values, principles, ethics, and faith. These could have been ideals and inner motivators, the forces or beliefs that direct individuals and give meaning to their lives. Lee Ann Nutt found, in her dissertation on job satisfaction of women presidents, that more than half of the presidents she surveyed attended church at least
once each week. Nutt also observed that nearly half of the presidents practiced some kind of personal meditation or prayer (Nutt, 1995).

Other specific belief-related topics might have related more to values, such as individual independence or belief in a strong work ethic, human rights and social justice attributes. These were all common topics in the Astin and Leland study (Astin & Leland, 1999).

Accomplishments

“Accomplishments” included any definable achievements that the participant believes positively impacted their lives. Again, Astin and Leland found that taking early leadership roles were common, with many of the subjects holding positions such as class president, student council, and school newspaper editor (Astin & Leland, 1999).

Skills

“Skills” were defined to include such things as leadership, empowerment and communication skills, as well as any practiced technical or trained ability. Practiced abilities could include computer skills, critical thinking, or even golf--anything that the participant believes has contributed in some way to their success as an administrator.

The skills-related interview questions developed to explore skills diversity and levels of the participants were framed, in part, to be inclusive of Benfari’s concept of “Practical Intelligence,” which involves three critical skill areas related to managerial success:

1. Conceptual Skills: Knowing the human, technical and cognitive requirements of a job;
2. Influence Skills: Knowing one’s own managerial weaknesses and strengths;

3. Interpersonal Skills: Knowing how to work well with others through understanding their strengths and weaknesses (1999, p. 57).

For instance, Benfari described the high Practical IQ manager as someone who is able to enjoy and create challenges, maintain appropriate control, be a self-starter; work with others as a team and complete tasks, and who is able to understand, cooperate and support others (Benfari, 1999). “Influence” and “interpersonal” skills fit well under the umbrella of leadership.

Leadership. As described by Astin and Leland:

Effective leadership demands the ability to assess a situation, to engage others in collective effort, and to bring about needed change. The women instigators suggest that they have been politically adept, willing to take risks, and perceptive – particularly in the sense of being attuned to their environments. Above all, they emphasize the critical use of outstanding interpersonal and communication skill. (p. 115)

Critical skills identified in successful leadership were “building bridges, creating connections, and defusing tensions” (Hecht et al., 1999, p. 16). “The essence of chair leadership lies in your ability to develop a functioning collectivity (Hecht et al., 1999, p. 132).”

Individuals in the Astin & Leland study who entered leadership in the 1950s through 1970s reported a relationship between early opportunity and leadership skills, self-confidence, and self-awareness. These individuals displayed a particular passion and commitment for social change. Many respondents were active in school team sports such as field hockey and basketball. Early public speaking and debate experience was also common. Most had strong continued support from family and friends. Other
frequent factors include early work opportunities, travel, exposure to other cultures, risk-taking, and action orientation (1999).

For the purposes of their study, the Astin and Leland defined leadership as, “the actions and behaviors of women who worked toward changing social institutions in order to improve women’s lives” (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 7). They studied four aspects of leadership: the leader, the context, the process (empowerment and collective action), and the outcomes. They defined the leader “as someone who played a catalytic role and who managed to empower and mobilize others toward a collective effort to improve the quality of life (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 11).”

According to Astin and Leland, the critical elements related to leadership that were observed from these women included:

. . . values that address change, the energy of personal motivation and involvement – whether from positive or negative experiences – and the capacity to look out from oneself and out to a society and the future. Woven together, these powerful forces coalesced as second-wave feminism (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 83).”

_Feminism._ Astin and Leland’s definition of “feminism” is from _The Rise of the Feminist Consciousness_ by G. Lerner, who wrote that it is “a system of ideas and practices which assumes that men and women must share equally in work, in the privileges, in the defining and dreaming of the world (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 19).” It was the groundbreaking work of early women leaders from the last century that resulted in the social change that benefits today’s women. Of the price paid by pioneering feminists, Aileen Hernandez, an early leader in the National Organization for Women, said:
There will be no way that any present leader of the feminist movement could have gotten where she got without a substantial amount of things that went before. To pave the way, there were the people who took all the slurs, and all the slings and arrow . . . while feminism was being made respectable in our society, because it wasn’t always considered respectable. (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 16)

There have been many definitions of leadership as it relates to higher education administration. Barnard defined leadership as:

the indispensable social essence that gives common meaning to common purpose, that creates the incentive that makes other incentives effective, that infuses the subjective aspect of countless with consistency in a changing environment, that inspires the personal conviction that produces the vital cohesiveness without which cooperation is impossible. (Barnard, 1938, p. 283)

This study explored changeable attributes related to one of the most significant responsibilities of any president, leadership. Among the related attributes identified in other studies was empowerment.

_Empowerment._ Women leaders use empowerment to lead. Three themes reoccurred in this area, according to Astin and Leland. First, the leaders saw _clarity of values_ as particularly important. Having a vision that guides their behavior, building trust, and maintaining integrity were high on the values list. Second, _listening to and empowering others_ was another important theme. The authors identified four empowerment-related behaviors favored by the respondents:

1. Meet people on their own turf and you listen.
2. Hire strong people who complement you.
3. Make them feel good: give others the credit they deserve.
4. You value collegiality; thus you consult with others and work through consensus. (Astin & Leland, 1999, p. 120)
Do your homework was the third common theme. Being prepared for meetings, doing research, planning, and developing blueprints were all considered important by respondents to Astin and Leland.

The fact that there are women presidents today, beyond the traditional women’s college setting, is greatly dependent on the investments and risks made by the women leaders of the past. (Astin & Leland, 1999)

Communication.

Leadership is the key to effective change management. The key to effective campus wide leadership is effective communication, and the keys to effective communication are openness of the process, honesty, building trust, listening, choosing the proper forms for discussion, and agreeing that it may be OK to disagree. (Rowley & Sherman, 2001, p.161)

Communication includes such things as listening, speaking, writing as well as other related topics. Through effective communication, the successful manager can strive for more win/win solutions (Benfari, 1999). Chairs need to be effective communicators who can act as the primary spokesperson for the department faculty, staff, and students. They must “implement and carry out campus policy, interpret and present information” (Hecht et al., 1999, p.21). If chairs must be highly efficient at communicating, it may be assumed that presidents must do so to an even higher degree.

Barnard identifies “developing and maintaining a system of communication” as the first on his list of the three most important functions of the executive within an organization. (Barnard, 1938, p. 217).
Habits

“Habits” related to voluntary personal and professional routines. Habits might have included such things as walking, preventative medicine, punctuality, nutrition, reading, organizational habits, any of which the participant believes have played a positive role in their administrative success.

Summary

Women leaders from diverse fields profiled in the Astin and Leland study all shared a common concern that later women leaders have failed to realize the history of the struggle for equality, that they seemed to take their opportunities for granted, and that they may be reluctant to carry on the “torch of passion” to eradicate all inequality for all people. It was certainly the hope of all of the women in that study that the work would continue and that an improvement in the quality of life for all people will persist. (Astin & Leland, 1999)

With the expanding “leadership gap” in higher education, where the majority of presidents and vice presidents will retire within the next five to ten years, and with the increasing complexity and demands of higher education, it will be critical to thoroughly prepare the greatest number of upper-level quality administrators, and to prepare them as well as possible (Campbell, 2002). It appears that this is an opportune time to tap into the resource pool of women administrators and encourage them to help fill the gap in leadership. It will be just as important to prepare women for the special challenges that they may face because of their gender. Additionally, because the research shows that women presidents tend to remain in office for shorter periods of time than men, and that higher education institutions tend to be both less forgiving and less tolerant of change
from women, it will be even more important to train aspiring women leaders well and prepare them for the special challenges they may encounter.

Consequently, it seemed likely that the best place for aspiring women to learn the highest level of successful practice is from the very women who have achieved successful presidencies. It was the intent of this study to explore these practices and to attempt to find valuable and useful information to help pave the way to success for future women presidents.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter explains the research methods used throughout this study, including the research design, the selection of participants, the instruments and the steps for collecting data, the analysis process for the data, the overall procedure, a list of possible supplemental projects which may result from this study, and the anticipated findings. The methodology for this study has evolved throughout the initial stages of this study.

Methodological Objectives:

1. To identify at least eighteen women presidents in American higher education who are willing to participate in the study
2. To interview and study these women presidents
3. To determine whether or not there are common changeable attributes among the eighteen successful women presidents
4. To study these attributes and explore whether and/or how they may contribute to the success of women presidents in higher education
5. To explore how information gleaned by this study may be used to help train or prepare other women for successful higher education presidencies.
Research Design

This was a qualitative study of university and college women presidents and the personal attributes which appeared to contribute to the success of these presidents. This study is well-suited for qualitative research as it is broad and exploratory in nature, with the purpose of discovering what might emerge as influential changeable attributes. The qualitative approach is “theory-driven,” based on findings from other related studies and, as such, it is theorized that there are changeable attributes which contribute to the success of women college presidents (Fig. 1). Likewise, the purpose of the study is theory-seeking, deliberately designed to discover what these changeable attributes may be and how they may further contribute to the success of women presidents in the future. The qualitative method for this study is “grounded theory,” as the study aims to derive a theory from the multiple subjects through data collection and analysis. Eighteen presidents from four-year American universities and colleges, mostly drawn from recent rankings in *U.S. News and World Report*, were interviewed by telephone by the researcher. All of the presidents were given choices of data collection methods, including the option of face-to-face interviews. All presidents in this study selected the telephone interview format.

Statement of Problem

Women are currently under-represented in academic presidencies, holding only twenty percent of these positions while representing forty percent of the academy, and more than fifty percent of undergraduate enrollment—as well as of the world population. This study sought to identify and analyze changeable attributes which contributed to women achieving and succeeding in higher education presidencies. One of the goals of
this study was to provide information which may assist more women higher education
administrators achieve success and advancement in their profession, and ultimately
assume a more representative proportion of presidential positions.

Research Questions

Research Question I:

What are the changeable attributes that appear to contribute to women becoming
successful presidents in higher education?

Research Question II:

What are the changeable attributes that appear to inhibit or act as barriers to
women becoming successful higher education presidents?

Research Question III:

What may be gleaned from the data collected that may contribute to more women
attaining and becoming successful at higher education presidencies?

Participants

Participants were selected by several different methods. Most participants were
selected from the Special Report - America’s Best Colleges listed in the August 30, 2004
dition of U.S. News and World Report, the most recent at the time of this study. Women
presidents were identified and listed in order of the U.S. News and World Report rankings
from highest to lowest, beginning with Research I universities, and then moving in order
through the next listed categories. The women presidents were contacted, again,
beginning with the highest-ranked president in each division and following in descending
order until the lists were exhausted. A substantial sample size of eighteen subjects was selected since the sampling method was not random. (Gay & Airasian, 2003, pp. 116-117). As was expected, more than half of the women presidents listed chose not to participate in the study. To insure demographic balance, a grid was used to indicate institutional characteristics. These characteristics included size, region, as well as whether the institution was public or private; coeducational or all-women’s; Doctoral, Masters’, or Bachelors’ granting. Subsequently, the list was then stratified into the three main types of four-year institutions, ultimately with equal representation from each – six doctoral, six Master’s, and six Bachelor’s. Because most presidents are typically very busy, and because there is seldom a great deal of flexibility in their schedules, it seemed prudent to select a slightly larger than needed population for the study in the event that some could not participate. A follow-up letter was mailed to three of the participating doctoral university presidents and to three who had chosen not to participate. The investigator asked them for recommendations for the remaining needed participants (see Appendix E.4). Fortunately, one president responded with several recommendations along with permission to use her name in recommending them for the study. One of the recommendations fit a needed demographic and had not yet been contacted. That president was sent a letter that day. Finally, there were still one more presidents needed to complete the sample size of eighteen. After examining the demographics of the existing sample, a few candidates were selected that best balanced those demographics and one of those presidents agreed to be the eighteenth president in the study.

Each president was offered the option to complete the interview either in person or by telephone. All participants chose the telephone interview format.
**Instruments**

The researcher conducted a telephone interview with each individual participant. A general question interview instrument was used to insure thorough coverage of the topic, but because this is a qualitative study, data were not restricted solely to that format (see Appendix C). This instrument collected a substantial amount of information related to the “attributes” of each of the participants: characteristics, experiences, beliefs, accomplishments, skills and habits. These attributes were identified originally in the relevant related findings in Astin and Leland’s study, *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*. Astin and Leland are lifelong experts in the field of women in leadership, and have studied many of the above mentioned attributes among women leaders from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Although they were general in their interview approach, Astin and Leland uncovered specific information related to what are being defined as “attributes.” To narrow the focus, and in an attempt to increase the depth of information about specific, identifiable aspects that may contribute to success, this study emphasized a somewhat more limited area. The interview questions were general, so as not to lead the participant to a given response, but focused, to keep the area of exploration directed to obtain the appropriate data.

A secondary background instrument was administered after the interview (see Appendix D). For the purpose of this study, the background instrument was used to support, add depth to, and fill gaps for, the interview process. This additional information is intended for further related research in the future.

The instruments were discussed and/or reviewed prior to the data collection process. One of the authors from the original study, Helen Astin, agreed to assist with
this study, if needed. A pilot study was administered (see Appendix F) with the help of a college president who generously agreed to be a pilot participant. This president holds a Ph.D. in Psychology and is active in women presidents’ professional organizations. Her assistance was helpful and resulted in some minor changes in the final interview questions. Additional input was sought from professional organizations and several other women administrators. This review and pilot study process was developed to strengthen the validity or “trustworthiness” of this instrument in compliance with qualitative data collection guidelines. (Creswell, 1994, pp.57-58).

Procedure

First, a proposal was presented to the Institutional Review Board for permission to perform this study. The study began once formal approval was received on December 16, 2004.

Names of women presidents were retrieved from the universities listed in the most recent U.S. News and World Report were compiled and ranked in priority from highest ranking to lowest (Morse and Flanigan, 2004). The presidents were contacted by mail (see Appendix E), in order of priority, to see if they would agree to participate in the study. As seen in Appendix E, the initial correspondence included a personalized introductory letter to the president, a support letter from the researcher’s department chair, and a stamped return envelope for response. Presidents were contacted in four subsequent groups of ten until the goal of a total sample of eighteen presidents were selected. Emails and telephone calls were made to schedule and confirm appointments with the presidents who agreed to participate in the study. Follow up letters, emails, and/or telephone calls were made to presidents who did not respond within a few weeks.
A response letter was mailed to all presidents who agreed to participate, which included an overview of the study, the interview questions, an IRB-approved informed consent form, the optional “President’s Background” data form, and a stamped return envelope (see Appendix E2). The informed consent asked for written agreement to be participants in the study and explain how the information would be used. Any questions that a participant had were addressed by the researcher--either by telephone, email, or mail--prior to the start of the data collection process. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

The researcher conducted all interviews with the presidents by telephone, as requested by the presidents, and all interviews were audio-recorded.

Each interview began with a mutual greeting and introduction. The researcher asked the participant if they had any questions related to the study. After any such questions were addressed, the researcher asked the participant if she was ready to begin and asked for the participant’s approval of the audio-taping of the interview to insure accuracy. Once the interviewee agreed, the researcher read the first question to the participant. The researcher waited until the question was thoroughly addressed and the participant stopped speaking for several seconds. If there was any doubt that the participant had completed their answer, the researcher asked the participant if there was anything further that they would like to say about this question. Participants were informed that they could return to any question at any time to add or change information. The researcher continued to ask questions in order and in the same manner until all 21 questions had been asked and the participant indicated that they had completed the interview.
There were a few questions for which a few participants occasionally requested clarification. One such question was number twelve: “What do you believe were the most influential variables that contributed to your achieving and succeeding in the position of the presidency? (Appendix C)” When asked for an example in this question, the researcher chose “how you dress or wear your hair” as a response that was specific enough to understand without leading the participant into a particular response. The comment that many of the questions were difficult and required thought was common, however, none of the participants hesitated to answer any question thoroughly.

After the initial data collection process was completed, all interviews were transcribed verbatim and color-coded for tracking purposes (See Appendix B). The option was left open for occasional follow-up calls to clarify or complete the data.

**Data Analysis**

*Research Question I*

What are the changeable attributes that appear to contribute to women becoming successful presidents in higher education?

The data were collected via telephone interview with each of the eighteen participants. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and color-coded for each president and institution (Appendix B).

All interviews were conducted in the same manner, with the questions presented in the same order beginning with Question 1 and following in order to Question 21. This order of questions provided a preliminary organizational structure from which the process of “constant comparison” was used. Constant comparison is the data analysis technique
for grounded theory qualitative research. Constant comparison “…involves the constant comparison of identified data and concepts to determine their distinct characteristics so that they can be placed in different and appropriate categories. As each new concept or piece of data is identified, it is compared to existing categories.” (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 233).

The first interview to be organized was selected for analysis on the basis of its thoroughness and amount of data. This interview was divided into subtopics related to each general interview questions to allow comparison with data from each answer to each from the other participants. From the comparison and categorization of the data from each question, subcategories emerged and allowed for groupings of common data. Where appropriate, categories were then consolidated. From these subcategories, patterns emerged of the common attributes among the college presidents. These attributes occurred at varying frequencies and with varying emphasis. The focus of the data analysis was on the changeable attributes perceived by the researcher and/or the participant as those which contributed to the participant’s success.

The findings were “triangulated” with existing studies and literature to enhance understanding and validity and to reduce bias. The definition for triangulation from chapter One is: “The use of multiple methods, data collection strategies, and/or data sources to get a more complete picture and to cross-check information” (Gay & Airasian, 2003, p. 593). The triangulation process uses different types of data corroboration to enhance the validity of the findings of a study. This study focused on two primary types and mention a possible modified form of a third type of triangulation. Denzin identified several types of triangulation methods. One type is “convergence of multiple data
sources” (Denzin, 1978). This study selected a large population of eighteen presidents, the data from which was categorized and compared by categories to corroborate responses. Response categories with four or more responses were selected for emphasis and further investigation. A second type of triangulation is “convergence of data from multiple data collection sources” (Denzin, 1978). The findings from this study were compared to findings from other similar studies to determine whether or not similar results had been previously discovers. In fact, the premise for this study was “grounded” in the data found in other studies, particularly in Astin and Leland’s study, *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*, the results from which this study emerged. Lastly, triangulation may occur through “investigator triangulation,” which uses multiple investigators in a type of “cross-examination” process (Denzin, 1978). Although this study had only one investigator, there were 21 general questions which gave multiple opportunities to elicit similar information. This might be viewed as a type of single-investigator internal cross-examination by ensuring that participants had multiple opportunities to present important data.

After the results were researched and analyzed, conclusions and recommendations were made. The results were written into a qualitative narrative form. Tables and figures were used where appropriate to illustrate outcome.

*Anticipated Findings*

Because of the previous study done by Astin and Leland, it is reasonable to expect that there may be similar findings, and that there are attributes that contribute to the success of women presidents. However, because this study focuses on college and university presidents and the Astin and Leland study involved women from several
professions, it was anticipated that the results from this study might identify attributes that were most significant to the population of women higher education presidents and might, therefore, be more generalizeable to that population. It was further anticipated that these findings might potentially be used to develop instruments, publications, and plans that may also contribute to the field, including the following:

**Supplemental Project Development**

It was the researcher’s goal to develop from this study the following:

- A training plan or “prescription for success” for women who wish to develop skills in preparation for the possibility of a higher education presidential position. And eventually,
- A hiring document for higher education boards, with a checklist of potential attributes to be considered in a presidential search
- A book-length manuscript featuring the presidents in the study, the findings and recommendations.

**Summary**

This was a qualitative study of four-year university and college women presidents and the personal attributes which appeared to contribute to the success of these presidents. It was stated earlier that qualitative research appeared to be the best choice for this study because its broad and exploratory nature better enabled the discovery of emergent influential changeable attributes. Since the qualitative approach is “theory-driven,” based on findings from other related studies and, it was theorized that this would be the proper research model to determine whether there are changeable attributes which
contribute to the success of women college presidents (Fig. 1). The second purpose of the study is theory-seeking. It was deliberately designed to discover what these changeable attributes may be and how they may further contribute to the success of women presidents in the future. The qualitative method for this study is “grounded theory,” as it is based on data from earlier studies and intended to affirm and expand existing theory from the multiple subjects through additional data collection and analysis.

Eighteen presidents from four-year American universities and colleges, mostly drawn from recent rankings in *U.S. News and World Report*, were interviewed by telephone by the researcher. Participants were stratified into the three main types of four-year institutions with equal representation from each – six doctoral, six Master’s, and six Bachelor’s. All of the presidents were given choices of data collection methods, including the option of face-to-face interviews, and all selected the telephone interview format.

A general question interview instrument was used to insure thorough coverage of the topic, but because this is a qualitative study, data were not restricted solely to that format (see Appendix C). This instrument collected a substantial amount of information related to the “attributes” of each of the participants: characteristics, experiences, beliefs, accomplishments, skills and habits. As mentioned, these attributes were identified originally in the relevant related findings in Astin and Leland’s foundational study, *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*.

All interviews were conducted in the same manner. After the initial data collection process was completed, all interviews were transcribed verbatim and color-coded for tracking purposes (See Appendix B). The grounded theory data analysis
technique of “constant comparison” was used, which involves the constant comparison of identified data and concepts to determine their distinct characteristics so that they can be placed in different and appropriate categories.

The findings were “triangulated” with existing studies and literature to enhance understanding and validity and to reduce bias. This study focused on two primary types and a possible modified form of a third type of triangulation as identified by Denzin: “convergence of multiple data sources,” “convergence of data from multiple data collection sources,” and “investigator triangulation,” (Denzin, 1978)

After the results were researched and analyzed, conclusions and recommendations were made. The results were written into a qualitative narrative form. Tables and figures were used where appropriate to illustrate outcome.

As previously noted, studies have shown that women are currently under-represented in academic presidencies (The American College President, 2002). The methodology of this study was designed the best assist in the identification and analysis of changeable attributes which contribute to women achieving and succeeding in higher education presidencies, with the goal to provide information which may assist more women higher education administrators achieve success and advancement in their profession and, ultimately, assume a more representative proportion of presidential positions.
CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of Findings

Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, at the time of this study, women were underrepresented in academic presidencies, holding only 21.1% of these positions while representing 40% of the academy (The American College President, 2002). This study sought to identify and analyze changeable attributes which contributed to women achieving and succeeding in higher education presidencies. One of the goals of this study was to provide information that may assist more women higher education administrators achieve success and advancement in their profession and ultimately move to fill a more representative proportion of presidential positions.

Chapter Four organized and examined the findings from this study. It begins with the formative years of the participant’s lives and careers in a Section I titled The Pathway to Leadership. This is followed by Section II on the formative leadership roles of the participants, titled The Pathway to the Presidency. Section III is titled Success in the Presidency, and examines information relevant to both achieving and succeeding in the position of the presidency. Chapter Four concludes with Section IV, Advice and Recommendations from the Presidents, which organized the information that the presidents said they perceived as important for women aspiring to a presidency and subsequent success in that role. The data were organized within each topic category, beginning with the most common responses from participants and descending to the least common responses and are detailed in a table in Appendix G.
I. The Pathway to Leadership

Introduction

A brief survey of both early awareness and significant influences in the lives of the presidents in this study may aid researchers in identifying the changeable attributes that contributed to these women ultimately achieving the rank of college presidents. Although a definitive link to changeable attributes may be difficult to establish, the findings of this study may help build a framework and a context from which these various leaders emerged. Material from the initial few background questions is included to construct a preliminary picture of the formative lives of these eighteen presidents and, perhaps, raise questions about just how critical a role these early years play in the long-term development of successful leaders. The data collected suggest numerous strong commonalities in the lives of these leaders. This section will begin by examining the presidents’ emerging awareness of their leadership ability, the early factors, people, events and circumstances, choices, accomplishments, beliefs, habits and skills that were perceived by the presidents of this study to have contributed to progress along the pathway to leadership.

First Awareness of Leadership Destiny

The presidents reported varying degrees of awareness regarding their leadership destiny. Some knew from a very early age that they had leadership potential. For most, however, this concept developed later—much later. One president said that she is “still waiting” to realize that she was destined for leadership. An equal number of presidents reported no awareness of a leadership destiny in their early-life leadership experiences.
However, even those who experienced early leadership roles often were not aware that it might lead to further leadership involvement.

Figure 4.1. Presidents’ First Awareness of Leadership Destiny

No awareness of leadership destiny. For eight presidents (C, G, J, M, S, T, W, Y), there was little awareness or planning in the pathway to leadership. For most it was an evolutionary process, an unfolding of vision through incrementally more responsible positions. Most were somewhat surprised that this pathway led ultimately to a college presidency and several to the provost’s level without a hint that they might eventually move on to be president. One president said, “I’m waiting for that enlightened moment” (President T). Another said, “This was never part of the plan, I don’t think I ever saw myself as a college president” (President C). President Y said, “Quite honestly, I never had ever thought of myself as destined for anything…”

I’m one of these leaders who didn’t consciously choose a path. I can remember the first person (who) mentioned to me that he thought I’d be a college
president… in 1990 when I was an associate provost. I remember being shocked at that (President W).

“I’m not a good example of a planned career. I really wanted to be in a role where, whether it was on the softball field or in a club or whatever, my views were at least considered. Then gradually that turned into a position” (President J). President S described her pathway to the presidency as “incremental.” There was never a point in her career where she said, “I want a leadership role in society, and I’m going to go get it.” Likewise, President M described her experiences as a “progression,” related to her skills and her administrative positions. She said that, ultimately, her career “evolved.”

There was some sentiment expressed that the “reluctant leader” concept might be indicative of the generation of women that had recently risen into the presidency, a generation that has seen few of their female predecessors in leadership positions. Many of these women emerged from a society that rarely condoned women in leadership positions. Until the 1960s, it was unusual for women to even aspire to careers, particularly to careers of leadership. As noted earlier, until the 1970s, there existed only a handful of women in college and university presidencies outside of the exclusively women’s colleges and their numbers remained disproportionately low relative to the demographics of the general population. There has been a slight surge in number of women leading colleges since the 1980s, but there remains a significant equity gap, particularly at the top (The American College President, 2002).

Interestingly, at least one of the presidents in the study, who was likewise surprised by her ascension to the presidency, said that the “reluctant leader” mold may be breaking. She said that one day she realized that she was in an administrative role, but
that it was more a result of “realizing one’s abilities” and “seeing what needed to be done” than pursuing an office.

I was fairly far along before it occurred to me that I might want to be a president. I was a dean. I think that’s changing. Women who are in leadership positions now are typically in their late forties through sixties and so their socialization and the kind of envisioning that they did is quite different from what young women today are doing. I’m seeing much more intentional approaches to careers among today’s college under-graduates, and young graduates too (President G).

As children, two presidents (T and E) were raised to believe that they were capable of any undertaking that they were willing to pursue. Neither sensed a different set of leadership expectations based on gender. Not until going to college did President T find out that there were things that “women should do” (President T). President E said, “I was a girl, and there were lots of things girls didn’t do, but my parents never told me that. I think I never knew it (President E).

*Early leadership positions.* Eight presidents (A, B, H, O, P, R, T, and V) were involved in leadership activities early in life. The fact that nearly half of the study presidents mentioned early leadership roles, as early as elementary school, suggests that some leaders may have had an early-developing inclination toward leadership positions. Although the presidents each experienced slightly different pathways, there are interesting parallels among the case studies.

Through grade school and high school, President T was regularly involved in leadership positions. President T has since accomplished numerous firsts for women.

President O described her leadership experience as more of an ongoing “course of experience” beginning at age ten. President A first noticed she liked leadership when she ran for class president in the first grade. She said she felt destined for leadership
throughout her life and continued in leadership roles throughout school and her career.

President P said she enjoyed the role of “teacher” when she was a child and President B said “…I always liked to take a lead in getting things going. I didn’t want to be one of the team; I usually wanted to lead the team.”

In elementary school, I was probably president of the class four years out of seven… in high school I had two teachers who were very direct with me, that I was talented, and that as a result of those talents I had some responsibility to do something with them, and they used that language… I had a responsibility to give back and make a contribution (President V).

Some presidents said they were surprised somewhat later, yet still early in their career, to find that they had leadership potential. President R said:

The point at which I really thought about doing something to make a difference in a larger arena…was (when) a very effective academic vice president at my college … asked if I would be interested in becoming an associate dean. That’s probably the point where I first thought “Gee, I could do that” (President R).

President H said that a graduate position she held was the first indication to her that she could be a leader. Early leadership experience apparently assisted in developing increasing leadership skills and confidence for the presidents who became aware of this potential and were able to develop that potential from an early age. Although early leadership involvement occurred for many of the presidents in the study, it may not be a prerequisite piece in the “leadership puzzle” since at least five of the presidents in the study did not assume leadership positions until later in their careers.

Leadership emerging later in career. Presidents I, L, M, P, and S first entered the leadership path later in their careers. President P first prepared for leadership after being elected chair of her department and, subsequently, chair of the college-wide curriculum committee:
It was a moment when I began to see the college whole, not just my department, and I began to think about issues at the college, which perhaps I would like to have a say in. I started to think about leadership on the presidential level very late indeed. I did not seek the position of academic vice president. Once I got into it, when that president retired, I did want to be president, and at that time the board of trustees...said, in their language, “You’re doing a wonderful job as vice president, we want you to be interim president, it will be a long interim presidency, maybe almost a year, but we really need a strong CEO type,” which I translated to mean “male”... A new president was appointed, and he was a strong CEO type, and he very, very quickly alienated the faculty and a lot of people. I worked very hard for him... he suddenly left... once they saw what a strong CEO type did in an academic institution, that it wasn’t really a good fit, ...they appointed me, and I was the first woman president of the college (President P).

For President I, the process was also a gradual progression of “interesting” opportunities. After working as a school teacher, she realized that she was intrigued by “broader organizational issues that continually cropped up in everyday work.” She decided to return to graduate school and follow her new interests (President I). President L’s career evolved early in her doctoral program when she volunteered to do a self-study for her college’s accreditation. She said this was her first awareness that she could handle a higher level of responsibility and that working out of the dean’s office gave her a good overview of how the college ran. She said, “... that was the first trajectory, but I was already thirty-six, this didn’t occur to me when I was twelve, nineteen, or even twenty-five” (President L).

Presidents M and S talked about how, without a single recognizable defining moment, their leadership roles evolved within their careers.

**Early Factors and Experiences Contributing to Leadership Ability**

When asked what they thought were the most important factors or experiences that contributed to their leadership capabilities as adults, two primary answers consistently emerged. The first, with eight responses, involved the early assumption of
leadership roles. The second factor, with half the responses, involved the influence of various life experiences, such as travel.

Figure 4.2. Factors Contributing to Leadership Capabilities

*Took responsibility and leadership roles early.* Presidents B, C, E, G, R, V, W, and Y all identified assuming leadership roles early in life as contributing to their leadership capabilities as adults. Several presidents were motivated by observing weaknesses in a situation and envisioning how they could do a better job.

There is a sort of joke in my family that I was born responsible. I came out of the womb responsible. I spent a lot of time as a youngster babysitting, taking care of my younger brother and sisters... When I went into high school, I was always willing to volunteer. I derived satisfaction from being responsible for getting something done... Sometimes I would agree to do something just because I was so unbelievably frustrated that somebody else was doing a miserable job of it. I began to develop the reputation of being able to get people together to get something accomplished (President C).
President G occasionally assumed early leadership roles in elementary school, where she ran a school in her basement one summer and essentially babysat the entire neighborhood.

At age ten, President R chose to live with a beloved aunt and uncle, “I made decisions like that early in life, and … drew on the best that different people and places and experiences could give me from a fairly early age (President R).

I started a sorority in high school. I really love starting things. I like building…I can see experiences in college or beyond college. I think one of the greatest experiences is being a scientist and writing grants. That’s where you really have to pick up the reins to set your goals, set your objectives, and bring a team together around you. That required taking a leadership role, a directive role. Those kinds of activities really established leadership capabilities…I liked to see things that needed to be done, and do them, sort of fill gaps. I often saw how I didn’t like the way things were being done… and try to get into a position so I could do them differently (President B).

President E was a leader of her high school baton twirlers, editor of the high school newspaper, her university daily student newspaper, and president of the literary society. She enjoyed the opportunity to, “to work with others, to try to affect something good together” (President E).

President V also accepted leadership roles from early in high school, serving in student government and continuing through college where she was head of her resident hall. “I chose to be involved in things beyond my little bailiwick.” She organized ski trips in both high school and college. “I have a lot of interests and I like to do a lot of things. If I had an idea and there was any interest in it I’d say, ‘Okay, let’s do it’” (President V).
Life experiences / Travel / Exposure to different cultures. Presidents A, I, S, and Y identified various life experience, particularly travel, as contributing to their leadership capabilities as an adult.

“I’m an Army brat who moved around a lot . . . . That experiences of living in different parts of the country and abroad certainly exposed me to things that helped mature me, and gave me a sense that neither I, nor whatever the dominant culture was, was the center of the universe” (President Y).

President A loved to travel to historic places and learn about other cultures.

President I said that for her, leadership, was something that emerged in young adulthood. “I went back to graduate school, and it wasn’t until I was more broadly read, and had a broader life experience as a young adult, that I realized I was very interested in broader organizational issues. I seized the opportunities that came available, did it well, and moved on to the next one quite quickly” (President I).

Athletics. Early involvement in athletics was mentioned by a few of the presidents as influential, particularly President V, who had been a competitive swimmer from the age of six. President B played softball and President T participated in a number of sports and sometimes even competed on predominantly male teams.

Girls’ schools. Presidents who attended all-girls’ schools all expressed the sentiment that these environments were conducive to developing individual leadership potential.

President V attended a Catholic girls’ high school. “I went to all-girls’ schools until I went to college, and I only saw women in charge, I never saw men in charge so
there were no sex role stereotyping of what jobs women could do or men could do. The women were the science teachers, the women were the business managers, and the women were the English teachers” (President V).

President W attended an all-girls boarding school where she said she believed it was easier to develop as a leader.

*Gender and racial equity.* President T lived in a supportive, equity-oriented environment where she participated in sports on both men’s and women’s teams. The best leaders were selected for any situation based on who was best qualified, regardless of gender. She commented that although it seemed “ordinary” at the time, she said she now realizes that she had a unique childhood.

Each president chose to accept leadership roles at varying times in their lives, but their were many commonalities of factors and experiences among these presidents, and many of these presidents credited their broad range of experiences as contributing to their success within the many and varied demands of leadership.

Gardner advises a very broad base of experiences for future leaders. He quotes Molière, “Where the goat is tethered, there it must browse.” Gardner said that, “Young citizens-to-be need long tethers; and young potential leaders even longer ones” (1990, p. 164).

*People and Their Influences*

Most of the presidents in this study were influenced by a number of people throughout their lives. In the early years, family members were the predominant influencers of the presidents in this study. However, later in life, the study participants
indicated that mentors serve an equally significant a role in the development and
direction of their leadership and career plans. Some of the presidents said they
deliberately surrounded themselves with good role models and mentors. This practice
and exposure often marked a career turning point.

![Figure 4.3. Most Influential People in Presidents’ Lives](image)

**Figure 4.3.** Most Influential People in Presidents’ Lives

*Parental / Family influence and expectations.* In John W. Gardner’s book, *On Leadership*, he writes that researchers know little about specific steps that parents can take to assist their children in developing leadership skills. However, Gardner notes that, “…behavior standards imposed in the home, the drives engendered there, the values inculcated, the models found in parents – all affect the emergence of potentialities for leadership” (1990, p. 163).

Although many of the presidents were raised in the traditionally structured households of mother, father, and sibling(s), several were not. President M’s mother died
young and M was raised by her two grandmothers. President R chose to live with an aunt and uncle at age ten.

The families of several presidents had what were then considered “progressive” concepts of what were considered appropriate roles for women in society. Many presidents stated that gender stereotypes were not present in their families and several presidents spoke of being “empowered” by their families to pursue any goal. Parental characteristics such as drive, “can do” attitudes, hospitality, jovial personalities and a sense of humor, strictness combined with high expectations, affirmations, regular encouragement, and the modeling of good leadership skills for their children were identified by the study’s respondents. Fifteen of the eighteen presidents in the study mentioned significant positive influence of family members, including respondents A, B, C, E, G, H, I, J, L, M, O, P, V, W, and Y.

A large percentage of the presidents, including (C, G, H, I, L, M, O, Y), placed heavy emphasis on the influence of mothers, particularly strong, disciplined, leadership-oriented mothers and grandmothers. A few presidents also discussed the importance of a supportive spouse. Several presidents did not advance in their early career partly because their spouse at the time would not or did not support their endeavors. Once in a supportive relationship, the careers for these women moved forward, culminating in the presidency. These findings agreed with those of the Astin and Leland study: “Consistent among the Instigators was the sense that parents and families modeled, encouraged or, at the very least, allowed them to develop as independent women infused with strong beliefs in social justice and the work ethic” (Astin & Leland, p. 42).
The following section is an overview of the family member’s influence on the presidents.

_Influential Parents_

They came from varied life situations – farms, the working class, an immigrant background, academic parents, parents with family-owned businesses and single parents and all-female households. The majority confirm other studies that noted strong identification of daughters with fathers but also called the attention to the importance of self-actualized women in their lives…often these women were their mothers (Astin & Leland, p. 42).

As corroborated in the Astin and Leland study, parents served as a powerful influence in their daughters’ formative years. Not surprisingly, the presidents in this survey emerged from an equally diverse set of life situations as the leaders in the earlier study. The following are specifics for the presidents (A, B, G, I, J, L, V, and Y) whose parents both served relatively equal roles as significant influencers in the participant’s life.

Neither of president A’s parents graduated from high school, yet from an early age affirmed President A’s love of reading, travel, involvement in public communication and speech contests. President A said an effective leader first must “really enjoy people.” Her childhood home was a place where people were always welcome and treated with genuine hospitality. President A said that she takes this seriously, and that she strives to continue that hospitality in all of her leadership roles.

President L said that her leadership style is a product of two different, but compatible, parents. Her father, she said, was “jovial” while her mother was “task-oriented.” President L particularly credited her mother’s “persistence,” her “can do attitude,” and her ability to solve problems. She also cited her father’s “congeniality” as
an enabling factor in her ability to accomplish her tasks with “a sense of humor, and more sense of humanity” (President L).

President G said she was from a family of ministers, teachers, and doctors. She noted that there was a “presumption” in her family that all would be of “service to society,” and because they are capable and well educated, to take leadership positions in their communities.” President G’s mother modeled leadership and community service for her throughout her childhood (President G).

A number of presidents cited the freedom allowed by their parents for choices and decision-making as being particularly influential in their lives.

“My parents were very good about not putting anything off the table as impossible. I think that is very, very critical because the way in which you set your aspirations or what you can do, can be very limiting. That’s why nothing was out of bounds. Also, my parents, and grandparents were very good about instilling a work ethic that was very positive” (President J).

President Y described the influence of her parents as “first and foremost” She said that although they never placed particular expectations on her, they made her feel as if she had no limitations. “If I wanted to do something that would have been unusual for a girl of my generation, like when…I was in junior high school and wanted to have a paper route but girls didn’t have paper routes. It didn’t deter them; they let me have a paper route… That was very liberating” (President Y).

President V identified her family as having the first important influence in her life. She said they provided her with numerous diverse experiences, allowed her
freedom, and encouraged her to do well--without the pressure of feeling she should have done better at a particular task (President V).

“I always had very supportive parents that always suggested I could do anything I wanted to do, never pushed me in one direction or another, and let me sort out a lot of different things on my own, to make decisions as to what I would do” (President B).

President I was first influenced by two traditional parents to be a fulltime homemaker like her mother. There was, however, an expectation that she would graduate from college--in a community where this was uncommon. She credited her mother for her focus on the college education, and her father for ultimately supporting any task she wanted to undertake.

**Mothers as the Main Influencer**

Seven presidents (C, G, H, I, L, O, Y) identified their mothers as the main family influencer in their lives. The following is a brief overview of how these mothers influenced their presidential daughters.

President C said that her parents were influential, particularly her mother, who was her piano teacher and encouraged her to attempt anything she desired. “If (my mother) had been born in the seventies, she would have been out leading the parade for women’s rights…She was unbelievably able to forgive and forget, and had a strength that was very admirable, (something) that I learned more about as I got older” (President C).

President O identified her parents as the most influential people in her life, “…especially my mother. She is an extraordinary woman but certainly was not a college president or a corporate CEO. I think her unflagging support, and yet very high expectations contributed greatly…my parents gave me responsibility as a young person,
and there were very high expectations for me…” (President O). President G also talked about her mother modeling leadership for her.

President H was most influenced by her mother, an elementary school teacher who continued her education, ultimately earning both a bachelor and master’s degrees. President H noted that, “…watching my mother work hard, and continue to develop the potential was a very important factor to me. I admired my mother tremendously… her expectations of me were very high…she just wanted the very best from me, and I know that spurred me on to do my best.”

Although President M’s mother died at a very young age, she said that the leadership legacy that her mother left behind, along with the promises made to her by the grandmothers who would take over the parenting responsibilities, established a lifelong pathway of high expectations.

**Influential Fathers**

Although fathers did not appear to be as powerful an influencer as mothers in the lives most study presidents, they were a significant force for at least three. Presidents E, P, and G identified their fathers as a highly influential parent.

“The biggest influences on me were my parents,” President E said, “all my life I aspired to be like my mother. Then I woke up when I was about forty, and realized I’d turned into my father instead.” President E described her mother as a “wonderful, loving, giving person” who did not work after her father’s business became successful. Her father “loved” his career and worked until age eighty-five. She said that he viewed his work in the shoe business as a service that made people happy.
Influenced greatly by an older and more traditional father who wanted her to attend secretarial school, President P rebelled and attended a local public institution. Always seeking his approval, she said she finally obtained it as an adult when she received a note from her mother telling her how proud her father was of her accomplishments.

President G said, “My father has always told me that I could do anything I wanted to, and that I was the most wonderful creature that ever lived, and he still believes that, which I think is just wonderful…that helps young women get a sense of themselves as having great worth in the world” (President G).

**Influential Grandmothers**

President M said her two grandmothers had the most influence on her and placed high expectations on her from age one when her mother passed away. “I was reared by two grandmothers, and neither of my grandmothers went beyond third or eighth grade educations. One of the commitments that they made to my mother when she was ill was that I would get a college education. So I had to fulfill somebody else’s promise” (President M).

President W identified her grandmother as her first mentor.

**Spouses as Influencers and Encouragers**

Most of the presidents in the study were married and several noted the importance of having the support and encouragement of their spouse. Interestingly, nearly as many presidents spoke of how the resistance from a former spouse had been a limiting factor to their academic career.
“My grounding is my husband who is certainly my best friend, and my best advisor. He doesn’t always agree with me on things, but having somebody at home I can count on is really important” (President B).

President P met and married her husband when they were both in a doctoral program. She said it was his willingness to equally share home responsibilities that enabled her to finish her education and pursue a career.

Within five years, I had four children, and I almost was going to give it up, but my husband was very, very supportive and encouraging to me. He didn’t want me to give it up, so I finished, and then I worked. …In a funny way, people have said…to me, “being the mother of four probably taught you a lot of things that you needed to know as a president.” And yes, I think family life is an important ingredient of learning how to manage people--sometimes difficult people--(and of) learning how to build consensus (President P).

Families as a whole served as an early leadership training ground for most of the presidents in this study. Among the numerous qualities learned in a family setting by the respondents were the following: affirmation, encouragement, hospitality, enjoyment of people, humor, a sense of humanity, persistence, the belief that anything was possible, a “can do” attitude, value for service and being of service to society, freedom, a strong work ethic, and the power of forgiveness. All of these are widely seen as assets to leadership potential.

Non-family influencers. The following were identified as non-family influencers.

Mentors / Supervisors and Colleagues

“Role models and mentors give us permission to aspire and to act. We are given permission to be ourselves and to transcend prescribed gender roles. Role models and mentors also inspire us to try to realize our greatest potential” (Astin & Leland, p. 46)
Mentors, by far, played the most influential roles in the lives of the presidents in adulthood. Sixteen of the presidents cited examples of the impact of mentors on their lives, their education, and their careers (A, B, C, E, G, I, J, L, M, O, P, R, S, T, V, W). Most of the presidents, at various times during their careers, had the benefit of assistance from both men and women mentors. Most mentors, whose employment positions were specified, were in academic administration and people to whom the mentee held a subordinate position. There was an abundance of gratitude directed at mentors in the presidential interviews, which implies that the mentees highly value the influence of these leaders with the gift of their time through teaching, advising, and listening. The following are examples of the far-reaching influence of a wide variety of mentors.

“I’ve been a person who is always trying to look around and find attributes in individuals that I wanted to emulate, not a single role model” (President J).

A vice president at a bank who was Orthodox Jewish, was willing to hire President T, and daily brought Judeo-Christian principles into his work and life, and set a high standard of morals and values which she said influenced her greatly.

“The person who selected me for my first administrative job, gave me the freedom to kind of explore my wings, was a terrific role model” (President C).

Among her mentors, President O cited two women mentors who influenced her as a young administrator. The first mentor took President O under her wing and taught her by example – discussing with her the practical aspects of making a contribution to education. “I began to see what great meaning it had in her life, and that had a great influence on me” (President O). The second mentor was both inspirational and directive in her advice. President O said that she “directed in terms of where she placed me within
the organization, and had such high expectations...I also had a great male mentor at (a) …pivotal point in my professional development (He) was dean of the business school, and at times I just shuddered because of the increasing responsibilities he gave me, but I realize now how valuable that was.”

President W acknowledged the importance of a number of women mentors, but when she entered academia, she found few women in leadership positions, consequently, men began to fill mentoring roles. According to President W, “…the most important mentor …was the Provost. He was the first person who told me I was going to be a president.” Later in her career, a president would serve as an important mentor to President W.

President G discussed a series of male mentors who were an important influence on her career. “I had wonderful opportunities to hear stories about leadership, administration, and management that actually afford a much wider range of experience” (President G). President O worked with both good and bad examples of leadership. From the bad example she, “was able to learn, and really think about how I would want to do things differently, but the ones that were good …I wanted to be able to make the same level of contribution” (President O).

“Throughout my career, there have been individuals who have had attributes that were important to emulate. I think you have to have sponsors in order to be successful who let you try things, and provide feedback” (President J). President V also had a number of both male and female mentors, “who have been there for me for advice and counsel, and who have also pushed me and pulled me when I needed to be.” For President R, a vice president and two different presidents gave her the freedom to find her
“own level.” President A had two male mentors, a provost, who appointed her to her first administrative position as department chair, and later a college president, who suggested that she consider a presidency and told her, “‘You have certain gifts…and a responsibility to consider a leadership position like a presidency.’ We would have long talks about it. He was a real mentor and encourager” (President A). President B also had a number of male mentors in academia who helped her to reframe her ideas. “I have great ideas, but they’re never half as good as they are after somebody else has worked on them with me. These are all people that collaborate. I get better by the people I work with” (President B). President E learned a great deal from academic administrators, but said she also learned from people in other professions, particularly people on her boards, “I’ve learned a tremendous amount from successful business people who want to help young people get their start…I’ve learned a great deal about business matters, and about focusing on the big things” (President E).

President P worked for a president who picked her out of the faculty and said, “You’re going to be the Vice President of Academic Affairs.”

I knew nothing about administration. I had been chair of the English Department. At that time the vice president for administration and finance was a much feared individual on campus and he was very negative about me at the start, but I just persisted with him. I kept saying, “If I’m doing this the wrong way, what is the right way? If I signed this wrong, tell me what I’m doing wrong.” In a funny kind of way, over time, he became a mentor, taught me a lot about the bureaucracy, which was totally new to me (President P).

President I had a number of mentors who had a significant impact on her career and encouraged her to continue in her career track. One mentor was a dean who gave her valuable advice related to her place-boundness. He advised her to “not slip into the highly educated female Ph.D. part-time instructor mode that so many bright women were
being trapped in academically at that time …There are a lot of ways to be happy. Don’t settle just because you love hanging out at the university.” Later in her career, a woman vice president of academic affairs gave President I the opportunity to be the first woman dean of the graduate school, even though all previous graduate deans had come from the sciences or humanities and she was in educational administration, a so-called “professional” school. Later, in a graduate school-related meeting with the president, he said, “If you’re ever going to be a president, you better get going on it.” After recovering from the shock, President I said she began to think about what she might need to prepared for the position that she now has (President I).

President L had early access to academic leaders. She ghost-wrote a number of academic policy papers and participated in a number of meetings where she learned first-hand about administration from the inside. Over time, this influenced her decision to take on a leadership role:

I don’t think…my generation of women, (always) understood that we could do this. The young women I work with now, who are in college, there’s just no stopping them. But we were a little bit more equivocal. People have said to me, “You could do this.” So the combination of watching, being engaged with leaders, and the support that comes from personal relationships, made me see that it was possible (President L).

Among the mentors for President S was a provost who was particularly influential. “That was the first time I had worked closely with a woman in a leadership position. She was very important to me both in her encouragement of me (and she was someone) on whom I could model myself” (President S).

President M said she analytically adopted aspects of leadership styles from several mentors and, from that, created her own style.
Gardner writes that “the discovery of a fine mentor…can strengthen…attributes even in middle age (1990, p. 163). It is apparent that mentors can be important models, trusted friends, teachers, shapers, enablers, facilitators, advisors, visionaries, encouragers, and inspirers. Because nearly every president in this study mentioned the significant influence of mentors and discussed specific events, many of which had a major impact on the direction and ultimate career outcomes for many of these presidents, carefully selecting and fostering positive relationships with mentors may well be among the most important changeable attribute contributing to achieving, and succeeding in, administrative roles.

**School Teachers**

“At the school level, values are still being shaped, and teachers have their impact through precept and example. Not only the ethos of the school but also the patterns of interpersonal behavior exhibited by teachers and administrators, have their effect” (Gardner, 1990, p. 163-164).

Seven presidents (A, B, J, R, T, V, and Y) identified teachers as important influencers. The following section includes specifics on the way these teachers affected these young lives.

For President T, it was a sixth grade teacher who convinced the entire class that the best period of the day was math. When the students were particularly good, they were rewarded with an extra fifteen minutes of math. President T noted that the whole class went on to do “exceptional things with that sort of attitude” and it sprang from the sixth grade sciences and math. President T also noted an “extraordinary and dynamic”
tenth grade teacher, a debate coach and non-traditional woman for her era, “We probably worked the hardest of any of the teams,” President T recalled, “and succeeded that way.”

President Y was greatly influenced by the Sisters at her Catholic school. Her parents did not attend college, but the well-educated Sisters had interesting lives and served as role models for leadership and high achievement while still appearing to lead joyful, fulfilling lives.

President J surrounded herself with characteristics that she wanted to emulate, “So it went from the high school math teacher, who was doing really non-traditional work, to others in the community who were making a difference” (President J).

President V acknowledged the influence of a number of teachers throughout her elementary, secondary, undergraduate and graduate education. She said she “loved” learning and had good relationships with her teachers. “They encouraged me. It’s all to me about a confidence spiral, that if you do well, and people have faith and confidence in you, then you have more confidence in yourself” (President V).

“In my high school years, I had a wonderful science teacher who thought you could do whatever you set out to do. There weren’t any barriers” (President R).

President A said that her primary influences were early relationships with teachers, beginning in elementary school and extending through high school. “I was involved in lots of extracurricular activities with teachers and they were very encouraging” (President A).

I . . . give the greatest credit to my high school biology teacher, without whom I would probably not have gone in the direction I did. I loved his class, and he’s the one who set the stage for what I would do in college. Interestingly, not too long ago, I got a
letter from him, and he said, “You’ll never remember who I am. I was your high school biology teacher and I have followed your career.” It was so much fun to hear from him. I wrote back and said, “Not know who you are! You’re the reason I am where I am.” He was one of the most influential people for me (President B).

*Professors*

For presidents C, E, G, H, R, S, and V, it was college professors who had the most significant impact on their career direction.

President C said she struggled with the decision of either joining the Peace Corps or staying in school and finishing a piano performance degree. At that crucial time, a professor who had a profound influence on her convinced her that, “what I was doing was worthwhile in music because people who had enough to eat needed nourishment for the soul too, and that I didn’t need to think that only those who helped the third world countries were doing good for society” (President C). Additionally, President C’s doctoral advisor provided her with feedback and challenged her to step out of her “comfort zone;” challenged everything she thought and believed in, and made her realize she had a better brain than she thought. “I do believe that was probably a turning point. Because of that experience I went back to my job after having been gone for two years (as) a far better pianist; a better, more sophisticated teacher; and I had a whole different slant on things” (President C).

President G reported little direction from her college professors save for a few professors who encouraged her to go to graduate school. President V credited her professors for their part in encouraging her and helping her to have a “terrific educational experience” (President V).
President R said that among the people who influenced her most were the faculty she encountered in college:

I was in school in a time when women were pretty much ignored. I went to a college with four men to every woman, so mostly men in my college life who were the “cheerleader people” to say “you really have all the capabilities to do anything you want to do. You choose and we’ll help you get there” (President R).

An English professor greatly influenced President E, culminating in her pursuing the same discipline, literature. “…He really captured my imagination,” she said.

Likewise, President S identified a college professor “who was enormously inspiring, and … changed me from being a good student to being someone who thought of herself as an intellectual. That was really important” (President S). President H’s college advisor helped her to obtain an assistantship to graduate school so that she could attend graduate school as the single mother with three children.

Other People

A simple introduction may change career landscapes. While on scholarship, President J met the Vice President for Student Affairs, who arranged for her to visit one of the leading experts in higher education at another state university. This expert offered her a job as a professor.

President H said she had two life-changing encounters. “I would say that one influential person for me was an assistant pastor at the Lutheran church who listened to my unhappiness, and counseled me… by the time I was done with the counseling sessions, I was going to college and divorcing.” The other influencer was a librarian who helped President H gather materials to “test out” of nearly a year’s worth of college courses, which helped enable her to attend college.
Family, teachers, professors, and mentors all obviously served as powerful influencers and enablers for the presidents in this study. Based on the sixteen responses, mentors were the most important people shaping the direction and careers for most of the presidents. They were most helpful in guiding, instructing, and encouraging the study respondents, specifically within the administrative system. Closely following mentors were “family members” whose influence elicited fifteen responses. Parents were important influencers, particularly mothers, who established strong leadership models for their daughters and were a source of encouragement to pursue goals, often non-traditional goals. Few people have a choice about who their childhood family members will be. Consequently, the influence of family cannot be considered a changeable attribute. Still, it may be helpful to understand the early backgrounds of the presidents, if for no other reason than to assess developmental strengths and weaknesses and develop a plan to potentially fill in any gaps.

Mentors, on the other hand, appear to be a major key to progress on the path to leadership and even into the presidency. Although some mentors may arrive unbidden, it appears more probable that these often very busy people will be more likely to assist if invited to do so. Many of the presidents in the study deliberately sought and encouraged the involvement of mentors, a decision from which only benefit and positive outcomes were reported. It therefore may be concluded that individuals aspiring to presidencies should seriously consider deliberately recruiting positive role-model mentors to assist and advise them along the path to the presidency.
Events or Circumstances of Influence

Events, as well as people, may significantly impact an individual’s life and direction. The following are events and circumstances reported by the presidents of this study to have been key influencers on the directions of their lives, particularly at major transition points. “Learning opportunities” were cited by ten of the study presidents (B, C, I, J, L, M, O, P, R, and T) along with “personal events or decisions” (by Presidents A, C, E, G, H, M, O, R, W, and Y) as the most frequent categories of these influential events or circumstances. Most presidents either said or implied that these events and / or circumstances were significant influencers. President Y said “key opportunities that came my way, helped me a lot.”

![Figure 4.4. Events that Most Influenced Presidents](chart)

*Figure 4.4. Events that Most Influenced Presidents*

Learning opportunities—academia / scholarships / awards / travel. With a total of ten responses, learning opportunities was one of the two the most cited events and circumstances categories that influenced the lives and careers of this study’s presidents.
Academia / scholarships / academic awards. Presidents B (above), C, I, J, L, O, P, R, and T cited opportunities in academia, including scholarships and awards, as the key influential event and circumstances at the various transition points of their lives. The following are examples of the significant markers of academic journeys taken by some of the presidents in this study.

While teaching at a college, President B had the opportunity to attend a summer institute in comparative anatomy. The medical school environment inspired her, and in retrospect, each opportunity appeared to be leading her, to return to work at the medical school at her university. Later, she worked in a dermatological lab, which led her into an unlikely new area of medicine. Ultimately, through the networks that resulted from these jobs, President B unexpectedly found herself in an administrative position. She became a vice president in research because she loved research and graduate students, and then later decided to broaden her scope and move into undergraduate education. “So generally, each step opened another door to another whole series of opportunities, and I just picked and chose” (President B).

After ten years of working in a university, President C took a one-year sabbatical to study with a man whose pedagogy and books had long intrigued her. Few music professors are able to take a year away from students without losing many of them. “I bit the bullet. I left for a year, and it turned into two years. That was certainly a life-changing thing that prepared me to go back” (President C).

Another event cited by President C occurred when she agreed to chair the academic senate following a successful record of senate committee work. Although she said she was highly challenged and stressed, she quickly found that she could appear
calm and was able to lead the senate through a number of difficult issues. “I tell my
students it isn’t what happens, it’s how you deal with it,” she said, “I dealt with it well,
and I developed a reputation on campus for being able to get things done in spite of all
that was going on around me.” President C said she has enjoyed every job she had and
was always reluctant to relinquish a position. Eventually, she was offered, an associate
deanship in the college of arts and sciences. At the time, President C said she was
concerned about losing her role as a faculty member and contact with students, but was
intrigued by her senate experience, particularly in dealing with the administration and
board. She accepted the position and ultimately termed it the “greatest job in the world.”
President C said she felt the same way about each of her subsequent positions as dean,
provost and finally, president.

When I’m really committed to a principle, I’ll follow through on it. I had more
influence as an administrator over advancing the status of women, and combating
sexual harassment (and) discrimination. I had a lot more influence as an
administrator than I did as a faculty member, which helped satisfy that conflict
that I’ve had all my life between joining the Peace Corps and being a pianist (and)
working on issues of social justice (President C).

In addition to an earlier position with a major corporation, President T taught a
course at a nearby university and found that she had both an interest and ability in
teaching. Eventually, President T assumed a fulltime faculty position at a university.
She also subsequently earned a PhD. “I’d applied to Princeton and was turned down
because they didn’t accept women in Ph.D. programs.” Instead, President T attended a
major state university. For many years, she spent alternating semesters teaching in
Europe. She was also involved on a project involving the new University of Africa
(President T).
President O majored in psychology and minored in English, and entered graduate school studying educational psychology. Eventually, she turned to counseling, and earned a Master’s in student affairs and academic administration. For her doctorate, President O combined coursework in counseling with higher education administration and, in time, earned a Ph.D.

Marriage interrupted President R’s graduate education at a major private southern university and she returned to the East Coast to be with her new husband, finish her master’s degree, and eventually teach at a small women’s college. Because she had not yet completed her dissertation, President R’s first attempt at tenure was turned down by the dean. Later, she received a fellowship to complete her dissertation, which resulted in tenure and a promotion. President R remained a fulltime faculty member for twelve years then moved into administration, where she has served for twenty-eight years. The vice president of the college offered President R an associate dean’s position, which she accepted even though she had been granted a sabbatical and had applied for a Fulbright. President R said that this was an opportunity to have a more “authoritative role, to really fix some things, and to earn a lot more money.” She viewed the move as temporary and planned to return to the sabbatical and Fulbright, but never did. “I never looked back.” President R later became an ACE Fellow. “That’s really a very self-conscious presidential grooming process. From that point on, I was really on a trajectory to where I am.” Over time, President R became dean and then vice president at the same institution and knew she would have to leave to advance. She accepted a position at another university, relinquished tenure, and started anew. “(It) was the biggest risk I ever took, and it was also just exhilarating. It was a very liberating thing …It made it much easier
when the time came to leave that role and come to a presidency, because I had already really made the functional break” (President R).

President L was a teacher and her first significant transition was deciding to attend graduate school. Her husband was attending graduate school at the time and the prospect interested her. President L said that, after she began her coursework, she soon discovered that she would enjoy being a teacher of teachers. The graduate experience “opened her eyes” and she decided to pursue a doctorate as well. President L said a doctoral program, “changes your life forever . . . it puts you at a different place where there is no turning back. It’s like a big jet airplane taking off, they don’t have any choice; they have to fly” (President L).

President I’s decision to abandon her plan of being a fulltime homemaker after the birth of her fourth daughter was initially triggered by the selection of various sociological and historical books on the county library book mobile when it stopped outside her suburban house. Books such as Richard Hofstadter’s *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* influenced President I to become more active in seeking professional reading opportunities, and made her realize how much she missed the intellectual challenge that had previously been a part of her life. “As much as I loved my family, and continue to love them, I realized that it wasn’t going to be enough” (President I).

President H received an assistantship which allowed her to continue in graduate school as the single parent of three children. President T was awarded a scholarship to study in Northern Europe and later won a Fulbright. President J received a scholarship to a large state university. President P received numerous scholarships and fellowships, which financially allowed her to attend college (President P).
Travel

Through her Fulbright, President T was able to travel extensively throughout Europe, followed by a trek across North Africa after the program was over. President T eventually ended in the Middle East, where she met and married her husband. She later moved from the Midwest to an East Coast city to work for a major national corporation. Additionally, President T returned each summer to the Middle East. Travel, she said, continued to be a big part of her career.

President M’s tragic loss of her mother at an early age had a powerful influence on her life. She was raised by two strong grandmothers who tried to offer every opportunity to succeed. President M said she blossomed in high school and credits a move to California to attend a new high school. President M later returned to the South and said that having experienced such environmental diversity was greatly motivating.

Personal event or decision. The following were personal influencers.

Divorce

The most frequently mentioned personal event in the lives of this study’s presidents was “divorce.” Presidents C, G, H, M, R, and Y all discussed how divorce was a key event in their lives.

President Y divorced and found that she needed to pursue a career that was more lucrative than working for “the church.” Later, she noticed a job posting for president of a traditionally male institution which was looking for a “very different kind of leader.” President Y’s background includes several military-related credentials and she became the first woman in that position. She had six fulfilling years at the college and remarked,
“Once you’re a president then you’re somebody stable. You get recruited for jobs over and over again” (President Y).

President G accepted the opportunity to complete a doctorate following her divorce.

President R divorced after completing her doctorate and receiving tenure.

President M’s spouse initially supported her career goals, but emotionally “didn’t weather them very well.” Their marriage ended in divorce (President M). President H found that she had to go through a divorce before she would be able to return to college and seek a career in academia. She later married a man she met in graduate school and both pursued careers in academia. President C quit school in the middle of her master’s degree to get married, and then divorced three years later. “At that point, I took the first job that was offered to me, which was teaching in a public school. I took the risk of leaving my public school job, which would have been very secure, (and took) a college job for one semester. That one semester job turned into a 27 year career…at (a) university” (President C).

Children

President G applied for a dean’s position after being nominated by a colleague. President G, perhaps humorously, claimed that she only accepted the nomination because it allowed her to step off the hiring committee for that position and therefore free her from the many meetings to have more time to work on her book. Thinking that she had only ended up in the final pool as an affirmative action candidate, a tentative President G was approached by her son who said, “Now mom, you’ve got to decide whether you want this job because if you do, then you’ll just go get it,” which she did. President G also
cited as helpful attendance at an ACE Roundtable workshop in Washington, DC which
provided her with a type of career road map (President G).

Because of the birth of her daughter, President A chose not to pursue an open
provost position at her college, which would have involved a significant time
commitment. Later, she took a Dean position at another college (President A).

President E and her husband raised five children, the first of which was born the
fall before she began her doctoral studies. Her husband was also a doctoral student at this
time and President E said that this type of responsibility, “…really focuses the mind,
teaches you how to use your time well” (President E).

**Personal charge / Desire to contribute or improve conditions**

President O said that she never consciously chose academic administration, but
loved education and the college environment. President O said she came to the early
realization that education was, “key to almost everything that’s positive in life…I began
to want to make a contribution” (President O).

President G said she was motivated by the sense that “something wasn’t being
done very well and needed to be fixed.” She accepted a position as associate chair in an
English Department and assumed the position of director of graduate studies. She also
served on the undergraduate policy council and was elected chair of that council.
President G said she had never planned to move into administration, but her
administrative career had begun.

President M reported that she eventually came to the realization that she needed to
“build a professional life” and that she had a daughter for whom she needed to be a
model. “All of those life transitions inform what you do” (President M).
Learning to deal with disappointment

President W identified learning to deal with disappointment as the main key event during her transition times. She said that the knowledge made her a better leader. She completed her PhD in 1975, which was a bad year for humanities job-placement. Even though she completed a PhD from a top university, her best job offer was in an open-access institution in the Midwest, which she reluctantly accepted. Although it was initially “eye-opening,” President W said she soon discovered that this type of institution served an important purpose.

Change in profession / career / location. Presidents A, E, H, I, L, P, V, and Y told stories of various key changing career events and circumstances that influenced their most important career transitions. Many presidents made significant career changes and, interestingly, none of our eighteen presidents said that they had a goal to be president from an early age. The tendency was for these presidents to very gradually approach the presidency, as if it were a series of unconscious successive approximations, with the encouragement and even occasional strategic push from mentors and colleagues until ultimately they became president. According to what the presidents said about their administrative ascension, the reluctance to aspire to the highest positions of leadership was for most, still somewhat evident until they actually assumed the presidency.

President Y returned to live with her parents after spending five years in a convent. She accepted a job, but said she quickly realized she needed to finish her education, even though neither she nor her family had the resources for graduate school. President Y visited the local military recruiter, was tested and accepted for officer candidate school. Her decision eventually yielded numerous further leadership
opportunities and included the opportunity to attend good schools and acquire early leadership experience. President Y became an officer, which involved rapidly rising levels of responsibility and, eventually, two commands. Among President Y’s most recent career changes, was leaving the military to accept a position as chief academic officer.

While President V’s first career was in social work, she eventually convinced a local college that she was qualified to provide academic advising and changed careers. President V said that “the key issue(s) (were)… defining that bridge by extrapolating some skills from one arena to another.” She was able to join a young community college at a young age and professionally “grew up” there. President V returned to school twice. “I was willing to take the risk, and willing to change to an arena I’ve never worked in, then go back and get the credentials I needed to do it, and keep challenging myself” (President V).

Early in her career, President A was asked by her then-president to consider an open provost position. Shortly thereafter, the president died suddenly and President A found herself serving as interim president. She said she was not planning to pursue the presidency, but after considerable encouragement from trustees, faculty, staff, colleagues, students and alumni, said she needed a “three month period” to consider the position,” during which time she “pray(ed) about it very diligently.” Ultimately, President A decided to apply for the position. President P likewise ascended rapidly, partially due to people unexpectedly leaving their positions. She became vice president of academic affairs just before the Spring semester began and, by April, the president of the university left and she became president (President P).
President E’s introduction to administration came when she served on an English Department search committee to find a chair. The department was firmly split when President E moved that they consider a three-year term instead of five-years. She said that the committee thought she was volunteering. President E finally agreed to serve believing that being chair would be “easier” than staying on the committee. After five years, she went back to research and teaching. At the same time that the provost resigned, she had made a proposal for an interdisciplinary center. President E was asked to serve as acting provost and when she did, accepted her own proposal. She served seven years and was nominated for a similar position at another college (President E).

While finishing her masters degree and serving in her first career position, President I said she realized that as much as she valued public education, she was not interested in a permanent career in teaching. When her youngest child graduated from high school, she said she began to look at universities elsewhere (President I).

When President L had small children and a husband who was working part time, she decided to seek a job with a higher salary. She eventually found an administrative position, which actually allowed her more time and flexibility than the faculty position she held previously. President L believed this was a key event in her career, as was the decision to leave the university and make a major move to a smaller college (President L).

Key events in President H’s career include beginning as an assistant professor of English, moving to various administrative positions, ending up as vice provost, and deciding she would like to be a president. Eventually, she served as president at another
college near to her original university, where her husband still served as a professor (President H).

For many more presidents, opportunity (or lack there of) served as an important factor in key events and circumstances in the careers of these respondents. Many presidents initially found themselves place-bound due to family obligations, however, when opportunity presented itself at the right times, these presidents were unafraid to seize and make the most of it. All appeared to enjoy the adventure of exploring new positions, locations, and, for some, even types of institutions. For the most part, this does not appear to be a hesitant or tentative group of individuals, and certainly their comments reflected very little timidity. These presidents were predominantly bold, adventuresome, and persistent, and generally capitalized on the key opportunities and events in their lives.

Reoccurring characteristics, values and motivations emerged at some point for many of the participants of this study as they stepped onto the path of leadership. Some of these include the following:

1. An awareness of ability or aptitude for leadership
2. Deciding to take on the responsibility of leadership
3. An ability to see the “big picture”
4. An ability to detect weakness or problems within a system and find a way to solve the problems
5. A desire to work with others as a leadership team, sharing power and responsibility
6. A desire or sense of responsibility to “contribute,” to make things better
7. The view that the development of leadership ability as an ongoing evolutionary process
8. Following the encouragement and vision of others, whether family, teachers, professors, or mentors, to step out and risk taking leadership roles
9. Taking advantage of educational opportunities

10. The ability to learn from and integrate life experiences into the leadership role

The Investigators in the Astin and Leland study said,

[Leadership] takes place when a certain combination of elements come together, where something needs to be done and enough people want to do it, and there’s the right combination of people that have the ideas and the people who understand the process…Leadership you earn by being able to put together that right combination of things so that people are doing what they want to do (Astin & Leland, p. 1).

II. The Pathway to the Presidency

Introduction

Once a leadership position has been achieved, the presidents in this study engaged in activities and continued to progress on their leadership paths. One by one, these leaders said they began to realize that the presidency was a goal, or at the very least, a possibility. This section examines the leadership journey to the presidency. Included in this examination will be a study of the attributes the respondents already possessed and how they honed them, the important choices and accomplishments that contributed to the leadership success which ultimately made the presidency an option, what some presidents would have done differently in their careers if they had the opportunity to make changes.

Choices that Contributed to Leadership Success

The presidents in this study were asked to discuss what they thought were the most important choices that contributed to their success in leadership. The following are their responses.
Choosing new directions/Choosing to take risks/Action/Liability of not doing.

“The world is not going to come to us,” warned Judith Sturnick, Director of the Office of Women in Higher Education at the American Council on Education. “Without risks you get nowhere, but think before acting (Wenniger & Conroy, 2001, p. 247)

Risk-taking was a common and often repeated theme for the presidents of this study. Many of the significant, and seemingly risky choices resulted in great opportunities that often moved individuals further down the path to the presidency. The following information includes the importance risk-taking, of being unafraid of change, and of the liability of not doing so from the presidents who counted these moves as among the most important choices contributing to their eventual success. Thirteen presidents (A, B, C, E, G, H, I, J, M, R, T, V, and Y) thought that risk-taking choices, particularly when they involved taking action and moving in a new career direction, was critical to their leadership success. Many discussed their single most important choice, as well as the liabilities of failing to take risks. Having choices always means that there is more than one option from which a person may select their preference, making this a
changeable entity, one that may completely change the direction or potential direction of a career. After reading these thirteen excerpts, it seems clear that having the courage to choose well thought out, yet often seemingly risky moves, was considered to be of the utmost importance for career success for these presidents. Several said or implied that they do not believe they would have reached the presidency without such risk-taking. At the end of this section, Presidents I and L discussed the importance for a president (or potential president) to be able to relocate when an appropriate opportunity arises.

President C said that perhaps the most important choice she made was “to leave a place after 27 years and take a new job, and that was excruciating.” She left a place where she had started as a “rookie” instructor, and ended as the dean of arts and sciences. She also left a significant other behind. “I thought I’d ruined my life,” President C said. In describing this most difficult and challenging time, she spoke about behavioral choices that helped make her successful including, “the choice to take on hard issues, to not shy away from a fight,” choices to “work hard,” choices to “take an unpopular stance” (President C).

President Y said, “Fundamentally, at some point along the way, I made a choice to take a risk…” She said that people of her generation might have hesitated, but she was able to respond because, “each time I found myself curious about an opportunity, conventional wisdom might have suggested that it wouldn’t (work), and for some reason or other, I would try things. I’ve been happy with that…I think nothing ventured nothing gained, and … in my case that was absolutely true” (President Y).

Just as her marriage was falling apart, President G was offered the opportunity to start a Ph.D. With three children in tow, she attended the summer semesters. “I’ve
always … been willing to just take a risk. That was probably the one (choice) that started me on this path. I’m a little vague about all this because I just seem always to have been the one in charge, and I don’t know quite how that happened.” President G said that even as a high school teacher at age 23 her class was always orderly and well behaved.

Earlier in her career, President J had been invited to become the assistant to the president to assist in a complicated contract problem involving tenured faculty that was being held up by Affirmative Action issues. The institution did not have an Affirmative Action plan at the time and controversy followed President J’s decisions. She said that this was a “high-risk proposition because there was a lot at stake for the institution through an uncharted territory.” President J agreed to accept the position and the outcome was successful… “I’ve been fortunate over the years that people who know me are prepared to at least place a bet with me for another role, and that’s most gratifying” (President J).

According to President V, included in her important career choices were continually “kicking myself out of jobs I like, because I’m not one who is going to stay somewhere for twenty years. I need to be engaged in what I’m doing, and I tend to like what I am doing, and I know you can get stuck. I was in a presidency before I came here, and I kicked myself out of that just because I knew I wasn’t going to do it forever. I had to respond to opportunities, and not say ‘Well, twenty years from now I’ll do this.’” President V recommended having an “antenna out” and being ever-conscious about where one is in one’s career. “I’m a believer that you need to keep checking in with yourself. That enables you to make choices, especially if it means responding to opportunities. Sometimes they’re out there and you may not be paying attention… you
can’t decide in these jobs that you’re going to get that one at that time. You have to at least know what kinds of things you might be looking for or else you might respond to the wrong call” (President V).

President R said that she is “fearless” about intellectual and, to some extent, financial risks. She said she is able to manage well with scarce resources and doesn’t “worry” or “look over my shoulder a lot.” For President R, the risky choice to leave and give up tenure was the most life-changing choice of her career. It made her think, for the first time of herself as a leader, she said.

When you make that profound a change in a job or location in particular, you really have the opportunity to reinvent yourself. You’re able to be self conscious about leadership in a whole different way…One of the strategies that was important for me was that I chose to take on assignments, areas of new learning, that I knew I was going to need later on. For example, I worked very hard in development, working on grants, helping to work on a capital campaign…I learned a great deal more about public relations and ambitions from the vantage of when anybody said, “It would be really nice if somebody would,” I would often choose to be the “somebody” because it expanded my reach. The more I learned, the more I was able to bring to this presidency. I have done my time in just about every piece of the operation. I think the most important choices are when you take a risk, and take on something that you think you have the skill to do, but you don’t quite have it all. Bit by bit, that builds your capacity (President R).

President A credited her choice to become an associate dean for faculty development as a significant choice leading to success. Although it may have been somewhat of a risk, she said that it focused on the positives, on how to help administer and develop faculty. As a president, she still considers herself a “faculty developer.” She said that her choice enabled her to transition to the challenges of being an academic dean, provost, and a president, where she says the decisions weren’t always positive. “I think if I hadn’t had that really positive experience first, I probably would have just continued to teach because I love that so much. I had to learn to become comfortable with difficult
decisions, and people that not only disagreed, but (did) not (like) you because of a
decision. That took me a while to adjust to” (President A).

President B enjoyed “jumping into roles.” She identified the most important
choice that contributed to her leadership success as her decision to leave science, but to
still use the many skills she developed from her experience in that discipline including
rigorous decision-making procedures. It was important to President B when operating in
different arenas to approach problems scientifically, starting with a hypothesis, gathering
data, using scientific methods. She said love of science and her ability to transfer those
skills into her general leadership style was, “part of the success. It kept me very engaged
in the community that I love… and a network… (a) vast link around the country to
people, and I think people are really what you need” (President B).

President E said she thought that perhaps most recent decision, to come to her
current institution, was her most significant choice. She had been happy at her last
institution where she loved the students and alumni. When President E was offered a
position at a research university, she left the “college of my heart” to go to the “university
of my head.” Although it was difficult to leave, she said she knew exactly what needed
to happen at the new university, while she felt she had done all that she could for her
original college. “When I called my mother to tell her, I burst into tears. I was so upset,
but it was the right choice, and I really have been able to take the experience . . . and use
it to great advantage here.” President E said she could see the potential for the university
with the right leader.

An important choice for President I was to return quickly from being a fulltime
homemaker to her vocation. She had received “adamant” advice from the principal at her
former school that she needed to “stand in line to get leadership opportunities” and “pay her dues” and if she quit, she would “get out of line.” Instead, President I said she responded,

No, I’m going to go and excel and see what happens. I’m not going to go get in line for the next fifteen years, and be fifty when I get my first leadership job. In higher education, I would have been far too old had I gotten in line, and simply acted as though I were twenty. I wasn’t twenty, and I didn’t have time to do that” (President I).

President T made the choice to work at an academic institution, even though she had had no previous intention of going on in administration. President T said she believed that it is important to be open to opportunities, and be willing to take the risks that those opportunities afforded. President T also identified as important, a “willingness to step out,” to take on even highly controversial issues to protect human rights, maintain a sense of fairness, and to stand up and represent the inclusiveness of the institution” (President T).

President M credited her choice to pursue professional opportunities that were presented to her as the foundation of her later administrative success. One risk was to pursue the professional opportunities that were presented to her. She decided to take a position that moved her laterally at first and then, eventually, upward. She said she often felt like a “ghost writer” for other people who continually took the credit for the papers she wrote. In time, President M came to accept her role because it gave her a view from “the eagle’s nest” (President M).

President H’s best choices were made by “looking at possibilities, and trying for them, thinking about what I would like to do, what was a challenge and an opportunity?” She said she moved from an English department to associate dean, and then to the
provost position because she was interested in the positions and thought she could succeed. President H emphasized that it is important to look “for the ways that are open, not being set that it needs to be a particular way.” She warned that if options are limited only to a particular path, there may be people along that path that will stay for a long time. President H stressed the importance of flexibility and noted that if a traditional path is not open when there is an interest to move… find “alternate routes.” President H had made a similar choice in her past, choosing to go into English because she could not afford the time-constraints of pursuing music at the time. “What seems natural may not be open to you, so you look for the best. Instead of looking for what is the right choice, look for a good choice, and then make it right.” Her theory was put to the test when she and her husband were both seeking academic positions at the same time. President H’s first choice was not a viable option for her husband’s career, so they selected jobs that were the best combined choice for the two of them (President H).

Importance of moving

President I said that her decision to leave the university and seek leadership positions elsewhere was a difficult, but a necessary turning point along her leadership pathway. “You can’t stay in higher education in the same institution. It was like leaving home” (President I).

President L said that the biggest mistake she made was the decision to stay at an institution too long. “I was told repeatedly that it would really be better for me to leave at the end of my doctorate, spread my wings, get into a tenure track, and get on with things,” she said. President L said she considered herself to be place-bound. “While I gained a lot of experience in the eight years I was an academic administrator without
tenure, I also lost time….the good news is I was able to ascend in my home institution, which is relatively rare.” President L received three degrees, became a professor and eventually executive dean at the same institution, but, “it took longer.” According to President L, “I would have had more national opportunities if I had not viewed myself place bound. So mobility is a really important thing” (President L).

Education / Training. Although “learning” was addressed in the previous section on Pathways to Leadership, the following information was offered by President C, H, I, M, O, T, and V in response to what they perceived as being choices that contributed to their leadership success.

Two of President C’s most important choices, after ten years as a higher education faculty member, were to first take a sabbatical, and then eventually finish her doctorate. Without these two decisions, she said she did not feel that she would have had the opportunity to be successful (President C). President T said that choosing the educational route gave her greater career diversity and choices. For example, she said she studied capital market movements overseas, which enabled her to travel throughout Europe (President T). The most important choices for President O were her choices of where to attend college. For her bachelor’s degree she chose to attend a small private college in the South where she had a good relationship with the faculty. For graduate school, President O said she consciously chose a large public research institution with excellent professors (President O).

Choices that President V identified as contributing to her success included returning to graduate school two different occasions. In both instances, she was an older student, but still attended part-time. She said she had to commute in the mountains an
hour each way once a week for three years. For her doctorate, President V took a leave of absence and attended school full-time, living apart from her husband during that time. President P also said that her most important choice was to finish her doctorate, which she had nearly abandoned. When she became pregnant with her second child, she was about to give up on completing her research when her husband said “the five years are coming up… if you don’t start it up again you’re not going to make it.” The decision to return to her doctorate changed her life. “I wouldn’t be a college president without a PhD” (President P).

President I said that her most significant choice was to stay in college and graduate, despite an early marriage and the pressure to quit to earn more money. In identifying important choices, President M said, “it was, clearly, taking advantage of an opportunity for doctoral studies, education and professional experiences.”

Mentioned favorably several times throughout the interview process were advanced higher education leadership programs designed to prepare women administrators for the role of the presidency. President H said that her experience at the Bryn Mawr Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration in the summer of 1990 was very influential to her success.

Spouse / Family. Several presidents (A, G, P, T and W) attributed much of their success to their choice of spouse. Other presidents cited the support of their entire family as crucial. Choosing to marry her husband opened many opportunities for President T, including a new academic discipline. President W said, her first, and most important choice, was her husband. The couple had been married for thirty-four years at the time of this interview… “He’s been a wonderful support forever.” President W said her second
most important choice was that of adopting children. “They have made all the difference in the world” (President W). “I am really basically a complete marshmallow whose most important thing in my life is my family, my kids, my grandchildren . . .” (President G).

President A said that her choice of spouse was her best decision. “In these positions, you need to have somebody who is not ego-centered, somebody who is really a great support, a great champion, and I have been fortunate to have that” (President A).

President P used to teach the works of Jane Austen and said that Austen’s books were valuable tools in instructing both men and women the importance of making good choices:

My life would have been totally different with another kind of man than the man I married; a man who gave me space, who encouraged me, who was an intellectual, who loved me for my mind as well as for other kinds of relationships. I think that’s a very important choice. You can’t choose your parents. You really can’t choose your children, but the one big choice you have in life is the choice of a partner, and I truly chose the right one (President P).

Accomplishments that Contributed to Leadership and Success

The presidents in this study to a great degree shared common values, goals, and styles of leadership. The success of these attributes is evident in their accomplishments. These presidents all value education and most set goals accordingly, to improve their own institutions, to improve the educational system, and therefore make a contribution to the betterment of society. And as they work tirelessly toward these goals, they also work collectively, in teams, empowering one another to accomplish even more challenging tasks. One of the participants in Astin and Leland’s study spoke enthusiastically about what can be accomplished through collective action: “Change occurs by hard work, by inspiring people to form a vision, by networking, and by having people come together to
accomplish a change” (1991, p. 157). Mendonca asked the presidents and chancellors in her study which of their personal or professional accomplishments had given them the greatest sense of satisfaction. Of the varied responses, dominant themes were “success as a parent,” “successful integration of family and career priorities,” and “attainment of the position of president” (1995, p. 129).

![Figure 4.6. Presidents’ Most Important Accomplishments Leading to Success](image)

Change: Improvement, innovation, courage and seizing opportunities.

“According to the women positional leaders, change occurs when you first see the problem, get a clear picture of it, and then mobilize others by organizing the collective effort to bring about desired change within the existing structure…” (Astin & Leland, p. 116).

Presidents A, B, C, E, G, H, I, L, O, P, R, S, T, V, and Y all said that the greatest accomplishments that contributed to their success were changes they made and opportunities they sought regarding the institutions where they served. This is a significant topic in that it is one of the few where fifteen or more presidents responded so
similarly. This may also indicate that a common value motivates these presidents: the desire to make a difference, to contribute to society. Below is a remarkable list of accomplishments with some interesting similarities.

President C had success in creating a mission-driven faculty, as well as success in creating “faculty-friendly,” but rigorous internal evaluation policies. She said she saw her success as the ability to unite people to get things done. She oversaw much work on accreditation issues and at the same time wrote a reorganization plan for her academic unit that wrote herself out of a job.

President T oversaw the “wiring” of her entire campus, one of the first campuses to be fully internet accessible. President T said that it is important to take advantage of available opportunities. “We’ve raised the visibility of the institution, we’ve raised the quality, we’ve had forty new young faculty coming in with Research I Ph.D.s” (President T).

President T said she believes that her greatest legacy will be what other people have done. Among those accomplishments is a total revamping of the college’s general education components, which required every department to regularly reexamine what it was doing, and to make all necessary accommodations and adjustments (President T).

Although President O is a new president, she said she had measurably verifiable successes in her previous roles (President O).

President Y said remaining unconcerned about her ego or taking herself too seriously as well as being willing to take risks, to courageously embrace difficult situations and do her best, has helped her deal with many of the challenges of being president for fifteen years. She said, “…people need to know that I’m not going to cave
in, or shirk my own responsibilities, or be overly fearful, or afraid of confrontation…one thing I’ve learned, is to lead … to press on, and to do so …with some genuine joy” (President Y).

President G volunteered to serve on a statewide commission when she was in Florida because she said she wanted “to be in the know… little by little you accrue a body of knowledge, but you don’t accrue it unless you actually go out and seek it.” She said she learned about issues by reading as much as possible about a subject and broadened her study until she felt “steeped” in the culture. “I think good presidents have done that before they ever even get to the presidency” (President G).

President V has embraced change opportunities in different ways. She said that she had just come from a first-ever noon-scheduled presidential address because they were having racial issues on campus. “I basically, in a polite way, yelled and screamed at everyone and said, ‘We have got to do something.’ So I have that capability.” President V considers herself a strategic-thinker with a good sense of organizations and how they work, as well as a good public speaker (President V).

President R said she views herself as a good “systems” person, able to bring a level of “order and consistency to arenas that were sometimes chaotic.” She also considers herself a good problem-solver. Her doctoral degree is in creative writing and her background is in science, so “I’m a left brain/right brainer. I’m really good at seeing the pieces of the situation, and figuring out the pattern …patterns that lead to organizational solutions”. As dean, President R said she worked hard to reorganize the framework of academic departments, “creating departmental zones where several related departments could live and work together.” She referred to this structure as
“interdisciplinary clusters” As an early member in the field of Women’s Studies, President R found a way to integrate that subject across the curriculum without additional cost, since the college did not have a specific program in that area. “I really was working to get people out of their silos, and to bring them into combinations that really led to more interesting, and more vibrant kinds of work” (President R).

President A said she is continually working on the “President Mandate,” to restructure the college. She said these types of mandates can be “ill-received” and cause “fracturing to the college community.” She said she considers this work to be important and that it promotes the university’s curricular and co-curricular work, providing more attention to student advising and co-curricular programs. The end result, she said, is that it generates the best scholarship from the faculty (President A).

Accomplishments are engaging others to move an institution forward towards its goals, according to President B. She has been proudest of the accomplishments that have helped others, particularly students and mentees, to achieve. At her current institution, President B pointed to a relationship and partnership with the community as crucial to bringing different colleges in her university together as a central core of focus (President B).

According to President E the accomplishments that most contributed to her success have been improvements at her university, which include raising it to the top 2% of all research universities. She has also completed a great deal of renovation, beautification and building on campus, which she said she believes has helped the university attract students, as well as improve the perception of the campus. In addition, President E recently worked with development to obtain the largest building gift every
received by the state university system and has chaired an educational commission that significantly impacts the delivery method for education (President E).

“We’ve brought technology to a very high degree of implementation at the college, I’m very proud of that,” President P said. She identified her greatest accomplishments as, “success in building projects …modernizing, and at the same time preserving the traditional look of the college… the technology, the capital improvements, and the preservation of the strong academic programs.

As an introvert, it has been a success-contributing accomplishment for President I simply to be outgoing with people in an official capacity and then be able to retreat and re-energize herself enough to repeat the cycle on a regular basis (President I).

President S mentioned several accomplishments that have contributed to her success. First, she worked through a serious budget crisis at her previous university which helped when she arrived at her current institution and found it in a similar situation. Second, was her ability to understand and implement a sense of vision, to “mobilize the community” (President S).

Leadership style

Astin and Leland define “leader” as “someone who played a catalytic role and who managed to empower and mobilize others toward a collective effort to improve the quality of life…” (p. 11). Leadership would be the process by which that happens, and leadership style would be an individual’s preferred method or pattern for directing that process. The following are comments on personal leadership style from Presidents H, I, L, P, and W.
In her current presidency, President W said that she believes her most important achievement has been to change the manner of leadership and communication on the campus--from a formerly top-down style to a more transparent and consultative style, with more dialogue taking place at all levels. To accomplish that, she said she had to “change a whole atmosphere” and people’s attitudes about what they expected from leadership without leading people to think that decisions would not be made. Secondly, President W created a leadership team “that didn’t just mouth those words but actually implemented those values.” She said that it is important to believe in these values if a president is attempting to implement them. She said that she believes there is a “genuineness” in her style and in the style of the people she works with (President W).

President P reported that she had worked diligently to create “a very good leadership team here at the college.” For this to happen, President P said that all members of the team must be honest and supportive of each other.

No president can run a college by him or herself. You don’t know enough, you cannot know enough. If you’re standing in a classroom you might know everything about Charles Dickens, and teach it, but in the presidency, impossible. You have to know about finance, you have buildings and construction, you have academic matters, and you have human service matters, contracts. We have four union contracts at the college. It’s impossible for one person to know them all, therefore, the success of a president of any kind of institution has got to be the creation of a well functioning leadership team, and I consider that perhaps one of my greatest accomplishments here because it simply was not there when I came in. Most of all, I’m proud of the creation of an excellent leadership team (President P).

“Learning to tell the painful truth as kindly as possible has been critical to my success.” President I said she believes that one of the biggest mistakes made by leaders is to try to be “kind” to a person or group that isn’t functioning. Although this may feel “humane” at the time, she said that it is “cruel” to the organization and can become
corrosive when the truth is not told and the problem is not worked out openly and
directly. President I credited much of her success to her directness, and she encourages
others to be direct with her. “It’s hard for people to tell the person they report to
something they think she doesn’t want to hear. But in my own career, some of the
biggest problems with which I have had to deal have arisen because the people who
reported to me did not tell me the truth, and did tell me what they thought I wanted to
hear” (President I).

President L said that it is critical to have a “theory of leadership.” An avid reader
of self-help books, she said her favorite books are those on institutional change, corporate
management, and leadership. “I’ve found it stimulating to think about how people move
the dial and, as a consequence, a theory began to emerge.” President L’s leadership
theory is a four-pronged theory involving vision “derived at the hands of many,” the
“implementation or the ability to act on a vision,” assessment of the “impact of ones
actions,” and the “tireless telling of the story of the institution.” She said this theory
guides her as she arrives at a new institution and identifies what needs to be done.

It isn’t always that you create the vision. Maybe it’s there and you use it, or you
use the history of whatever was the vision to evolve a new one. But I do believe
that successful leaders are people who have an idea of how you lead, and it has
worked for them. They’ve had some success at it, and they revisit it (President
L).

President H cited her ability to listen and build consensus as her strongest
leadership attributes. “I bring out the best in others…I set up expectations for the people
who come to work for me. I expect that they’re going to do well, and more often than not
they live up to my expectations” (President H).
New programs

Presidents B, P, and T were all instrumental in developing new programs at their institutions said that they felt that these new programs were among their greatest accomplishment--all of which contributed to their success.

President T helped develop several international programs and eventually oversaw them.

One of the things that President R is most proud of is uniting her university with a Head Start Program for developmentally disabled children. She said the university raised money and created a multipurpose childcare center that provided an educationally interactive environment for students and faculty alike. It involved three different populations under one umbrella. “I’m really proud of (the) places I’ve been able to get the most out of people and resources, to gather their strength, and point them toward something new” (President R).

President B helped develop four new colleges as well as several new organizations at her former university which she said helped that university to grow in sustainable ways (President B).

Find and hire the right people and then trust, empower and nurture them. Most leaders in this study readily admit that leadership happens by an entire team, not just one individual. Along with having good leadership at the presidential level, it is important to have effective leadership and ability surrounding the president. The following presidents in this study (C, H, J, P, T, and Y) all discussed the importance of finding the right team leaders and then empowering them to lead.
President C cited her success as associate dean in increasing the number of women and minorities hired at the college as a significant accomplishment.

President T surrounded herself with extraordinary people willing to work together to bring about change in an institution. She said she empowered people to “achieve excellence in everything” that they did in every area of the institution. She set expectations and continued to increase those expectations without exceeding the realm of possibilities. “I keep thinking I would work my way out of a job if everybody would do all the work, but they just keep coming up with new ideas and new opportunities, so I keep going forward. That, to me, would be the empowerment of colleagues who share a vision of what can happen” (President T).

President Y said she never believed, despite the fact that she was president, that she knew more than people around her.

I’ve always been very grateful for the help and the assistance, the wisdoms, the experience of other people, and that has served me very well…I’ve really tried to find those people who have more experience than I have, know more than I know, and enlist their help, and almost always people have been generous in that regard (President Y).

President Y said that a “little humility” makes her more open to other’s insight. “I’ve always felt I could learn a lot by that.” She also said that choosing what has been the most important in contributing to her success would have to include, “colleagues in my work, having made good hires, or inherited really good people, (it) make all the difference in the world.” Also important, according to President Y, is nurturing those relationships.

It’s about relationships… that are where a lot of my energy has had to go, but in the end it’s paid off. It is not taking people for granted… It can’t just be a one way street… It takes time. You can’t just go in and ask people to give a lot of
themselves and then ignore them when there doesn’t seem to be a need. Foster those relationships (President Y).

President J hired and surrounded herself with good people. She said she believes in “hiring people who are better than you are” (President J). President P concurred: “I don’t have any disappointments in the people I’ve appointed. You could say the building blocks of a college are the people who are running it, and that’s been my biggest achievement” (President P).

“I am good at choosing good people for their positions.” President H said she has the best job right now because she hired most of her administrative leaders.

I never know for sure whether it’s luck or skill but whichever it is I want to keep doing it because you pick good people, you make it fun to come to work, I believe in group personality. I believe that an institution takes on the personality of its leader, and that the leader sets the personality. If the leader is committed to what he or she is doing, believes in it, and believes in the people surrounding him or her you will have a positive group personality, and I think we have that (President H).

President H said that her institution has had numerous individual successes with her leadership group. They have reorganized and established a strategic plan that blends budget with planning. The university now enjoys a robust financial health. “I can cite …all kinds of accomplishments that…have all come out of the group personality of the people here who believe in themselves. I support that belief in themselves by believing in them” (President H).

Institutional culture and values. Each institution of higher education has a somewhat unique culture and set of values. Many presidents in this study mentioned the importance of knowing these values and culture to be sure the institution is a good fit for both parties. Some president dared to make modifications in a system that is inherently
resistant to change. In his discussion of academic culture, Duderstadt quotes former Stanford President Don Kennedy on cultural change in academia: “The academic culture nurtures a set of policies and practices that favor the present state of affairs over any possible future. It is a portrait of conservatism, perhaps even senescence” (2000, p. 64). This resistance may be one of academia’s strong links to long-term stability. Nevertheless, there often comes a time when change is deemed necessary and it is a significant accomplishment to successfully make alterations in the culture and/or values of an institution.

President T emphasized the importance of learning the values of an institution or a community, and then not necessarily changing those, but perhaps offering alternate values that are consistent with what are already embedded in the institution or community.

President A has worked intentionally to create a campus “ethos of hospitality” and has consistently written and lectured on “the importance of intellectual and spiritual hospitality” at a university. She said she thinks of the college as a place where people and their strengths are affirmed, and where people should help each other with their weaknesses – a place of “civil conversation and debate.” President A said, “We try to help students be those kinds of gracious people.” She added that hospitality is a needed value for culture at large as well. President A said that when speaking on the topic of hospitality, some of her male colleagues in particular, initially do not take the topic seriously. She said she has used examples she learned from her immigrant parents and grandparents, to affirm “what it means to be around the table together…the respect and the love for each other,” and to continue the conversation (President A).
Education / Having degrees from prestigious institution. President V said that in her case, degrees from prestigious universities often “communicate something” significant to other people (President V).

President M responded to the query about most important accomplishment with, “I think it was education. That was a big factor for me. In academia, you don’t advance much without a Ph.D.”

Early appointment to the presidency. “I guess the first accomplishment is I was appointed president at age forty of a four-year public institution. There were almost no (women) presidents in public institutions other than community colleges in a state where I’d been for a long time” (President V).

Beliefs (Religious, Spiritual, and/or Value Related) and their Impact on Career

Several of the presidents in this study identified religious beliefs as an important influence on their career, but the more common response identified a set of values without a religious or faith-based component as having a significant impact on their careers. Astin and Leland asked a question regarding the religious background and preference of the participants in their study, but did not focus on either faith or religious beliefs in their discussion of women leaders. Astin and Leland did report however, that generally defined “values” were an integral component of their study. Some of their findings included: vision-guided behavior, “having a point of view that clearly articulates an institutional mission,” “trust,” “integrity,” “commitment to human rights and justice” (1999, p. 118). The presidents of this study shared many of those values in common with the leaders interviewed in Astin and Leland’s study.
Beliefs were described in Chapter One as relating to: “values, principles, ethics and faith, ideals and inner motivators, the forces that direct the participants and give meaning to their lives” (p. 10).

![Figure 4.7. Beliefs and / or Values that Impact Career](image)

**Value-based / Non-religious.** Although Presidents C, G, J, L, R, S, V, and W self-describe as primarily non-religious, are all driven by a strong value system that they said calls them beyond their own needs, to a commitment to service and/or a calling to help society. This category elicited the largest number of value/belief responses from the presidents in this study. The following are descriptions from these presidents of their values and how they impact their careers.

President C said she was raised in a religious tradition but now considers herself agnostic. She said that her spirituality is the one area of her life where she is comfortable with ambiguity. President C said that she is “driven” by certain values, many of which are at least somewhat founded in religion, such as social justice, fairness, kindness, and the belief that every person has the right to be treated with dignity until otherwise proven. She said she is of the opinion that all people share the right to equal opportunity and that
once individuals have taken care of their own needs, there is “an obligation” to care for the rest of society and the world. Ultimately, this led to a belief that “…in some respects, we’re required to push on so that others can later make it easier for those that come behind us” (President C).

President W said she considers herself an “ethical person” with an ethical standard for leadership. She offered as an example the choice to be “good corporate citizens” over a choice that would have been financially beneficial to the college. “I think that you always have to be reminding yourself … that there is an ethical aspect,” she said. “Our reputation for being an ethical organization is extremely important, and it’s actually … financial value to the institution … you have to preserve it” (President W).

Although President G is the granddaughter of a Baptist minister and regularly attended church most of her life, she does not consider herself traditionally religious. She said she now thinks of herself as more of “spiritual person,” one who is “deeply committed to a set of values that are associated with honesty, integrity, compassion…” She said that she now views her responsibility as college president to be to ensure that the elements of the college are as healthy as possible for students, and to allow them to be active and involved with one another in healthy ways. She said she views the college’s responsibility to help students develop a sense of responsibility and to become independent learners (President G).

President J said that she believes in doing the right things on behalf of others, even in the face of adversity, and doing so with compassion, in a “context of civility” (President J).
President V indicated that she was raised in the Catholic faith, but no longer has any religious beliefs. Like President G, she considers herself a “spiritual” person. “I believe in the potential of people. I believe that five heads are better than one. I actually believe we really do want to work and learn together, and we just have to get the crap out of the way. I really am one who believes that people want to do their best, and that my job is to create the environment in which they can do that” (President V). President V cited Margaret Wheatley’s work on leadership in the new science that involves the notion of fields of energy in the physics, as an illustration of how she sees her role. “My role is to help that energy be released, not get in the way of it, she said, “I believe we’re here to make a difference. I’m a very strong proponent that all of us are supposed to leave this place a better place than it was when we came. Ultimately I believe in ‘servant leadership’” (President V).

Until age ten, President R was raised Episcopalian. At ten, she said she moved to live with relatives who were Catholic and where she attended Catholic school. As a non-Catholic, President R paid her way through Catholic school and then went to a Catholic college, where she met her husband.

During the sixties…our generation became very disaffected with institutional religions…Although we would still be in and out of church with family, …the education that you get in philosophy and theology is so sharp and intelligent that in many cases you end up saying, “I don’t have much of a belief system left.” I know a lot about religions and religious history, and probably when you know too much, it tips over to a place of just being more of a humanist than a religious person (President R).

President R said that her spiritual values are expressed more in her relationships…particularly with the people she cares about most. She said that integrity is more a guide for her than anything else (President R).
President L said that she assumes that a person’s value system is a combination of their “morality, spirituality, work ethic, and belief about the world and people.” She said that her value system manifests itself in the type of institution she chose to serve. Educated and employed by the public systems, President L elected to work in a public institution with the “triadic mission of research, teaching, and service.” She said her value system stems from “a sense of service,” which is defined as “reaching out and engaging, wading into a sort of problem-rich environment. Whatever my makeup is, and my beliefs about why you are put on this earth to do what, gets manifested in that.”

President L said she had a religious background and still respects the concept of “spirituality.” She said she believes in the “goodness of people,” and the need for people who have a capacity to step up… I think communities expect university presidents to get out there, and draw people to the task…it is a sort of moral proposition” (President L).

President S, also self-defined as agnostic, maintained that she has a “strong sense of the responsibilities that we have to making the world a better place (with) whatever opportunities are given to us.” She also values honesty, fair dealing, institutional generosity, public responsibility, and said that those traits have been important in shaping her sense of what presidents should do (President S).

*Christian / Christian value-based.* Presidents A, B, M, O, P, T, and Y self-identified with the Christian faith. Three presidents identified themselves as Catholic, two as Christians, and two as Methodists.

President T is a long-time United Methodist and said that her spiritual and value-related beliefs influence everything she does. She said that one of the reasons she is in higher education is because of its “great commitment to social outreach.” President T
served on regional and national boards dealing with issues ranging from equitable salaries to finance in higher education, and will be serving on a board which oversees both the American and world institutions that relate to the church. Through the church, President T has been able to address a number of things that she said she cares about, including justice and peace issues, and she plans to continue that work. “I would not have gone to an institution that did not have a religious affiliation of some sort because I do think, however tangential it may be, nevertheless it sets a target …a sense of values, and historic traditions come out of that kind of relationship . . . ” (President T). President T’s college is related to the American Baptist churches and is founded on the freedoms articulated by Roger Williams, including freedom of conscience and academic freedom.

As her career unfolded, she said she believes it has been determined by “The Lord” having her in the right place at the right time. “So yes, this greatly influences my everyday life, my family life, and my professional life, wherever that has led me” (President T).

President O said she reads the Bible and prays every day.

I am a very spiritual person and I am Christian. I pray about the decisions I make, even about coming to accept this presidency. So, in the sense of being in this position, and this might sound strange… I feel almost like a call to be here. I’ve sensed that this is where God wants me to be at this time in my life (President O). President Y identified herself as a Roman Catholic. She said she believes that the values of the church have had a significant impact on her, both as a child and as an adult.

She said she has always been attracted to the church and speculated that perhaps some of that was innate. President Y views the values she inherited as being important in

…the context of worshipping communities, and the attitude toward work that comes out of the social teachings of the church. The dignity of labor, for example, the notion of vocation, the sense that people are called to be in communion with one another, the notion of community, of sharing … all of those
things have affected perhaps the way in which I’ve tried to live my life, and the
way in which I try to offer leadership (President Y).

Perhaps the most emphatic response to the question of beliefs and values was
provided by President A, who said she believes in “a theology of hope”:

I … believe in the notion that God is sovereign, and that all human beings are
created in God’s image, so the value and the dignity of all persons is very
important to me. That frames what I think about the importance of education,
about educational community, about how I should relate to all sectors of the
campus from the grounds workers, to the student, to the full professor… As a
Christian, I believe that we’re not only reaching for the future, but reaching for
the present. I think that leading an institution and challenges that come up, (and)
in preparing students to be servants and leaders, that we need to be people who
are hopeful despite what we might see going on around us, despite chaos. There
is so much that is very good in the world… (President A).

President B said she was reared in the Methodist Church, and had a grandfather
who was a Methodist minister. Although she no longer attends church services with
regularity, she said that she has a strong work ethic and set of values that she adheres to
and relies on when making decisions.

President P described herself as a “believing and practicing Catholic” and said
that her beliefs “influence her tremendously.” When she was not hired the first time she
was a candidate for the presidency, she said, “That’s God’s will for me.” President P said
she believes that her faith helps her accept setbacks, while also preventing her from
feeling too personally proud of achievements.

After holding a series of jobs, each presenting greater challenges as well as higher
salaries, President M mused that her current presidency is somehow different. She said
that initially, she had no desire to return to the South and, when called about the opening,
she said she was not interested. Eventually, she realized that the university was going to
persist. “When I walked in the door, I was just overwhelmed by the idea of being able to
come back…and to contribute at a Catholic urban university, in (one of the) poorest neighborhoods in the country. I really felt called to that position, and I realized that all of my wanderings made sense to me now” (President M).

_Deism._ When asked to describe her belief system, President I said, “I would describe it more as spiritual. I’m probably a deist in the old Benjamin Franklin sense. I’m not an active member of a formal religion, and find that the earth itself, and its beauty and dynamism, and my place in the universe give me sufficient solace for my soul” (President I).

President H said she believes that we are “mortals who yearn for the immortal, and we have a sense that there is more to the universe than our limits of existence and we search for and want to praise it.” She said that the problem arises when we try to attach labels, which excludes others with different beliefs. President H said she believes in a “conscious creation,” and that humanity exists for a purpose. “While I believe human beings have the potential for good and evil, it is our job to work, to develop the potential for good…What better way to do that than in education? …My career is connecting students with that development of their potential through formal education, and what higher career could I possibly have?” (President H).

_Other religions (non-Christian)._ Presidents E and W identify with the Jewish tradition, while President E is also religiously devout. “I am a strongly identified Jew, I’m not sure I’m a deeply religious Jew, and those are important qualities to me that I think come out of the East European Jewish experience on the secular side, not on the religious side” (President W).
President E said that she was reared in a Jewish family and said that the primary gift of her faith are her family’s strong bonds

(My) greatest joys were always the family joys. I guess you feel that as long as your family and the people you love, including the people at work that you care deeply about, are okay, you can take care of the rest of the problems (President E).

**Habits that Contributed to Success**

Habits were defined as any “voluntary personal and professional routines, such as walking, preventative medicine, punctuality, nutrition, reading, or organizational habits” (p. 10).

![Figure 4.8. Habits Contributing to Success](image)

President R quipped that, “All of my habits are bad, actually.”
Reading. The most common valued habit mentioned, which was cited by Presidents A, B, H, J, O, P, R, T, V, and W, was a love of reading.

President T claimed to be a “voracious” reader. She said that there is so much being published that to find the “good stuff” you have to scan through quite a bit.

President O said she reads the Bible daily.

President W said that she does a lot of “pleasure and leisure reading.” She can “get lost” in a book,” and be transported “someplace else” (President W).

“You have to have some competitive level of intellect and curiosity,” President J said, “the same kind of intellect and curiosity you want in great faculty members.” President J recommended that administrators read widely, and stretch their mental abilities by trying “to push the edge of the envelope a bit with respect to your thinking” (President J).

When asked about her habits, President V mentioned an intellectual regimen that includes mostly non-fiction, but no longer higher education, reading. She wants to read about “ideas,” about what the faculty are lecturing about, biographies, books on history, politics, and sociology. At the time of the interview, President V was reading about World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. She said she wants to understand it better. Her stated goal is to understand the present by understanding the past. “I think I’m a social historian, that’s probably what I really like the most” (President V).

President R has read since she was a young child, mostly mystery novels and sometimes biographies or history. Self-help books are “hard-work” that she said she reads only out of necessity and they usually make her “sleepy” (President R).

President A reads as part of her spiritual formation.
President B said she loves to read and reads often, mostly for pleasure. She said she even enjoys reading the materials that come across her desk. At the time of her interview for this study, she was reading an Anne Tyler book that she picked up in an airport. President B said that she also enjoys books about people and recently read and enjoyed the book on Hillary Clinton. She also recently selected a book about White House Press Secretary Karen Hughes, which she also enjoyed. She keeps several books going at the same time. She has been reading a book on China in preparation for a trip to that country. President B added that she also “loves” reading everything from college newsletters to professional and business journals. “I think we are business in spite of the fact that we do so many wonderful things that are not business at all, and that’s the way it should be. I do think when you have a budget of (several) billion, you’d better be in business. So I read a lot of things” (President B).

President P also said that she loves to read and does so whenever she can. Since she discovered audio books, she doesn’t mind taking long trips so much. She said she has listened to all of the books on George Washington on tape, and recently bought David McCullough’s *1776* (President P).

President H’s grandmother read to her throughout childhood, which she said contributed to her becoming an avid reader. “To me, the power of reading, the vicarious experience that you get from reading, made a difference in my life” (President H).

**Exercise.** Exercise was the second most frequently mentioned habit by the presidents in this study and was cited by Presidents A, G, I, J, P, T, V, W, and Y.

A “walk-about kind of manager” who regularly wears sneakers and walks the campus, is how President T described herself. In addition to the physical benefits, she
said that walking alone makes her more accessible and approachable, which promotes a
dialogue with constituents that might otherwise not happen. “I’m often out at the library
at night when it closes at one o’clock, (and) I say goodnight to the kids leaving”
(President T).

After fifteen years in the presidency, President Y said she recently came to realize
that she needs to focus on “the habit of healthy living.” She said she was always healthy,
but she needed to focus more on regular exercise, good nutrition, and good rest. “These
jobs take a lot of stamina and …as I become older, it is really important for me to have a
habit of setting balance as much as I can so that I can sustain what it takes to do the job”
(President Y)

President W said she recently improved on the amount of consistent exercise in
her life and claimed that the increase made a great difference on her stress levels.

Regular exercise is important, according to President G, but who admitted she had
“fallen in the breach,” at the time of this interview. Her stated goal is a forty-five minute
walk at 6:30 a.m. each day (President G).

“I walk around campus. I try to play a little golf occasionally” (President J)

President V said that she is “physically very active” and recently began practicing
Yoga.

“I should exercise. I don’t, so I’m not going to lie to you” (President A).

“I walk, of course, for my health” (President P).

President I tries to be physically active when possible. She said that she and her
husband are “avid kayakers,” and both enjoy biking. Prior to her presidency, she said she
regularly went backpacking and was involved in other outdoor activities. “Being
outdoors and enjoying the world around me is a critical part of helping me feel grounded” (President I).

*Separate professional life from personal life / Balance life.* Presidents B, I, L, P, V, Y identified the twin challenges of successfully separating professional from personal life and keeping balance in life as the third most commonly cited habit in this study that contributes to success.

“I do try to have a life outside of work,” President Y said, “I’m not always successful at that, but I think it’s important. I never identify so closely with my work that somehow it becomes me or I become it.” President Y said she makes a habit of periodically interacting with friends and family on matters unrelated to work. She said that this helps her stay “grounded” and keep “things in proper context.” She said that it is easy for presidents to “delude” themselves into thinking it is a “rarified atmosphere in which they sometimes live and work.” Maintaining relationships with friends and family who have known you since childhood will help ensure that some kind of balance is maintained (President Y). President B said that she also believes it is important to be with friends and have time away from the job. “We have a home at the beach, and that’s absolutely my salvation…I can go down there and put things aside, and come back feeling refreshed—even in a day and a half” (President B).

President P said that she tries to maintain interests outside of her job. She said she tries to leave work at work when she goes home each evening. After a brief recap of the day’s events with her husband she says, “Now I don’t want to think about that until early tomorrow morning.” President P said that administration is emotionally different from teaching. While teaching, she constantly thought about and researched for her
classes. Conversely, as an administrator, she said it is important to have periods when she is not thinking about work. She called this “the habit of giving yourself some breathing space from this job, because these jobs are all-encompassing” (President P).

President I said that she and her husband work hard at setting aside time for their children and grandchildren. Their extended family all live elsewhere, so they work systematically to preserve significant travel time. President I said that she refuses to let the pressing matters of her job prevent that family time (President I).

President V emphasized keeping a balance between work and home:

If I don’t take care of myself and continue to develop that I’m going to be useless. I am intellectually active, physically very active, and I’ve gotten into things like yoga in the last couple years. I believe that no one else is going to watch out for me, so I’d better watch out for myself. I feel better when I do those things, and I know I work better when I do them as well (President V).

President L also spoke of the importance of maintaining balance:

I don’t mean that every day is balanced, but over the long haul take time for the people you love, and who love you, and don’t cheat them because you’re driven by the job. On the other hand don’t short shrift the job (President L).

*Professional modus operandi / Leadership habits of the mind / Attitude.*

Presidents C, E, H, J, and L talked about their operating procedure, mental and attitudinal habits that they consider vital for the successful execution of their duties as an administrator.

President C said she is methodical, well-organized, and “improvisatory.” She said she strives to keep an “eye on the big picture while keeping my eye on…details.” President C allots time to care for her staff, she is “honest with people,” and tells them “if she can’t give them an answer.”
“I think I have pretty good sense of people and work ethics. I tend to …force myself out of the box, even in pressure situations, to try to find paths. I try to blend the best of cutting edge research and problem-solving” (President J).

President E said that all parties need to feel that they win occasionally. She said she still views herself as operating as a teacher even though she has been an administrator for many years. “I always figured if you could have fun five percent of the day that was really worth the other ninety-five percent, but I have more fun than that” (President E).

President L said she has the ability to focus, stay on a schedule, and work in a highly complex but still predictable environment. When she sets out to accomplish a task, she said she invokes a series of steps to serve as a template: “getting people together, forming an agenda, being persistent about the work, (and) calling for measures of impact that are habitual.” President L said that,

When I was teaching teachers, we talked about ‘habits of the mind.’ You have to build a set of habits that are like the habits of your personal life that train you to think in a certain way. You’re learning to think like the discipline that you love, so for me it’s the habits of the mind of leadership. If you set out to do something then how do you get it done? (President L).

President H said that she believes that the single most significant habit is “attitude.” She said that it is possible to examine both the positives and negatives of a given situation and then choose the appropriate attitude. The goal, she said, was to discover the hidden opportunities that may arise from the situation. President H recently had to make “dreadful” budget cuts which she said also provided an opportunity to “reshape” the institution and allow it to “grow responsibly.”

Sleep / Personal biorhythms. Several presidents (E, H, P, and T) said that they need very little sleep despite the great demands of the presidency. President H
maintained that it is important to function within one’s own natural biorhythmic schedule.

President T only needs three or four hours of sleep per night, which provides her time to accomplish more. She said this unique ability has contributed to her success.

“I don’t need much sleep, and that’s a plus,” President E said. “I work very long hours, I tend to do my e-mail at night after everything else…I am very efficient at using time well, and I think that’s a really important trait” (President E).

President P said she is an early riser and is another president who does not need much sleep.

Although President H is said she is not “an early morning person,” she said that it is worthwhile to make a habit of “finding what your biorhythms are and try to work with them as best you can.” President H, like most presidents, has some early morning obligations, but she rarely arrives at her office before 8:30 a.m. And while she often works until about 8:30 pm., she said she does not apologize for her late arrivals, although it is sometimes a source of humor in the office (President H).

*Entertainment / Hobbies.* Presidents B, G, J, and W all claimed that having hobbies and entertainment were important habits that contribute to their success.

President W said she often visits New York City for musical performances. She said she “loves” music and frequently attends performances at the Met and Carnegie Hall (President W).

President G said she enjoys doing “housewifely” things, including needlework and knitting while listening to audio books. She listens to murder mysteries or other “escape” topics. President G said that she has a “need” for some non-work-related time
alone and maintained it is “more important” than sleep, for her. She said it gives her the energy she needs to engage people at work. Unlike her needlework, “so much of what one does in administration doesn’t come to an end at a neat point” (President G).

President J gets out on campus, rides the bus with students, eats in the resident’s hall and participates in other university activities such as athletics, and performing and visual arts.

President B says that her two dogs make a positive difference in her life. While she occasionally indulges herself in a favored hobby, she rarely gets to spend much time with them. Still, she said, the little time she does spend on her hobbies “does sustain” her (President B).

_Spiritual habits / Prayer._ Spiritual habits were important contributors for success for Presidents A, O, and P.

President O identified prayer as a habit that contributes to her success.

President A described her personal spiritual formation as “being part of a safe community,” and practicing “reading” and “prayer.”

“I get up in the morning, I go to mass” (President P).

_Hard work._ “I characterize myself as someone who works hard but I’m not a workaholic. Some people laugh at that, but it’s true” (President V).

“I have been a workaholic in that I will work as long as it takes to get something done. I can’t stand to stop in the middle” (President R).

President S said she considers herself to be “very disciplined” as well as “hard-working,” two traits she believes contribute to her success.
Give feedback. President M said she has worked diligently to develop a habit of “giving people feedback both positive and constructive, negative feedback.” She claimed that people will do their best when they know what is wanted of them. Another habit cited by President M involves, “writing notes to people who deserve to be acknowledged or thanked in some way. I think those are all just professional habits that are part of your success” (President M).

Organizational habits. President P said that she is an “organized” person and that she likes to know the structure of each day (President P).

Punctuality / Early arrival. President R said she has, throughout her work-life, tried to arrive an hour earlier than necessary at most scheduled meetings, to give herself some “quiet time” (President R).

Eating. “I wish I could say I had healthy eating habits. I have terrible eating habits, (so I) can’t use that one” (President W).

Skills Most Valuable in Presidency
The presidents in this study were asked to identify which skills they possessed that they believed were most valuable in their presidency. Similar to the findings of this study, Astin and Leland reported many of the same skills to be crucial to the success of their women leaders, including “communication,” “people,” and “strategic skills,” all of which ranked highly in their study. They said:

Leadership is a process of working with people and through people…The ability to work with others rests on both interpersonal skills and self-awareness. Perhaps one of the most significant skills the “Instigators” modeled…involves their ability to integrate their capacity as strategists, facilitators, and communicators. In
addition, these women were perceptive and they learn fast (Astin & Leland, p. 111).

Mendonca presented her study participants with a list of skills and asked them to rank the skills they believed to be “most important to a successful presidency.” Chosen as “first place” by 57% of the respondents was “visionary ability.” The second most important skill, with 20% of the respondents, was “verbal communication.” Just 11% or less of the respondents in each category ranked “organizational and time management,” “people skills,” and various others, including “financial” and “fund raising” skills as being of primary importance (1995, pp. 112-113).

Skills were defined in this study as including “leadership, empowerment and communication skills, as well as any practiced technical or trained ability. Practiced abilities included computer skills, critical thinking, and even golf” (Mendonca, p. 11).
Communication skills. The most frequently mentioned skill-set valued by the presidents in this study was that of communication, cited by Presidents A, C, E, G, I, J, L, M, O, P, R, S, T, V, W, and Y. Astin and Leland said the “Instigators” in their study showed, “Adeptness at using forms of communication, such as writing” (p. 110).

Presidents O, C, L and T all identified good communication skills as being highly valuable.

President C said that communication skills are important. She has studied the theory of communication, and seeks to understand why what she did was successful in a given situation, and how to make it even more successful. She said that listening is crucial: “I really do listen well, and I incorporate what I listen to” (President C).

President T studied “speech” in both high school and college, and said as a consequence she is able to speak to any size group on virtually any subject. As president, she said that “…you never know when you’re going to become a spokesperson for the group you’re with.” President T was a debater for many years and also studied theater in college. “That gives one a sense of presence, and a sense of how to manage one’s self in any kind of a situation.” Additionally, she said she directs more by asking questions than by giving orders (President T).

When the constituents of President T’s college were involved in controversial issues, she traveled throughout the United States to discuss the university’s position. She said that most people were disarmed by her presence. “I invited them to the office, I went to dinners, I went to clubs with them where they would have a comfort level in their surroundings,” President T said, “It’s been wonderful to have people come up and say, ‘I was a member of that group but I was wrong. I didn’t see the vision that you had when
you came, and you stayed, and we’re in better shape now than we’ve ever been’” (President T).

President O identified both negotiating and writing skills as particularly important to the successful women college presidents.

Actually, one of the things … that turned out to be much, much more helpful is my Ph.D. …in rhetoric. I never would have imagined that what I learned as a rhetorician would have been as useful as it is in this kind of work. …being able to write …to speak publicly, which I do a lot, like to do, and do well, has really served me well (President Y).

“I listen well, and I respond expeditiously” (President W).

A successful president must have “first-rate” communication skills, according to President G. She said she is “grateful” that she can write well. She added that it is “absolutely essential that one can speak well before groups, and that’s particularly important for women because they don’t just naturally command the same respect (and) attention in groups that men do.” She said that this is due, in part, to a patriarchal society. She said that women also have a disadvantage because men are often taller and have deeper voices (President G).

President J stressed the importance of, “listening to people, and trying to remember that people are the most important asset you have, whether they’re alumni, a donor, a student, or a faculty or staff member.”

“I have good writing and speaking skills” (President V).

President R is a writer by profession and said that while she has very polished writing skills, she is also a good public speaker as well.

President A cited communication skills--interpersonal, public, and listening skills--as particularly valuable. She said that her background is in communications and that she
spends a significant amount of time on both the theoretical and practical aspects of communication. President A said that she believes that academia sometimes forgets that students, faculty, staff, as well as administrators want to belong to a community. She holds an “open door day” once each month where anyone on campus may come see her. She also said that she visits the residence halls monthly (President A).

“I have the ability to listen,” President E said, “I don’t need to be on stage all the time.” President E said she writes many of her own speeches and believes that writing skills are valuable. “I relate comfortably to people” and while she does not consider herself a great speaker, she said that she is confident in her ability to deliver a speech (President E).

One important thing President P said that she learned from her career as a faculty member was the ability to be at ease while speaking with people. She said she has no fear of public speaking and, in fact, enjoys it. “I also am a good writer, and I can dispatch my letters very quickly,” she said “You (also) have to be able to express yourself verbally” (President P).

“I’m articulate; I’m told I’m a good public speaker” (President I).

“I am a very good writer, and that’s been important,” said President S whose background is in English. “I’m really sensitive to language… that’s important in both interpreting what I hear and read, and also in shaping it to communicate” (President S).

President M identified her “ability to communicate, to write well” as critically important to her success.

President L said that her “ability to articulate the issues, to tell the story, to talk coherently, to talk with excitement and energy, to engage people and get them to want to
do what we want, what we need to do, to be self protective, and sometimes self effacing, to have a sense of humor,” was critical to the presidency.

**Social / People skills.** Social or people skills are another important asset to college administrators who must interact well with many different groups and individuals. These skills are considered so important that eleven of the eighteen presidents (A, C, G, E, H, M, R, S, T, V, and Y) identified these skills as most valuable to them in the presidency.

“I have the skill of making people feel valued for what they do” (President C).

President T said that she has worked systematically to both know most people on campus by their first name and know about their families. She said that friendliness and the willingness to interact with people “at all levels” is important. However, she said she believes it is important for a president to maintain a certain formality, particularly with students. Still, President T emphasized that, despite some formality, there are no “subordinates” at her institution. All are welcome to be represented at the decision-making table, she said. President T said that her institution has reworked nearly every policy and handbook to become a more “open” institution, while at the same time reminding people that they need to take responsibility for their action and work. When “you’re part of the process, you assume some of the responsibility (President T).

President Y said that she is an extrovert who “really likes people,” is “energized” by them, and feels it was the “luck of the draw” to have been given an innate gift of working well with them (President Y).

President G said that she has the ability to read people, what motivates them, what their issue is, and where they might fit. President G said that she has made “really good
hires.” “(We) absolutely have zero tolerance for ‘turf,’” she said. “So I’ve got a team that really enjoys one another and works well together” (President G).

“I have very good people skills” (President V).

President R said she has good social skills and interacts well with individuals and community. She said that her greatest weakness in this area is working with committees, where she feels the least happy and effective, but she works hard at it (President R).

“I really enjoy meeting new people, so it’s not a challenge for me to go into a new room and meet a room of strangers,” President A said. She added that she is often “energized” by new acquaintance (President A).

President E said she loves developing “innovative curricula ideas, and working with a group of people, and coming up with something special, and new, and just fun.”

“I’m very good at listening to people, and good at building relationships” (President S).

President M said she has developed the ability to organize people around their work so that all participants feel that they are contributing. She said that her most significant contribution has been to organize a large board in such a way that enabled them to work very differently than it did for most of the past decade. President M said that her confidence gives others confidence in her. “I also try to create lots of space for feedback…about things that I’m not doing well, or could be doing better, or things that I’ve overlooked” (President M).

“I’m a good judge of people,” said President H, “I’m pretty good at persuading the legislature, the state boards.” She said that her background is in the “art of
persuasion”--English Letters and Composition--and that she utilizes that background
persuading people (President H).

Strategic Planning / Problem Solving Skills

Considered another important skill area, Presidents A, B, G, L, M, and P all spoke
on the importance of strategic planning and problem-solving skills.

The ability to think strategically is crucial, according to President G.

What separates the leader from the permanent middle manager is the leader does
not allow him or herself to be downed by the crisis du jour. A lot of offices lurch
from crisis to crisis, or high period to high period. They never get out from under
all that to step back and be able to think long range. A leader can do that, that’s
one of the things that separates us (President G).

“I’m a good problem solver, like to work through issues, and come up with
solutions,” President A said. She said that, if possible, her goal is to have all parties
involved in finding a solution (President A).

President B said she is a great “multi-tasker.” She said it is important to see what
can be done, and coalesce the different pieces to accomplish that end. She called herself
a “big picture person,” one who likes to “connect things,” to see “how they might go
forward.” President B said that the college, at one time, had so many technology areas
that they were “tripping all over each other.” Her solution was to merge the divisions into
one organization with one CEO, which she called “a one-stop-shop” (President B).

President P claimed to be curious about everything. She said that because she is
from a liberal arts education, which includes writing and critical thinking, she is strong in
“transferable skills” (President P).

President L said she considers the ability to work collaboratively, to solve
problems with others, as vitally important skills. She said that a group will find a
solution faster than an individual. President L termed her style “collaborative” and “strategic.” She said she wants to get things done and has little patience for “dinking around, and meeting for the sake of meeting, and not doing homework between meetings, not showing up for meetings.” She said that meetings are for a purpose, to get things done. President L said that she has the ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously and “cut through the clutter.” She said that it is important to know what to pay attention to and not get distracted, to stay with a problem until it has been solved (President L).

President M said that her most valuable skill is her ability to “conceptualize problems, challenges, or new directions well.”

*Accounting / Finance / Math / Statistics.* Although considered among the most valuable skills acquired and a strength for a few of presidents in this study, accounting, finance, and math skills are an area of weakness for many of the presidents including P, R, T, V, and Y.

President T believes that her accounting background has been a real advantage, particularly for a woman since women are often perceived as weak in this area. As the first woman on a board of directors for a large bank, President T said she had to work harder at the position than her male colleagues did, but it ultimately meant that she was better prepared than many of the men on the board. Consequently, the men on the board began to meet early before board meetings to try and anticipate any questions President T might ask and prepare an answer. President T said she was unaware of these meetings until after she left the board.

President Y said that she would have taken more courses in finance, accounting and business if she could make a change college and post-graduate career.
“I was a math whiz, not that you need to be, but some people are afraid of budgets because they think they’re complicated,” President V said, “I’m not afraid of numbers at all. I have good analytical skills.”

President R said she considers math skills to be among the top few skills most valuable to any president. “Everything that I know about finance, particularly an ability to scan a page of numbers and quickly know what it’s saying, is something that most people don’t expect women to be able to do in this work. It’s an area where all my background in math comes in and helps me” (President R).

When she looks at a column of numbers, President P said she wants to “fade out.” Budget, finance, math are not among her strengths. Fortunately, she said she has had two “outstanding” financial vice presidents and regularly requests charts or graphs, along with a narrative, to help her understand budgeting issues. Additionally, she has delegated much of the financial responsibility to an “excellent” financial vice president (President P).

Disposition – positive, calm, and focused / Sense of humor. Early in her career, President T said she developed a reputation for being “absolutely cool and calm,” and being able to deal with multiple issues, while still keeping a focus on the issue at hand.

President O said that it is important to maintain “a joyous, positive spirit.”

“A good sense of humor,” was particularly valuable, according to President S.

Intellectual skills. President O said that “being intelligent is essential,” as is “being a great problem solver.”

“You have to have pretty good intellect these days” (President J).
“I’m a quick study; I am very good at reading and absorbing analytical material quickly” (President I).

**Decision-making skills.** President Y said she credits in part her military training, but claimed that most of her decision-making ability was a result of having taught forty eighth graders. Consequently, she said she is not afraid to make a decision. President Y said there is a time to respect process but that it is also important to come to a conclusion and make the decision. She said this has been difficult for some of her peer presidents (President Y).

Decision-making, and a sense of concern for the people involved, are highly valued skills to President A. “I bring a good balance of personal or affective kinds of skills” (President A).

**Stimulus or motivational skills.** President O identified the ability “to make things happen,” as an important skill for success.

**Computer/Technology skills.** Among the many skills that are valuable in a presidency are computer skills, according to President R. She said that, “even in a leadership role that has a lot of people around… who can do functional things, if you don’t understand management information systems, and information retrieval…and how technology can be put to use, you will make major mistakes” (President R).

**Organizational skills.** President C said she believes that her organizational skills contribute to her success.
Hard work. “I’m a hard worker and a quick study,” said President W. “Things don’t stay on my desk very long” (President W).

Changes the Presidents Would Have Made

The goal of this study is to enable others to benefit from the experiences of responding presidents so that their path may be easier than it was for their predecessors. The purpose of the question that asks the presidents of this study what they would have done differently in their careers if they had a chance to make changes was to provide aspiring presidents the opportunity to learn from the past experience of women in the presidency. Of the eighteen presidents in this study, fourteen said that they would make changes. Five presidents initially stated that they would make “no changes,” but one recanted and mentioned a career change she would have made. The most common response was “career and timing changes” and, in descending order, was followed by changes in education, finance and accounting training, personal, “very little,” and leadership training. Finally, there was a category for “no change.”

![Figure 4.10. Changes Presidents Would Have Made](image-url)
Changes. Presidents A, B, C, G, I, J, L, M, O, P, R, S, W, and Y all said that would have made changes if they were somehow given the chance to do things differently. The following are some of the changes identified by the responding presidents.

Career or timing changes

A number of presidents indicated that if they could have they would have gone back and either made changes in their career, or at least in the timing of certain facets of their career.

President G said she believes she would have enjoyed taking a presidency at another college after five years at her current presidency, where she currently served for many years. “It would be fun to move to another college, taking the skills, abilities, and knowledge that I now have and see how another (college) works” (President G).

If she were to revisit “with knowledge,” President P said she would not have remained as long at each of her positions, either. For eight years she held the position of chief academic officer at one institution, nine years at another and, at the time of her interview, was serving her tenth year at her current institution. President R said she has a tendency to become involved and stay, but that leaving after “six or seven years” may have provided some different options and perhaps a “richer set of experiences.” She said that “in about six or seven years, particularly in a vice presidential job, there is not a whole lot more that you can do that is really innovative. I started to get bored. I think I let myself be bored longer than I should have” (President R).

President I said she would have remained engaged intellectually and professionally and attempted to maintain balance in her life when her daughters were
born and were very young rather than “completely stepping out” of her career at that time.

President L said that while she was in her doctoral program, she wished she had been “more forthright” about her career plan and about what she wanted to become and how she would get there. President L began her career in the 1960’s and said that the opportunity environment is “getting better and better for women to understand their full capabilities,” whereas she said her generation “had to find it ourselves.” Secondly, President L admitted that, “I took one or two longer stops than I needed.” She advises the women she mentors to “get planned, get focused…get help, and you’ll get there” (President L).

President M said that she was not certain she would have chosen administration again, citing the inherent frustrations and paucity of creativity. She confessed that “with better career guidance, I probably would have been in one of the more creative professions, music, or drama, or literature.” However, President M said that she believed that her gifts have been useful in the institutions where she has served, and overall, her career has been rewarding. “So maybe my calling was not of my own choosing, maybe that was what I needed to bring to this workplace” (President M).

President C initially responded that she would not have made changes, because change might have prevented her from reaching the presidency. However, she later said that, “If I could go way back, I might have changed some things early on in my piano career.” President C said that she might have been a freelance pianist in New York. Additionally, she said that she might also have changed some of her earlier methods of decision-making.
President W said that she had been offered an administrative position earlier in her career which would have placed her on the pathway to the presidency sooner, but that she was not sure she would have enjoyed that position and is “pretty content” with the way things worked out.

*Educational changes*

President O said that, if she had known she would be in administration and, if she had the chance to start again, she would have attended an Ivy League institution, in particular Yale University. Additionally, she said she would have pursued a PhD in English because “the lessons of literature and the writing, and the thinking about life that comes from great literature would probably have been extremely helpful in approaching this position” (President O).

President V said that although she has no regrets, she would have studied abroad for at least a few months, if she had a chance to make changes in her undergraduate experience.

President A cited gaps in her education, including skipping the sixth grade and attending a Bible college at the recommendation of a pastor, rather than a more academically rigorous institution as being among the problems that she claimed she has “been repairing the rest of my life.”

Although President B said she could not afford to do so at the time and therefore has no regrets, she said that she wished she could have attended medical school and would have done so immediately following graduate school. “I very much enjoy my whole career in medicine,” she said (President B).
“I often wish that I had gone into science,” President S said, “When I think about the fields that are really making a difference today, I would have had more of a sense of consequence of my academic work if I’d gone into a scientific field…I wish I hadn’t been so closed to the possibilities.”

Courses in finance, accounting, statistics, and/or business

If President Y had known earlier in her career what she now knows, she said she would have “taken courses in finance or accounting.” She cited gaps in her education, particularly in business and finance, as weaknesses that she has had to compensate for and did so in part by taking a “correspondence course” (President Y).

Although she said she believes she had an excellent education, President P also said, “I really wish I had studied…statistics.” She had to learn on the job that “statistics can be very misleading …A college president needs to have some knowledge of that kind of use of numbers” (President P).

Personal changes. “I would have more children. We have one son” (President O)

“I would be less of a workaholic,” said President R, who also said that when her son and her new husband’s two children were in pre-adolescence, her career “was really taking off.” Additionally, she moved a year ahead of her family to a new position and missed her son’s senior year in high school. “I might have waited a year to move, but I really loved the (new) job opportunity” (President R).
Very little change

“I can’t imagine changing things radically” (President Y).

“Obviously there are individual things, hindsight is always great…I’m doing something I enjoy, so I don’t second-guess myself” (President J).

Leadership training

President A said she moved onto leadership and to the presidency quickly and because of this rapid advancement, she said she has not had the time for some of the professional development programs that she wished she could have attended, such as the ACE Fellow program or the summer Bryn Mar Summer Leadership Institute for Women in Higher Education.

No changes. President C said that she would not have changed anything. “I’m here today because of what I did in the past.”

President T said she enjoyed her career as it unfolded and the opportunities that came that she might not have had otherwise.

President E said she is content and has no regrets. She said she once turned down a position that she thought would be wonderful, but it was the wrong timing for her family. She remembered that her mother always said, “It will always work out for the best,” and President E said that her career has, indeed, done just that.

“The easy answer is to say I would have gone straight to college, and not gotten married out of high school” said President H, “but I’m not sure that’s true because all of these (things) combined to make me who I am.” One of President H’s professors once said, “What a waste my years as a farm wife had been. I suddenly had this flash of anger.
It was not a waste. I have three daughters that are incredible…I have some humility from having made some mistakes in my life, and I’ve learned from those.” When it came to what she would actually have changed, President H said, “I’d have to say, ‘nothing.’”

“In terms of my career I think I’ve had great opportunities, worked for great people, so I’m not going to say it’s perfect for everyone, but for me…it’s worked” (President V).

Variables that Acted as Barriers to Success

The presidents in this study were asked what variables in their lives acted as barriers to their eventual elevation to and success in the presidency. Gender-related issues were found to be the predominant barrier in this study, just as they were found to be “obstacles” in the Astin and Leland study. Similarly, Mendonca named gender as the main “potential barrier” in her study of women chancellors and presidents. Mendonca writes that as a consequence of the upper ranks of management having traditionally been predominantly white male, and because there is a tendency toward “homogeneity,” the gender-related power structure becomes self-perpetuating (1995, p. 9). An interesting point among the list of “barriers” cited by the presidents in this study is how many of the listed categories, though they may not be directly attributed to gender issues, are often intertwined or indirectly related to gender-issues and stereotypes. As an example, one of the presidents in this study, who applied for a presidency on the East Coast, said she realized that she was not offered the position because she did not have the right “pedigree,” which she defined in part as a degree from an Ivy League School. Yet, at another point in the interviews, one of the presidents who applied to an Ivy League School was informed that they did not, at the time she applied, admit women as
undergraduates. It is, as Joseph Heller wryly notes in his seminal novel by the same name, “Catch 22.”

![Figure 4.11. Variables that Acted as Barriers](image)

**Figure 4.11. Variables that Acted as Barriers**

**Gender.** Presidents A, B, H, I, M, P, R, S, V, W, and Y identified gender in particular as a barrier to their elevation to, and success in, the presidency. Although the research has shown that women are “not more emotional, more suggestible, less decisive, or less objective than male leaders,” women presidents must overcome the perception of these traditional leadership stereotypes before they are able to achieve a level of acceptance that male leaders begin with (Astin & Leland, 1991, p. 4). Astin and Leland quote Bennett College President Willa Player in a 1985 speech where she commented on the progress of women in leadership, which appears to be greatly true even today:

> Although we are making commendable progress in many areas of life, it is not enough. We are still only tokens. We are still on the periphery – too distant from
policy development and decision making. We are still overworked, underpaid, isolated, uncertain, and powerless (p. 144).

The following are examples of gender barriers as experienced and perceived by the presidents in this study.

In the military, being “female…was a barrier,” according to President Y. Additionally, in her former profession in the church, both being a woman and a lay person could act as barriers. President Y said “there are barriers everywhere.” She said that even with equal experience and credentials as another candidate, it sometimes is reduced to the perception of “who you are” and that may not be enough to get the position. President Y said that through such experiences, she as gained “small, profound insight into what it might mean feeling truly marginalized.”

President W identified gender as a barrier. “It’s hard for a woman to get chosen to be a president. Just look at the numbers.”

President V said that, “There are probably some places that didn’t hire me because I was a woman, but we’ll never know, because they don’t tell you in this day and age, they just act on it.”

“It’s still difficult for a woman out there,” said President R. She provided two personal examples. The first involved being a finalist, along with two men, for a presidency. “The interviews were… great. I liked the campus, and the campus community seemed to like me so much so that the local newspaper thought they had a scoop, and they actually were type-setting a headline that said this college was going to choose its first woman president.” President R said that the search committee recommended President R to the Trustees, but the Trustees were allegedly leaning toward bringing football back on campus and said, “A woman president cannot do this.” As a
finalist in a second presidential search, President R knew that there was an expectation, although not a stated requirement, to preach once a month in the local interdenominational church. She had this type of experience and was willing to meet the expectation, but a local Bishop on the board of trustees said, “I won’t have a woman in the pulpit” (President R).

President A spoke about a meeting she had with a group of Christian college presidents and their spouses when she was the only woman president in attendance. When it was time to adjourn into executive session, one of the presidents said, “OK ladies, now you can go talk and we’ll meet.” President A said that she and her husband exchanged weary glances (President A).

President B is a “first-time female president,” which she said is both an “interesting” and “difficult” position to be in because people evaluate your “contributions and …behavior” based on the often very different leadership style of their male predecessors. President B said that women often differ from men in both their interaction style as well as in appearance. She said that, “People find it easy to criticize women, much more so than they would men.” She mentioned the fact that woman may be criticized for not wearing school colors, while men are rarely criticized publicly or privately for their choice of attire. President B said that even the media will describe women differently than men and used the example of the description of Barbara Boxer at the Senate confirmation hearings for Condoleezza Rice. “They described her as looking ‘harried, and frazzled,’ and her hair was ‘sticking out in all directions.’ I thought, ‘How cruel. Why would you do that?’ Would anybody ever say, (a male is) ‘looking bald, and pasty?’ No!” (President B).
Although President P served as interim president on two different occasions at her college the board did not perceive her as the “strong…CEO type,” and continued to search for a man. The first man did not work out, according to President P. The board was in the process of searching for a second man to be president, when they corporately decided to give President P a chance. “I think people see now that I can be a strong leader,” President P said. She guessed that what the board was perceiving as “really strong” was really “manifest(ing) in being ‘dictatorial’…I think that was… the type of person they were looking for, and I’m certainly not that kind of person” (President P).

President I said that she was the first female faculty member hired in her department, and was the first woman in each of her subsequent leadership roles.

In past positions and institutions, President S said she believed that being a woman was a barrier to being considered for advancement. She said she also experienced some “suspiciousness,” which she said she believed was at least partly related to coming to a small liberal arts college from a much larger public university (President S).

President M said that being a woman both “helped” and “didn’t help.” She said that the same was true about her ethnicity. After graduating from college with a degree in journalism, President M applied to work at a television station in the 1960s when there were no women or minorities in television in that region. After her interview, she was told “there was no place” for her, and she was “dismissed.” “It was very blatant, and it was …a shock” (President M).
Although she said that being a woman has not seemed to be a barrier for her, she said she thinks it can be and, because of this, President H said she actively promotes women serving in higher education at all levels.

_Ourselves as barriers._ President C said that she had a lack of belief in herself, which acted as a barrier. She said that she never clearly considered becoming a president until two years before taking her first presidency. After serving as dean and then provost, President C said it was a “brutal look in the mirror,” and a type of “seven-year itch” that finally compelled her to seek the presidency.

In retrospect, her initial choice not to seek a presidency was a barrier, according to President T. She was occasionally drafted into searches, but said she did not participate with her “whole heart.” “I had a great life…and had no need to take on anything else” (President T). One college insisted that she interview for the presidency and, eventually, offered her the position (President T).

President W identified not seeking administrative positions until later in her career as barriers of her “own doing.”

When asked about barriers, President G said that her barriers were primarily self-imposed because of her family priorities. “I wasn’t ready to do this job, or even take on this level of responsibility while I still had children at home,” she said. President G once even turned down a Fulbright to Europe because of “family situations.” President G also said that the level of confidence needed for the presidency developed slowly for her. She said that she might have been more “assertive” and pursued opportunities earlier if it had “occurred” to her that she could. President G noted that self-confidence is a “tricky thing,” and that many women she knows “are not happy with the notion of competition,
and frankly you just don’t get into jobs like this without beating out other people. That also means you risk not winning yourself” (President G).

One thing that President L said “slowed (her) down,” was “I wasn’t clear what the end game was for a long time. I just wasn’t quite sure where I was going. But once I figured it out, things got better” (President L).

**Being an internal candidate / Place-boundness.** President A said that there is no benefit to being an internal candidate, “People know your weaknesses as well as your strengths.”

President I said that, “The first barrier was being place-bound in a higher education career when it’s … the norm to move from institution to institution.” She said she had to be the best Ph.D. student in the multi-state region to be able to overcome the research university’s aversion of hiring their own graduates. President I said the second barrier was to prove her academic excellence and independence as a scholar by publishing alone, rather than jointly with colleagues. She termed this “critical” to prove that the quality of her work was not dependent on relationships to mentors (President I).

President L said that because she was a “home-grown product,” she may have been a victim of the concept that “familiarity breeds contempt.” She eventually did determine that “mobility” is an asset. When a dean position she was interested in opened up at her institution, she also applied for outside positions. She said that when she was subsequently sought by other institutions, that increased her own university’s interest in her. “I did figure out that one of the best ways to ensure that I could be competitive, (was) to get on the job market elsewhere.” She suggests to others engaged in internal searches to do the same, “First, you might like what you see and you might go there, but
secondly, you certainly will be more interesting to people who thought they knew you” (President L).

**Pedigree.** President Y was invited for an interview for a president’s position at a prestigious East Coast school. Although she had an impressive experiential record, to her surprise, she said she realized that she didn’t have a “pedigree” in an environment where that mattered. She said she did not come from an affluent family and had not attended the most highly-ranked institutions, nor was she an “East Coast person.” She said that she knew within the first thirty minutes of the interview that it was not going to be a “good fit” (President Y).

President A said that her choices of colleges might have been a barrier to her career. “I didn’t go to an Ivy League school.” She discovered from other provosts and presidents that “…the pedigree-- where you went to school and who you know--is very much at play” (President A).

**Lack of information.** “One always wishes one had more information and access to more information,” said President T. Consequently, at her direction, her staff developed a fact book to provide ready access to critical information. Under President T’s watch, her school was one of the first colleges to become internet accessible.

President R said that most people lack information about the difference between the search committee and the board of trustees. Search committees usually include various constituents, such as faculty, students, alumni, members of the community, and usually only three or four trustees. “They develop their own chemistry; they get to know the candidates really well,” she said. President R said there are usually twenty-five to
thirty trustees on a private-sector board. “Boards can do these strange sort of turns in the road when you least expect it, so you can’t always count on the fact that what you think of as the absolutely best interview experience has any bearing on the final choice.”

President R questioned whether it is wise to work with an unpredictable board. She said she has had the privilege of a good working relationship with a united board which “stood by” her through tough times. “They took the risks along with me, and I think without that I would have been long gone…Having a board that really takes bad news well and helps you solve the problems… is critically important” (President R).

Other people. President B warned that there will be people who do not want to see any president succeed. These people may be opposed to hiring “outsiders” or a “female” or anyone who acts differently than their “predecessor” (President B).

Politics and external relations. President J emphasized the importance of understanding both the politics of the role of president and the accompanying external relations as a challenge and a risk.

The press. President B said that the press can be a deterrent and can even do harm to a president. “The press can say anything… (and) people believe what they read … no matter how wrong they might be …people believe it, and it sticks” (President B).

Handwriting. Once while a candidate in a presidential search, President R said she had to submit a handwriting sample. A “seven-figure donor” board member who also ran a Fortune 500 company would not accept anyone who’s “handwriting profile wasn’t suitable.” She was not offered that position (President R).
Background / Perception. Although her discipline was not in science, President E was hired as president of a predominantly scientific institution which, she said, was used to, and expected, a president with a comparable scientific background. “It was very fortuitous to the university to get somebody with a different perspective…it took a while for people to understand that this was not a mistake” (President E).

Appearance. President M said that being “tall” and “attractive” did not help her because she worked in a predominantly “male environment.”

No barriers. “There must not have been many. I can’t think of any” (President O).

III. Success in the Presidency

Specifics Contributing Most to Successful Presidency

The presidents of this study were asked if there were any specific things that they believed contributed to their success as president. The purpose of this question was to attempt to tease out important attributes that might have been missed in the previous questions. The most common response with ten presidents responding (A, B, G, H, I, M, O, P, R, and S) was teamwork and valuing people. Astin and Leland termed this concept “collective action” and found this to be one of the most significant three elements of leadership accomplishments in their study.

Virtually all of the women in the study conceived of leadership as a process of “working with people and through people.” They constantly acknowledged the thoughts and energies of others who helped them or laid the groundwork for their labors: “Things that I accomplished…not one of them did I accomplish alone…There were other women working with me” (Astin & Leland, 1991, p. 157).
**Teamwork / Valuing People.** “I enjoy communicating …having people work with me to accomplish things. I’m very team oriented but at the end of the day I accept responsibility and either it’s worked or it hasn’t worked” (President O). President O said she actually enjoys assessment, devising plans to accomplish a goal, communicating that goal so there is “buy-in,” and then celebrating the achievement.

Something President G said she learned that was instrumental to her successful presidency was that the “committee system works, that you’re better off getting input from lots of people.” She noted that most professors are used to working individually, and many competent people, particularly women, may think it is “just quicker to do it myself.” President G said that,

…in fact, the product is better if lots of hands have been on it; lots of minds have been turned to it. That’s an important skill to learn. I think it’s counter-intuitive for a lot of competent women, probably competent men as well, but I think competent men have been socialized to delegate tasks, whereas competent women have been socialized to just hop in and do it (President G).
President R spoke of her “teambuilding” gifts along with her other accomplishments.

President A said that she is not “smart enough” to know everything herself, so she advocates and values committees, taskforces, and plans initiated by her leadership team. She said that she may have a vision or plan, but after the group works on it, it may look different than originally envisioned, which President A said she believes is the ultimate goal,

…but because there has been more ownership, and it’s better than it was before. That process of valuing people…and working together on things…has made me successful. I have a lot of trust from the community, and I don’t take that for granted. I want to constantly live up to that. A lot of that has been built on personal relationships…and people trusting that when I say I want feedback, I really do (President A).

President B said that it is most critical to “bring together a very strong team. I have outstanding people that I work with; human capital is always the most important thing.” She also identified, “valuing the people…giving them the power and the confidence to do better” as an important aspect of leadership (President B).

President P said that she believes that she maintains good relationships throughout campus, but that she has worked hard nurturing those relationships for more than thirty years. She credited bringing a leadership team together, as well as reaching out to all constituents on campus as contributing to her success. “It takes time to build up people’s confidence in you, but it’s very important that everybody on campus looks at you and feels, ‘She’s doing a good job, we’re with her.’ President P said that it is equally important to “get everyone on board” and cited the example of an on-going union action on her campus when she first took office. “I remember that morning looking out the window, and seeing a lot of people… with picket signs. I went down… shook hands with
everybody. I told them I certainly did sympathize with them. It diffused the whole thing.” She said that trying to “stay in touch…with everybody’s issues and problems” is important and that doing so via e-mail is not enough (President P).

I think that experience…helped me become the kind of person who could lead an academic institution, which is all about consulting, building consensus, listening to what people have to say, bringing them along, or maybe they can bring you along sometimes. Leadership is a matter of getting people to do what you want them to do, but to get them to buy into it, and to bring their own nuances and skills to decision-making (President P).

President I emphasized about the importance of building productive work relationships with board members, especially in the new governance environment.

It is absolutely critical that a president learn to respect…and work with activist trustees. In the old days the president, like the CEO at American corporations, was independent of…everyday…involvement of trustees in the work of the university, that era is over. You have to see your trustees as a partner. At the same time… make it clear…that you are the CEO. That’s an ongoing and delicate balance. It’s a lot of work (President I).

President S said that she is good at teambuilding, at being able to identify good staff and assisting them to take ownership of issues and realize credit for contributing to progress. “… one of the most important aspects of leadership is both building a team, and also sharing the responsibility of the credit for where you want to take the institution” (President S).

What President M termed her “analytical nature” directed her to collect “opinions and perspectives from people, and then from that make a decision.”

President H considered it a high accomplishment when people say to her, “you really aren’t very presidential are you?” She said she prefers to rely on other people, and “choose good people, and then… let them do good work, and… praise them for the good work. I don’t need to be at the center of their accomplishments. They need to be at the
center of their accomplishments, and I need to be their cheering squad.” President H said she tries to regularly recognize people doing things “right,” with such affirming statements as, “Wow, that’s amazing,” “good job,” and, “I knew you could do it.” That means so much to the institution,” she said. “It means so much to me” (President H).

Personal Qualities / Personality Traits and Characteristics / Self-Knowledge

Seven of the study presidents provided a list of qualities and/or personality traits that they said were specific factors that contributed to a successful presidency. A list of these with attributions may be found in Appendix H. A composite president who possesses most of the qualities listed by this study’s presidents in this category, who might be termed the “president’s president,” would be best described as the following:

The president’s president is a smart, honest, quick, self-aware, self-examining, fearless, creative, organized, intellectually lively, perceptive extrovert with the highest integrity and a commitment to excellence. The president’s president is someone who manages time well even under pressure, is a good public speaker, has a wide range of interests, loves and connects with people, listens well, flexibly embraces new knowledge, and then, by using good judgment, intuition, and rigorous prioritizing, operates efficiently. This president makes tough decisions, sticks by them, follows through and weathers adversity with a sense of humor, all the while looking and sounding unfailingly presidential (adapted from the responses of Presidents C, G, H, M, R, S, and V).

Additionally, President H said she is an extrovert, intuiting, feeling, and perceiving, personality, an “ENFP” on the Myers-Briggs. She also said, however, that she is moving toward an “ENFJ” (judging rather than perceiving). She said that “perceiving doesn’t work very well as a president. You can’t perceive through very much,” President H said, “You need to make judgments.” President Y said that she is an “ENTJ” (extrovert, intuitive, thinking, and judging) on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality profile. She said she once belonged to a small group of women leaders and
discovered that the local judge and the prison warden both had the same Myers Briggs profile as she did.

*Problem-solving / Analytical and math abilities.* When asked what “specific” things had contributed most to their success, Presidents E, M, O, and R all mentioned problem-solving, analytical, and math skills as major contributors.

President O said she looks for trends, that being a “good analyst,” being able to “assess potential,” and to solve problems is important to a successful presidency. “I’m… a great problem solver” (President O).

President R identified “problem-solving abilities” as one of her strongest points.

President E said that her speed at “arithmetic” has always been a “plus.” Her abilities have impressed colleagues, particularly her unusual ability to instantly spot errors on spread-sheets. “I also can look at … budgets, (and) the one number that’s wrong will just spring out at me, and they will have checked the number a million times because they don’t want me to find anything and there it is… (it) is not something I’ve learned; it’s just there… you use what you’ve got…” (President E).

President M said she has an ability to think conceptually, to “see big picture things,” to “spot the gaps,” and to see the “slivers of light” and follow them.

*Having and articulating a vision.* With a 57 percent response rate, the number one ranked response to a list of skills presented to women presidents and chancellors in Mendonca’s study was “visionary ability” (1995, p. 112). In describing the function of a university president, Duderstadt said that first there must be “substantive leadership.” He
said, “A president is expected to develop, articulate, and implement visions of the university that sustain and enhance the quality of the institution” (2000, p. 252).

You have to have vision about where you need to go. You have to be able to communicate to a wide variety of people. You have to have tenacity, because in this day and age in higher education things don’t come easily. You have to have a way of building trust with people so they’ll put their best effort on behalf of mission and stay (President J).

President B said that “being a strong spokesperson for an institution is critical in helping build the reputation of that institution through your own advocacy role . . . building links to the outside community that are strengthened are important.”

President E recalled the time a leader in her institution said that she was the most unlikely president he had ever met. President E agreed that she did not fit the typical presidential image, but said that “you work with what you have.” One of her strengths, however, is vision and by the time she gave her inaugural address she “had a vision and knew what needed to be done.” Since that time, President E’s said that her institution has surpassed all of the goals set in her original vision.

When President L was hired, she said her board wanted a plan for the future. She had been engaged in visioning processes and had even written a book on the subject. “I knew how to name it, to put a ribbon around it, to codify it, to call it, to brand it, to disperse the assignments through the people who had been engaged in the visioning process, and then to hold ourselves accountable for getting the job done” – what President L called her “theory of leadership.” She admitted that this theory is hard work and believes that the process must be “collaborative, and interactive… you’ve got to pull a lot of people along… you build teams. You make public your ambitions so the people will hold you accountable” (President L).
Experience / Teaching. President C said she proceeded slowly along the path to the presidency. “I stayed eighteen years in the faculty, being very successful at every step that I’ve taken, and staying in my positions long enough to really understand what it takes to build whatever it is you’re building” (President C).

President G said that she believes that becoming a “first-rate” professor is the “ideal” training for management because it involves “motivating people” and assessment of others, helping others to “tease out” important points, as well as honing communication and writing skills. President G noted that administration often demands a “yearning for the big picture…I think most presidents’ and deans are first and foremost good teachers, and have a good strategic mind” (President G).

Experience taught President I the critical importance of staying on top of money and technology issues as well as information flow. “If you don’t know where your money is, and if you don’t know about the impact of technology, you’re at an immediate disadvantage in the university presidency” (President I).

Energy, endurance and accessibility. Energy and endurance are vital, according to President T. She said that “…it’s an eight-day a week job in which you have seven days to do it. I’m very, very active on campus; I go to every play, lecture, music and athletic event that I can.” She warned that once a standard of regular attendance is set, however, people will think something is wrong if the president misses something. President T said she believes that it is important to identify with and be part of the community. She insists on being accessible to all constituents, having an “open door policy with… regular drop-in hours” for students.

“I have a lot of energy,” President V said.
Support. “First is support, the kind of support that I get from my family” (President W).

“I’ve had strong support from my family going way back, and from my husband of thirty-five years” (President V).

Keep up with current events and interpret for staff. President T said that she regularly stays abreast of current events and regularly asks the question, “What does that mean to us?” She recommended reading extensively on current higher education issues, in part because it is easy to become regionally focused when far removed from the center of national education. She said she believes it is important to have access to the national headquarters of educational organizations at One Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C., and remains active with the American Council on Education (ACE), NICU, as well as with local women’s groups. President T said she served on various educational boards, and often chairs committees. Because of the time constraints, she said, however, that she tries to limit her national involvement to one major commitment at a time. She does this, she maintains, to focus her energy on specific goals, to avoid burn-out and unable to fulfill other responsibilities.

Work with state and legislature. “I work in a public university, and relationships with the broader state community and legislature are critical” (President I).

Influential Variables that Contributed to Achieving and Succeeding in the Presidency

When the presidents of this study were asked to identify the variables that contributed most to their achieving and succeeding in the presidency, the most frequent responses were “appearance” and “experience.” Astin and Leland mentioned “physical
vitality,” “energy,” and “confidence” as physical attributes that repeatedly appeared throughout their study. (1991, p. 125). The perception of a president as “presidential” was noted by several presidents. This perception involved not only behaviors, but also visual impressions. Somehow, an ill-defined combination of behavior and appearance worked together to create a presidential “presence.” Additionally, “experience” was, again, mentioned as an important contributor to success.

**Figure 4.13.** Influential Variables Contributing to Success in the Presidency

**Appearance / Presentation and effective communication / Poise and confidence.**

President O said that her appearance is a source of comment, even in the local paper which has referred to her as “diminutive.” She said she has also received comments about being perceived as having “a lot of energy,” and “looking very healthy” (President O).
President G said that she has known women presidents who have not “worked out” at their institution and she said she believed part of the reason was their “visual presentation.” She said that it is important to look professional and, in the South, be “charming” and represent the “best that is the college…It is important to (alumni) that I am ‘turned out,’ and pleasant, with social graces.” President G recommended that presidents “dress conservatively.” She said that at the ACE or SACS presidents meetings, each president “looks a whole lot like the next one,” they wear “kind of the uniform.” At evening events, President G dresses to appear “elegant, but understated.”

“First impressions are so important; sometimes you only see ‘an alum’ one time. Looking at some of the faculty, and knowing that a lot of presidents emerge from the faculty, (the faculty) may need a little help in these areas” (President G).

The best piece of advice that President G received from the Harvard Seminar for New Presidents was from another president who said, “Don’t ever eat food when there is a camera around, because we’ll always take your picture in the middle of chewing or otherwise looking stupid.”

Additionally, President G said that it is important to be proficient at public speaking. “I never walk into a room of alumni that somebody doesn’t ask me to say a few words. I need to be able to…seize that opportunity, to walk the walk, and talk the talk for the college” (President G).

One of the best “elements of coaching” that President R received from a search firm was that “dressing like an academic vice president is not dressing like a president…you have to change your style.” She moved away from her “teacher” attire and learned to “love suits, dress with much more sharp edges, dress more
authoritatively… (and) wear larger jewelry.” Rather than a gold chain or strand of pearls, she began to wear “more assertive necklaces, and larger earrings, and put a bracelet on.” Over time, President R said she has developed her “own style.” She said, “If you’re a woman president, I can tell you for certain that everybody around you is looking at your clothes all the time, because they comment all the time. It’s subtle in not so subtle ways.” President R said that the presidential style changes slightly according to region and that color is important, “If you’re in New York, it’s mostly black, and that’s a northeastern kind of element. But in general, it’s more important to dress to your color scheme than to wear somebody else’s idea of colors. You can be a person who looks awful in black, and it’s a bad idea to wear it because you won’t look authoritative or anything else. You’ll just look washed out.” She said that presidents often must walk into corporate boardrooms to solicit financial support and it is important that “they take you as an equal.” President R said she made some deliberate fashion changes after her first few presidential search experiences and that it eventually changed the outcome.

President A said that appearing “Poised and confidence, particularly as it relates to public communication” was critical to advancement.

Looking like a president…Appearance is important… some of us see it as professional dress and demeanor, others might describe (it) as a “presence” of some kind. People need to feel like they’re with a president when they’re with you. Whether you are handsome and tall and look great in a Brooks Brothers suit or whether that’s simply the way you handle yourself…When I gave my first speech as a provost, one of the trustees said “That was very presidential.” (President I)

“I don’t know what in the world I’m going to do with all these suits when I retire,” President L said. She added that people often comment when she is not wearing school colors, even though she wears them often (President L).
“I have plenty of professional suits, and I wear them a lot,” President H said, “I’m very careful during my job interview to look professional.” She often wears pants and has noticed that other women in administrative positions have also been wearing more pants than skirts in recent years (President H).

Experience / Background / Prerequisites. President C said that growing up in a farm town of a thousand people helped to prevent her from learning how to “play games” with people.

The broad experience that President T brought to the presidency was important, she said. She said she taught for thirty-two years, served as an associate dean, and supervised an overseas program and had enough background in many areas to feel comfortable working with, and being a sounding board for, people (President T).

President Y identified a career with the military, in addition to a previous position as an administrator at a school of theology, as the two primary career variables which most contributed to her success. She said the naval career assisted in her ascension to the presidency, while the academic career gave her the skills and administrative experience to perform well in the position. Her second presidency was more contingent on her academic background, her religious denomination, and her contacts (President Y).

President V said she had the degrees, which were the “technical” prerequisites for the presidency. “I didn’t know I was going to be a president, although I knew I wanted to do something significant, and…if I didn’t have the tools in my tool kit, I wouldn’t get through the next door” (President V).

President B identified “preparation for the job” as the most important variable contributing to her success. Although she did not consciously aspire to the presidency
“somehow I felt like as I was starting up that ladder, the end point would be a president.” President B said she proceeded through all of the important traditional steps at the university from student to faculty member, department chair, associate dean, dean, vice president, provost, and finally to president.

President E said that growing up in a business was a great contributor to her success. She said that the fundraising the president must do often involves business people and that academics frequently “distrust and are uncomfortable with business people.” She said she does not experience this discomfort because these are “the kind of people I knew” (President E).

Teaching high school was what President M said was the “most formative” of the values she holds on education, and these values ultimately led her on to the pathway to a college presidency.

**Sense of humor.** President O and President V both identified their “sense of humor” as the important variable contributing to their success. President L also mentioned the importance of a good sense of humor.

**Knowing ones-self / Believing in ones-self.** President W said that it has proven effective to establish and present herself as “an academic president … even though I don’t do much research anymore.” She often quotes Emily Dickinson’s poetry during public presentations. “It gives a certain patina to the speech, and then to my presence” (President W).

“People believed in me, and I believed in myself” (President V).
President H cited the confidence to let “people see the aspects of me that I want them to see, and not trying to fit the mold.”

*Listening / Remaining open / Careful decision-making.* President T said that she found it helpful to be open and listen, refrain from making quick judgments, and to always respond in a timely manner.

Seeking “opportunity” was what president H said led her on the path to the presidency. What enabled her to succeed, she said, was being “open” to all possibilities, not just to the next predictable step. “Not looking for the single right thing, not limiting my vision,” not “closing doors,” were all important to eventual success according to President H.

President P said that a past university CEO had difficulty building consensus because he gave “orders,” instead of following the George Washington model of leadership. That is, she said, to “be silent… let people talk… let them debate, and eventually bring them around.” President P said that she believes in being organized. “You have to bring people along, make them see that what you want them to do is the right thing,” she said (President P).

*Leadership style / Shared governance.* President V stated that her leadership style was an influential variable, one that contributed to her success. President L said that it is critical to understand “how you lead” in order to build on a personal “theory of leadership.” We all need to know a lot about leadership,” she said, “but fundamentally, you have to define it for yourself, and then you have to do it” (President L).
One person cannot do all things, according to President T, “It takes a whole group of people--and sharing governance makes a stronger institution.”

President T said she finds her willingness to help others to be an important variable, one that helps her demonstrate her commitment to the institution and to the staff. During a recent Spring Break, the library was having difficulty with a former student. President T said she had all calls related to the matter forwarded to her office so the library staff could enjoy their break. She said she often puts herself on the firing line for the college, identifies where change is necessary, and then works for change within an institutional context (President T).

Additionally, President T said that it is important to have a “willingness to step out,” and take risks when helping others. Responding to criticism aimed at a Gay and Lesbian organization on campus, President T insisted that this group was a part of the community, and the university at large must care for this group, just as it does for any other group. She said she believes that it is important to accommodate special interests, while maintaining their American Baptist heritage and to “stand up and represent the inclusiveness of the institution” (President T).

President J emphasized that achieving success in the presidency goes back to “vision,” “communication,” and the ability to “build trust” in relationships.

_Institutional fit / Timing._

There needs to be a good match between a president and an institution. It’s important to be successful in an environment where your values and skills match the needs and the broader social environment of the institution. I would say to any candidate for a presidency: Don’t take the job just because you want to be president. Aspiring to the role is a very different thing than fulfilling it (President J).
President S identified the importance of matching professional desires and aspirations with the needs of an institution as being vitally important, as well as “being in the right place at the right time” (President S).

Support. President S said that the support she received from her colleagues has been important to her success. She credited any success she enjoyed to this point to her “strong leadership team” and a “wonderful board” (President S).

Practical approach. President T said she chose to take a practical approach to her presidency. She gave the example of dressing professionally, but changing into walking shoes before walking around the campus (President T).

Marketing and entrepreneursh. President R said that she believed that her interest in marketing was a significant contributing factor in the trustee’s selection of her as president. She said that the trustees found the other candidates “too narrowly academic in their vision,” and said that in the end, the trustees apparently believed that the institution needed “an entrepreneurial vision” (President R).

Networking / Volunteer. President B said she built a strong network of people that provided opportunities, made recommendations, and helped her achieve a presidency. In the process, she said she served long hours on many boards and review committees, wrote grants, and was active in national professional organizations. “In many of my roles, I’ve been connected with government, so I have a lot of people in Congress that I know very well, (as well as) a lot of people in higher education organizations… everywhere you go and everything you do builds large networks. It’s
kind of fun. If somebody says, ‘Do you know so and so?’ and so often I say, ‘Yep, I do’” (President B).

_Love of administrative work._ President A said that it is important to have “a real love for administrative work…I took every committee assignment that ever came to me, because I enjoy that kind of work.” She said that volunteering for these types of assignments allows others to observe her many administrative gifts and to encourage of the development of those gifts (President A).

_Accent._ President E said she tried unsuccessfully to “lose” her accent as a graduate student so that people would “take my work seriously… because if you’re both a woman and a Southerner, they… assume you’re not too bright.” However, she now views her accent as more of an asset. She terms it a “recognizable trait… when I call people, I often forget to say my name because they recognize my voice” (President E).

Attributes that Board Members and Vice Presidents Say Contribute Most to Success

Unspoken cultural norms may cause people to withhold positive information about themselves because it may be unbecoming to reveal everything. People may be naturally reticent to trumpet their accomplishments. For these reasons, the participants were asked the question “What do you believe your board and your vice presidents would say are the attributes that contribute most to your success?” This question was intended to tease out information that might not otherwise be obtained. Although some of the same characteristics emerged that were seen from other questions, the subsequent answers resulted in categories that are somewhat different in emphasis and order. A more extensive and detailed list appears in Appendix G.
President G said that the attributes that her board and vice presidents would identify as most contributing to her success are being “smart,” a good “idea” person and “problem solver,” “self confident enough to pick good folks,” being able to “step back” and let good people perform “without interfering,” modeling accessibility, “treating people” the way she likes to be treated, almost never becoming “visibly angry,” having good “communication skills,” being “honest,” and always giving her board “the full picture.” “You only have to hold something back from your board once to have undermined that trust,” President G said.

President B said that two things her board and vice presidents might say she possessed in abundance are “energy and work ethic.”

**Figure 4.14.** Attributes Identified by Boards and Vice Presidents
President O said that her board has described her as… “a breath of fresh air, taking us to a new level of excellence, courageous, taking on the tough issues. My senior staff would say I’m working them to death, and I’m taking on too much too soon.”

President O said that she is a “great boss” for high-achievers. “If somebody needs…constant management, I am not as good. I have really high expectations” (President O).

President C said her board and vice presidents would say that I know who I am; I know what my strengths are. I work hard, I communicate very well, I’m sensitive to people. I have a great knowledge base, and in terms of what it takes to run a university, I have an understanding of both the ethos, (and) the impact that culture has on a new president coming in trying to make change…I am not afraid to take on a conflict but I will do what I can to make it as easy on people as possible. I’m not afraid of the job (President C).

She identified some of her other strengths including her communication styles, honesty, openness, and direct manner with people. President C said she is publicly willing, “to admit that something has gone very badly and we need to fix it, to shoulder all the blame where I need to, even more than I need to” (President C).

President V said her board and vice presidents would say that she was “smart,” “energetic,” that she knows “higher education as a profession,” she is “well known,” “organized,” “quick,” “can figure out a strategy for how to get from here to there,” and is able to “connect with people” well. She said they might also say, “I’m fun. I’m playing with tops here on my desk.” President V said that her board “can send me out to meet anyone, and I’m going to represent the institution in a positive light.” She said that, “The vice presidents would say that I support them, that I’m a good boss…I’m not a micro manager. She said the board would say the same and that she “hire(s) strong people, which not everyone does” (President V).
President R said she thought her board and vice presidents would describe her as a person of: “courage” and “determination,” “vision,” “entrepreneurship,” a risk-taker with good “communication skills,” financial skills, and the ability to…“manage with scarce resources.” She said the university’s vice presidents might add “that I drive them too hard” (President R).

President E said that her board would identify her most successful attributes as “determination, focus, ability to see how the parts fit together, but most of all the ability to keep my eyes on the prize, and know what steps it takes to get there.”

President P said her board and vice presidents perceive her as a “good leader of the institution.” She said she gives her vice presidents “a lot of space,” and that she calls meetings “with an open mind,” that she wants “to hear what they say.” President P said it is important to be “open to listen to other people’s critical thinking, and to let it inform my own” and that she hopes this is what her board and vice presidents would say about her (President P).

President S said that her board and staff would say that she is “willing to take on hard problems and make difficult decision,” “good at developing relationships,” a “good financial manager,” and that she has a “sense of directive action.”

President A said that she is perceived to have maintained a good balance of being a good “pastoral” president – caring for people – living the “vision of hospitality,” demonstrating good “leadership,” being an effective “visionary” “encourager,” “community-builder,” and an effective manager. She said that her board would say that “I’m passionately committed to the mission of the identity of the institution, which is
really what drew me to (this college) and what excites me to want to be here” (President A).

Maintaining a good “work atmosphere, praising people and getting the best from them, delegating jobs…expecting (people) to do well (and) noting when they do” are all attributes that President H said her board would mention. She said that she first finds “common ground” and then “proceed(s) from there.” She operates this way with her staff, board and the legislature. President H said she explains their needs, pledges to make the “best possible use” of the money, and affirms that she is confident that they will do their best, and then thanks everyone for what they have done. In the end, she said she would probably be described as being “friendly,” “agreeable,” and that the legislators would say that she “doesn’t whine” (President H).

“My board members have always appreciated that I do get things moving, can get going, and work towards achieving something rather than just theorizing about it,” President Y said. “I think the vice presidents appreciate that, too.” She termed this attribute as being “goal-oriented.” President Y also said that board and vice presidents say that she is a “good listener” which she said means that “they understand that I respect what they know, and pay attention to it” (President Y).

President W said that her board and vice presidents would identify her “passion,” “creativity,” and the “ability to create a team” as the attributes that contributed most to her success.

President J said that her board and vice presidents appreciate that she always has a “passion” for what she does and that she “does things well.” “I’m able to be inclusive so
that I don’t hog all the credit. I really operate under the adage that when something (good) happens we’ve done it, and when it’s a mistake, I’m responsible” (President J).

Having abundant “energy,” was the first attribute that President L said her board would identify as contributing to her success, followed by being “hard-driving, long-serving, persistent.” She also said, “They might say ‘fun’…I think people are kind of enjoying all this momentum and this movement” (President L).

President T said that her board appreciates her ability keep a focus on what they are all about--education. “The mantra has been (that) when two people meet, there is both the opportunity to teach and to learn, and it’s never clear who the teacher will be.” She also said that “The campus has a lot of fun together, and we know each other well, (and) we work together.” She was recently introduced as the “kind of boss everybody should have once in a lifetime.” President T said she has been complimented for her willingness to assume the “hard tasks” and work through these tasks all the while involving others in the process. President T said that she “can’t ever take credit for things” since many people have been involved in the process and “they” should get the credit. “I’ve just been fortunate enough to be here at this time” (President T).

“I pay…attention, and I don’t ignore it when people tell me something is important” (President I).

President M said that one of her board members was overheard saying that their university “had a very charismatic president.” She said this description overwhelmed and even embarrassed her a bit, but she said that she does try to be “authentic,” and perhaps that was where the description originated. “Parker Palmer has written a wonderful book on authenticity and when I read that, I thought ‘That’s the only way to
She said that you can’t be one person as a president and someone else at home. “You can’t live a divided life” President M said that her board would describe her as “authentic,” that she “encourages” that in others, and that she is “effective.”

**Most Rewarding Aspects of Presidency**

As one of the Instigators in the Astin and Leland study said, “I feel very fortunate. I have influenced, literally, the lives of millions of people” (1991, p. 155). Indeed, the women presidents of this study repeatedly said that they are rewarded and renewed by the fact that they make a difference, that they have been a part of improving their institutions, their communities, and the lives of students, faculty, and even alumni. These presidents have made a permanent mark on society and, although this has been an “exhausting,” ongoing journey, virtually all have remarked how satisfying it has been for them to do what they could to make the world a better place.

![bar chart]

**Figure 4.15.** Most Rewarding Part of the Presidency
Advancing the institution. Shortly after she arrived at her institution, President C said she recognized that the advancement program at her new university needed work, and she said she had “a couple of immediate successes,” which were “critical to the long-term health of the institution.” One of her very first moves, she said was to hire a strong, innovative vice president who developed a foundation and began to campaign and fund raise. Secondly, through the implementation of various plans, she was able to assist in reversing the declining enrollment. Both events, she said, provided significant personal satisfaction (President C).

According to President T, observing the changes to the campus has been the most rewarding part of being president. She oversaw several capital campaigns, which provided expanded acreage, new building, and the renovation of old buildings. A separate initiative served to more than double the number of applicants to the college. “I always say we’ve taken the bushel off the candle and we’ve let it become a spotlight” (President T).

“I really think the college is much better shape than it was when I came,” said President G. She added that the “curriculum has entered the 21st century,” the “physical appearance of the campus” has improved and a significant amount of deferred maintenance has been remedied.” (President G)

President E said she has seen many changes since her presidency began. She said she is most proud of the physical improvements, including new signage and improved new print materials and logos. Additionally, she pointed to the increased diversity of the student body, “Our students are so diverse and so smart…everything about us now says this is an important university” (President E).
President P said that, as with other presidents, she was rewarded by “the feeling that I have brought the college along, and that it’s a better place today than it was when I took over. It’s more beautiful, I’ve brought an eye for aesthetics to the campus…I’ve made it run better…I have made very good appointments--In many ways that is the most important thing a president can do” (President P).

President I said that her university is focusing on advancing in the areas of “excellence” and “reputation.” “I’ve had a big impact on that,” she said, noting that that advancement has been the most rewarding aspect of her presidency to date. President I said her efforts secured many millions of dollars from their ordinarily “frugal” State legislature for campus capital improvements. She has been told that her “presence and presentation embodies the excellence of the university, and its growth, and its future.” (President I)

President L said that the most rewarding part about being a president is “getting things done…accomplishing, moving the dial.” She cited as an example her institution’s partnership with the public schools and neighborhoods to prepare more children for college. “It’s acting, bringing ideas to fruition, and creating, that really ultimately moves the institution…because there is so much hope and expectation in a university. Fundamentally, the excitement…is getting the right things done” (President L)

President H said that watching her institution, which had been struggling four years ago, turn around and become “a healthy, viable institution that is doing a good job…allowing faculty and staff to do what they truly are committed to and believe in…educating the students. Watching--seeing it work, there just isn’t anything any more rewarding than that” (President H).
Student and faculty accomplishments. President C said that it is “fun” being able to spend more time with students as president. “My students are the greatest people in the world,” she said. She also said she found it rewarding to work collectively to solve problems at the university. “I find some reward in empowering others, and I’m going to begin to see more women in leadership positions. That feels good.” (President C)

“What the students are doing and what faculty are accomplishing…are the most rewarding parts of this job,” said President T.

President O said that seeing students grow, hearing their dreams, and knowing what is happening “behind the scenes” to support them is like a “tonic.” Additionally, securing funds for an endowed professorship, and then offering that position to one of their professors was “a very special moment for me” (President O).

President Y described her greatest joy as President as facilitating:

…the excitement that happens when students learn and good teachers…teach. The most rewarding thing is to know that people who love their discipline and…education can come to work and find ideals, find the resources they need to do their best work, and that students … can see that they’re learning…that they’re growing, they’re maturing to prepare for something beyond college (President Y).

“It’s always seeing people be successful,” said President B. She said that it is “fun” to see students graduate and be successful, but she said that it is also rewarding to witness “change.” President B said that she has a goal that every student at her institution will have some kind of “research experience” before they graduate. Although many in the faculty were initially reluctant when this plan was first introduced, numerous students have returned to describe their research as the best part of their education.

“Administration is here to serve the faculty and the students. We’re not here to build ourselves. If we are, we’re probably in the wrong job” (President B).
President M both named commencement and convocation as the most rewarding aspects of the presidency. Convocation, because she said she sees the frightened “wide-eyed kids” coming into the institution and Commencement, because she said she sees the transformed person – which is, according to President M, the most rewarding part of her job.

*Working with people / Feedback.* President W said she enjoyed serving as a guest lecturer in classes since she no longer has time to teach. Just prior to this study, she said she was invited to give a lecture in a senior class on leadership. After the lecture, the professor sent out an e-mail to rate the lecture on a scale of one to five, with five representing “the kind of visionary leader that actually transforms institutions.” The class rated her lecture as a “five.” President W said this was “very affirming.”

“Knowing that the college is doing what it says it’s doing for students is a great satisfaction,” President G said. But even more rewarding than this, she added, has been “working with bright, young administrators and mentoring them along.”

President J said the greatest rewards are “seeing the difference in the lives of people.”

President A said that the most rewarding part about being president has been working with the people on the university’s board, “people committed to the college, learning their stories, and who they are.” She said she often spends a day with individual board members, “learning about their business and all about them,” which helps her to better understand how they function on the board. “Some of these people are not extremely well educated…but incredibly smart,” she said. “That has been a great joy.” President A also said that she has been able to have more contact with students in her
presidency. “I’ve been doing a lot of things to be very intentional with students, and that has given me energy for the work that I do…I’ve always had close relationships with faculty” (President A).

“One thing I really love…is working with the younger administrators…seeing them grow and take on new responsibilities.” (President E)

**Love for the university and the challenge of the job.** “I just love being on college campuses,” President V said, “I think they are the best places to be. They’re…full of ideas, interesting people, wonderful students, engaged faculty.” President V said that the there will always be accomplishments, but the most rewarding part about being president is the “work” itself. “These jobs are extraordinary, and I feel really fortunate to have one” (President V).

**Community development.** President R said that she has found “community development” to be the most rewarding part of the presidency. She has seen a “significant difference in both the economic development, and the neighborhood development” in the community which she said she sees as a “legacy that will go beyond what I’ve been able to do for the college.” President R’s college is located in the heart of a historic district that had fallen into ill-repair. She said that it was clear that the college was growing into that area, so she spearheaded a project to encourage “owner/occupants to re-inhabit the houses within a fairly tight, three-block radius of the campus. That has just made a huge difference.” She said it has since “become a very ‘hot’ place to be.” President R worked “diligently” with a group from the city to “bring everybody together around the common vision…There are lots of other people now involved; industry is
coming in.” The institution has also attracted “research facilities” and formed partnerships with schools and other facilities. “We also have put in place a service-learning component in our general education curriculum, she said, where “students are … working on community projects, and making change. That’s been very exciting, and it’s nothing I would have imagined that I would be involved in” (President R).

Meeting alumni. President S identified the most rewarding part of her presidency as “meeting alumni; just getting a sense of the enormous variety and extraordinary lives that the alumni have led has been the most rewarding part” of her job.

Most Disappointing or Discouraging Aspects of Experience as President

Most of the presidents in this study chose to define a negative feeling or experience as a “discouragement,” “frustration,” or “despair,” rather than a “disappointment.” It appears that most of the presidents view difficulties as “challenges” and they are generally unwilling to give up a battle or lose hope. The word “disappointment” may imply a resolve that the battle is over. Nevertheless, because any presidency is challenging and, as one leader in Mendonca’s study remarked, when “every single day is a trial by fire,” there are bound to be some low times (1995, p. 186). Among the lower points for Mendonca’s leaders were “loneliness,” “isolation,” “criticism because you don’t do things like a man” (1995, p. 184). Similar findings were articulated by the presidents in this study. Additionally, the main findings in this study revealed that there were even greater issues involving money and resistance from small, usually unhappy, groups of faculty. In the last section, it was determined that the presidents in this study derive their greatest rewards from “advancing the institution.” It makes perfect
sense that the things that interfere with institutional advancement, which are often money and resistance from the faculty and constituents, would be the greatest source of frustration and disappointment.

Figure 4.16. Disappointments of Experience as President

Budget / Money / State legislature. President C stated that the most discouraging aspect of her presidency was the current state of the State legislature and the budget process. “There is such a change in philosophy at the legislature,” President C said, “We’ve got a bunch of kids down there running things with no history of Higher Ed. That’s not only discouraging, it’s downright scary.” She also said that there are “issues” that she hasn’t found a solution for yet, but she would describe them more as “conundrums” rather than “disappointments.” President C added that she has experienced a variety of “slightly discouraging” situations, but that what appears to be the
apparent solutions “go so against the culture of anything that’s ever happened around here” that she has to move slowly. President C said that, as president, there are times when “I get frustrated, I get exasperated, and I go home and think.”

Just as for President C, the biggest disappointment for President W has also been “working with the legislature.” She said that legislature has been “struggling” with serious deficits, and that “they either demagogue you because you raise the tuition too high, (or) now they’re asking for all sorts of information with implications that we’re irresponsible (for example) ‘How many administrators have you hired in the last year, how much are you paying them?’” President W said that this kind of political mistrust is “contradictory to the kind of world I want to work in. It’s not real accountability” (President W).

President J said that she also struggles with financial priorities and has difficulty convincing people to look at the longer-term situation. “Higher education is really a long term value,” she said, and that people often do not want to “disrupt their lives today in order to get to the new place tomorrow.” She said that she sees that repeated in everything from providing new academic programs to “making macro budget judgments.” (President J)

President V said that her greatest disappointment has been “the absolutely ludicrous position that the federal government and the state are taking with respect to student aid.” She is “discouraged” about the inability to convey to the legislature “that the world needs future leaders, and if we don’t educate them, we’re all going to suffer. I think sometimes they think we’re just saying that because we think it’s good for us” (President V).
Even though she said that her institution, in response to lower state support, has become “thirty percent more efficient in our administrative costs than our peers,” President I said that “money” matters are still her biggest disappointment. She said she is “tired” of hearing the state repeatedly tell the universities to “tighten your belt some more. That wears you down; that’s very discouraging.”

President I also said that working with a unionized faculty with the mind-set of “across-the-board rewards, rather than merit and equity awards, is a tough environment in which to build a really good collegial relationship with the faculty . . . (and) to then go into the collective bargaining agreement, and put a structure around it.”

President H said that her greatest disappointment was the “ten percent cuts in my first year (budget) as president, the challenge of that. It was difficult, and it was discouraging” (President H).

**Resistance from colleagues.** President T said that she has not yet had any disappointing or discouraging experiences as president. She expressed occasional bouts of “despair,” as during the implementation of a new sexual harassment policy that was challenged by some colleagues who failed to understand that “the legal environment has changed.” Additionally, she said the lengthy time periods that it often takes to implement change at the university level, can be discouraging, she said. Still, President T philosophically calls such experiences part of “lifelong learning.” President T also commented that “It’s better to involve more people in the process, have more buy in, and then spend more time on the upfront instead of putting out fires afterwards. There is much less acrimony” (President T).
President Y said she had many disappointments. Some, she said, have been from people who she thought had great promise and didn’t perform accordingly, but the most disappointing has been the “frustrated, very unhappy faculty member,” who she said “impedes the progress of everybody else.” President Y said that some faculty, for a variety of reasons, stay at an institution where they are “miserable” and often “take out their misery on other people and they can be an extraordinarily negative influence on a faculty as a whole.” In every institution where she has served, she said she has observed this phenomenon. “All it takes is just a handful of people to basically highjack an agenda.” President Y said that these individuals “clearly don’t belong in academia anymore.” Additionally, despite the fact that most faculty are content with their institution, President Y said they are generally not “highly invested in the future of the institution because they’re more concerned with their own discipline, their own teaching.” President Y said that this attitude is discouraging because, “as an institution, we can do so much more in communities of learning. We could move more quickly… achieve more for our students if people were just a little more energetic, and a little less afraid of change.” President Y recommended “tolerance,” “re-energization,” and peer influence in dealing with disappointments with faculty. One of the worst adaptive behaviors is when personnel are “shuffled around,” she said. “That’s a disturbance for them and most [sic] everybody else.” President Y added that it is important to provide these people time to “rekindle or re-ignite themselves” (President Y).

Echoing President Y’s observations, President R said that she is disappointed by faculty members and others who hate the “idea that change was going to be necessary for survival… can’t see, and don’t want to be in, the place that the institution is moving.”
Although she said she has generally had excellent relations with the faculty, “the toughest thing has been having even a piece of the faculty be alienated.” She said that her Chief Academic Officer will eventually “move them out in benevolent ways,” but in the meantime, “they’re so unhappy, and so angry… it’s very hard to deal with” (President R).

“I get discouraged sometimes because I find faculty members, particularly ones that have been in a place…many years, can be so resistant to change…some of them would rather complain about things than have them better” (President E).

President P said she is most disappointed by people who refuse to work together to make improvements.

President S said that her greatest disappointment has been “residual resistance from the faculty… finger-pointing about the financial steps that the campus had to take, (and) the sense that balancing your budget is somehow corporatizing, or betraying the tradition of (the college).”

_student-related.  President O said her biggest disappointment has been “dealing with misplaced student dissatisfaction, like having a significant group of students who are adverse to any kind of change, whether it’s transplanting a tree or moving an office.”

President I said, “The environment of stress, the cultural and social developments that undergraduates face in the current decade, with an ongoing environment of the alcohol abuse and the attendant social ills that go with it, that’s always been discouraging. But we’re working on it” (President I).
Lack of forgiveness / Judgment / Liabilities of being a public figure. According to President G:

There have been heartbreaking moments. It doesn’t matter how brilliantly you functioned last year, or last month, or last week from the point of view of the faculty (and) the students. If you do something that they disagree with or don’t like, or things go wrong over which you may not have much control this week, your name is mud. I don’t think that’s as true with the board, which tends to take a broader view of things. Students are notoriously passionate because of their age. That’s why it’s so crucial to have an administrative team that works well together, knows everything, and is supportive of one another (President G).

President V said that people have a tendency to judge a president for the positions they hold and often have a significant misconception about “who” the president is or what beliefs that president actually holds. A few weeks prior to this study, President V said that she received an accusatory letter from a student about racial issues. She said that was difficult because, “I’m not the enemy. We share a common enemy.” She said that this type of situation “comes with the territory” and that “compartmentalizing and not taking things too personally” is important for her (President V).

*It is difficult to “get things done.”* President L said that the most disappointing thing about the presidency is that “it’s really hard to get things done.” She also identified “getting things done” as the “greatest payoff” to being president. Some days President L said that it seems as though the “wheels have fallen off the five biggest projects I’m working on.” She will then “get a grip,” and the “next day one of (the projects) gets back up on their feet again,” and so it continues. “It’s hard work, tiring work, exhausting work” (President L).

Aloneness / Isolation from colleagues. President G mentioned a couple of disappointments from her presidency, one of which was the loss of close relationships
with colleagues. There is constantly a hierarchy that limits the level of closeness that a
president may have with their vice presidents and faculty, all who work for the president.
The same problem exists with the board members, because the president works for them.
President G said there is only one president, one person at that level which may mean that
there is no one with whom the president can talk candidly,

…unless you have a spouse to whom you can talk comfortably. Virtually all male
college presidents are married, female college presidents, much less so. I can’t
tell my husband everything…he gets so angry if somebody is angry at me. He
wants to go out and tell them “what for,” and that won’t help. You’ve got to get
over it if somebody has insulted you, or somebody has called your decision
idiotic, or somebody is working behind the scenes to make your life difficult…
you’ve got to move on…I think the dynamic of a woman president’s husband’s
approach is going to be quite different from the average wife’s dynamic. That’s
one thing that’s disappointing or sort of debilitating (President G).

**Gender barriers.** President A said that being one of the few women presidents
within the group of evangelical Christian colleges, she has been most disappointed by the
“less than hospitable welcome as a presidential colleague” she has sometimes received.
She said did not think that most of the male presidents would agree. She said that these
presidents would “say” they were “glad” she was there, but “it’s the difference of being
intentional about developing friendships and relationships.” President A said that she
believes the small number of Christian college women and minority presidents is an issue
with the boards of these colleges who “don’t even think outside of their own comfort
zone.” She said that “board development” is crucial to making changes in this area
(President A).

**Women who won’t help other women.** A disappointment for President M has been
the reluctance of other women to help her when she has sought assistance. She was once
rejected when she asked another woman leader for a few minutes of her time to advise her on her future. President M concluded her comments on this topic with a quote, as best she could remember it, from former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright: “Women who don’t help other women have a special place in hell” (President M).

*Obsession with athletics.* “I find it very discouraging that athletics drives so much of what goes on in this institution…I think it’s to the detriment of the academics. The overwhelming obsession with athletics is to me disappointing and discouraging” (President B).

*Education has a long way to go.* President M said that among her disappointments was a general concern: “I think education in general has such an enormous way to go still” (President M).

*Could Have Been Better Prepared for Presidency, and How So?*

The eighteen presidents in this study were asked if they wished they had been better prepared for the presidency and, if yes, how so? There were three main categories of responses: Ten presidents (A, B, C, G, H, R, O, P, S, and Y) responded “yes,” indicating that they did wish they had been better prepared. A second group of presidents said they believed they were well prepared (E, I, J, L, T, and W). While, one president responded that it was not possible to prepare for a presidency.
Money: *finance, accounting, budgets and fundraising*. President C said that she wished she had been better prepared in economics, had had more “budget experience” and “economic predicting.” She said that although she works with “great people” and has always stayed on budget, “there are some more complicated financial issues than I wish I’d had” (President C).

President Y said it would have been really helpful if she had had “more training in finance and “business.”

President G said she wished she had had a “deeper understanding of the whole budgeting process (and)… accounting procedures …because colleges are very complex systems.” Coming from the humanities, she said she was deficient in these areas and “learned it on the job,” often feeling “behind the eight ball and too reliant on my vice presidents, who, thank God, were reliable.” Additionally, President G said that she had
had virtually no experience with “fund raising, and development.” However, those areas proved to be relatively easy to master, she said (President G).

Although President R had worked in development, she said she had never had to solicit an individual gift. She has since mastered that art, but said that some “coaching beforehand would probably have been helpful” (President R).

“I wish I had been better prepared in accounting and financial matters,” President A said. She works with another woman vice president in finance who, she said, has been a great mentor. “I know a lot about my discipline and...(the) academic mission of a college…but there are a lot of budgetary decisions… I wish I had done some more intentional work there,” President A said.

“I’ve had to scramble to learn more about finances,” President H said. “I’ve had to scramble to care about it.” Although she said she knows that financial matters are important and that they have to “care” and be “responsible” to avoid “turmoil,” she added that she regrettably finds some of the “more involved financial aspects boring” (President H).

*Yes – overall.* President Y said, “Oh sure, there is no doubt about it; I wish I’d been better prepared in many ways.”

“I don’t really feel that I was well prepared for this presidency. I wasn’t prepared at all to be a dean. I had no clue what I was doing,” President G said. However, by the time she reached the presidency, President G said that she began to master many of the necessary prerequisites.

Although President B said, “Yes,” she wished she had been better prepared, she was not sure how: “I don’t think you can be prepared for what you don’t know,” she said.
I think I was as prepared as I could possibly be.” Having been the provost, she said she thought she “knew the job.” “I don’t think you really do know the job until you’re in the job. I could never have guessed a lot of the things that go on. It’s just different” (President B).

President P said that, just like parenting, people generally wish they had been better prepared. And like parenting, most people learn from experience.

It’s like a fruit that’s ripening; you can’t ripen it all at once…it has to hang there on the tree, and if you take it down too early you know it’s got some hard spots. You can’t know everything. I couldn’t possibly have known what this job was all about when I started it, but you have to let yourself be ripened by it, and over time you become better at it…you come in somewhat green…gradually you ripen, and after a while, it’s time to fall from the tree. There is a line from Browning, “experience is an arch through which I pass.” You’ve got to pass through the arch, that’s all I can say (President P).

Communication / Interpersonal / Learning more about the presidency. “I wish that I had come into this being the greatest speaker in the world, and able to know how to…work with every constituency … It’s kind of trial and error as you go along” (President O).

President S said that she wished she had been better prepared, particularly in knowing the difference between a small liberal arts college and a large research university. Ultimately, however, she blamed her inexperience on herself. President S stated that in retrospect “more conversations going into the presidency about how this role would be different would have been very useful to me,” as would one of the “presidency institutes,” which she concluded from visiting with peers.

Experience working with legislators. President Y said that she had had little experience working with state government when she moved her institution into the state
university system. She said it was similar to being “the head of an agency, like the Department of Transportation… I had to really learn a lot about advocating for our budget before different legislative committees…I wish I’d been prepared for that” (President Y).

**Athletics.** President C said that she inherited athletic program problems from “years of neglect.” She said her university has two dozen athletic teams without adequate budgetary support. Additionally, she said her university recently had further equity loss from a settlement, and is being scrutinized by the office of civil rights. Consequently, the university cannot either drop teams or change divisions in part due to “gender equity” regulations (President C).

**Human resources training.** President A said that further education in human resources might have been helpful. She said there are frequent “personnel issues.” “I rely heavily on a fine Human Resources director and a college counsel, but…I wish I would have had some training in both of those areas in terms of formal courses” (President A).

**Be flexible / Let others help / Absorb the culture.** President B said that she wished she had been less “independent” and more “flexible,” allowed people to assist her more, “laying low” a little longer, and “absorbing more of this culture” when she began her presidency (President B).

**Well prepared.** President T said she believed that she was “well prepared.” She had worked very closely for thirty years with the senior officers at another college. She said that they allowed her a great amount of freedom (President T).
President W said that she was “about as prepared as I could have been.” A president at a former university had mentored her and had provided numerous learning experiences in preparation for a future presidency. She had served as both provost and executive vice president, positions which served more as a chief operating officer. Eventually she oversaw all operations except budget and athletics. However, even with this amount of experience, she said “when I became president, I was stunned by the weight of the job. I love it, (but) I don’t know that anything else could have prepared me for that (President W).

President J recently began her presidency and said, “There is nothing that’s been too surprising about the first couple months here, but I’m sure I’ll find something later on.”

President E said that she felt well prepared for the presidency after serving as provost at a previous institution.

“I think I was prepared.” (President I)

“I’m going to say that I was pretty darn well prepared for the presidency,” said President L. She attributed this preparedness to being a “leader observer.” She said she originally learned how to learn from observation. “I came to my first presidency with a repertoire of actions, and behaviors, and mannerisms that I believed were a composite of the good things I see other people do,” she said. President L added that she had also made mental notes of “bad” behaviors that she did not want to repeat. She said she had taken and taught classes on leadership and had written extensively on “organizational change” prior to her presidency. “These were fields of study for me,” she said. President L said she fashioned her presidency, on her assumptions of the role of president, and
“people I respected and admired. When I finally got the chance to be president, by God I was president” (President L).

_Cannot prepare for the presidency._ President V said she believes that it is not possible to better prepare for the presidency, because, “You don’t know what’s coming.”

**IV. Advice and Recommendations from the Presidents to Aspiring Presidents**

In the chapter titled “Learning from the Past and Looking Toward the Future” in the book _Women of Influence Women of Vision_ the authors discussed the initiatives, contributions, and landmark events involving the women leaders in their study. Their assessment is revealing:

They have been leaders who generated a climate of action through their individual passion, vision and sense of societal priorities. They have changed our institutions, our concepts of gender roles and responsibilities, and the social construction of reality. Indeed they have been leaders of a different kind. Prompted to action by personal experience and observation of social injustices against women, they evolved into leaders, uniquely supported by colleagues and networks of women with like concerns (1991, p. 139).

The presidents in this study generously gave of their time for an extensive interview, in part because they believe in education, and a system that can truly make a difference in the world. Just as importantly, however, these presidents gave their time because of a sense of commitment and a sense of gratitude to those people whom had helped them along the way. These presidents said that they wanted to return something, share something important and valuable, something that had been shared with them. In the pages that follow is their advice for other women, fellow travelers on the journey.
President L said she encourages women she mentors to, “get planned, get focused, and get help, and you’ll get there.” President G said that recommendations on preparation for the presidency are “the sort of thing one could talk about all day and all week.”

Proper credentials / Experience / Portfolio / Intellect. For women pursuing the presidency, President V recommended “Do it!” However, she also said that it is important to first “get the right credentials” and “diversify your experience.” She said that “volunteerism,” particularly “serving on boards,” helps prospective presidents to learn about development and finance. President V said it is necessary for future women presidents to prepare because “opportunities come when they come.” She added that it is also important to know what “kind of place you’d like to be a president.” She recommended leaving the office “everyday” to observe how all other parts of the organization operate. President V recommended that women create a personal “post-
doc’ in higher education” at their respective institutions. She said that it is important to find and join various organizations, learn about “community relations,” and “fundraising.” President V said that once in a presidency, inexperience in an area may be a “weak suit” for any president (President V).

President I said that it is important from the very beginning to “pay attention to your own career path…to the touchstones that are most common among presidents” of the type of institution a prospective president may be interested in and to “pay attention to where you want to go.” She said that the path is different for different types of institutions. President I emphasized that the most common first position held by most presidents is generally a “faculty” position. She recommended that prospective presidents have a time-table to complete each of the “touchstones.” According to President I, “If you want to be the president of a research university, you better become a full professor with tenure in a research university, and that will eat up a whole huge chunk of the first part of your career.” She recommended that anyone pursuing a presidency in a state system volunteer to work with “legislative relations” and “ask for opportunities to testify in legislative committees.” President I added that women “need to do the same things men do: read broadly, become skilled in multiple environments… pay attention to the social environment…and make sure your behavior is perceived as legitimate and supportive within that environment. Pay attention to what you don’t know, and fill those gaps.”

President L said that although the pathway to the presidency is not “lockstep,” she emphasized that it is important to “pay your dues as an academic in your discipline.” She said that only when a potential candidate is widely seen, “as a reputable colleague
who’s been very successful in his or her academic line” can he or she “ascend.”

President L did say that some institutions now hire “bankers,” “lawyers,” “corporate people” and “retired government officials” as presidents, but that that practice is still the exception rather than the rule. “I was very adamant; I would not take an associate deanship until I became a full professor,” she said, “I just felt that was the ticket to the dance.” President L also recommended that women “plot out your academic profile, and rise through the ranks with an eye toward assuming increasing academic leadership.”

She emphasized the importance of assuming “academic leadership as a junior member of the team,” and to observe “what people do who are in leadership positions” (President L).

President S said that to be president, “you have to have had academic success in your academic career.” She said her record as a “successful faculty member” gave her the “credentials to lead a faculty.” President S said she has met a number of women who do not understand how critical the academic component is. Additionally, she said that it is critical to “have had a position of line authority. Unless you’ve been actually the person making the decisions in some previous job, I think it’s hard to make the transition to being a president” (President S).

President W advised women pursuing the presidency to “prove yourself in the hard jobs. Make sure you understand budgets. Don’t be timid if someone asks you to go out on an external visit.” She added that as a woman, “more will be expected of you, and you will have to perform better to get as far as a white male. It is not fair, I’m not saying that, but that is the case, and just don’t whine about it” (President W).

President C said that she believes a person can arrive in a presidency from “the academic, the administrative, or the advancement path.” She advised potential presidents
to volunteer for various tasks to “broaden your experience.” President C’s portfolio included both “sabbaticals” and “space allocation” work. Additionally, she suggested that aspiring presidents should consider availing themselves of any “change in portfolio” opportunity whenever possible. She cautioned aspiring presidents not to move too quickly and initially “have some successes behind you, but don’t be afraid to ask for an additional assignment or a change of assignment.” President C added that it is important to “do a good job of whatever it is you’re doing” and to stay at it “long enough to be successful instead of job-hopping” (President C).

In her closing advice, President T said that it is important to prepare and be “open to new opportunities.” She added that “public speaking,” a “good accounting background” to name a few skills, were very important for any president to possess. “No matter how competent your assistants are, the final decision becomes yours” (President T).

President O recommended that women “have a variety of positions,” including “student affairs,” “finance,” “admissions,” “teaching,” and have a “well-rounded experience” in order to “understand the lives and inner workings of an institution.” President O also said she believed that it is important to “constantly read,” particularly The Chronicle of Higher Education, as well as books on a variety of administrative topics and areas of interest in higher education. She said that she reads “anything” that Frank Rhodes, the former president of Cornell, writes (President O).

President Y said that she believes that the traditional method of rising through the ranks from department chair and up through administration is helpful. She said that it is also helpful to “have more than one traditional experience… if you have just one
experience at an institution, you come to think that everybody does things the same way.” She encouraged involvement in the larger community, networking, and “learning as much as possible from other people” (President Y).

President G said that there are “lots of routes” to the presidency. She said that for those who chose the traditional faculty route, “the first thing you need to do is get outside your department and take on roles and responsibilities that cut across divisional departmental lines so that you begin to see the gestalt, how things work together” (President G).

President J said that it is critical to have “administrative experience,” but that it is also important to “find some opportunities to broaden your skills, even though it may look like it’s deflecting you from your path.” She gave the example of a faculty member volunteering to serve on the “athletic council” because athletics plays an important role in the presidency. Conversely, she warned against making the pathway “too linear” (President J).

President R said she believes that it is important to identify all areas that a president oversees and “methodically” acquire some experience in each of these areas. She said that “the ACE Fellows program is a wonderful springboard.” She also recommended developing relationships with other women presidents, finding mentors, and being involved in the national network of women presidents (President R).

President B said that future presidents will emerge from “different angle(s),” including “law,” “business,” and not exclusively from the “typical faculty route.” She added, however, that she thinks that “it’s nice to have been through the whole route and understand (what)…your people are thinking” (President B).
President P said that after receiving a good education, it is important to stay “intellectually alive” though activities such as “reading,” “reflection,” “thinking,” visiting museums, attending concerts, so as not to allow “yourself be overwhelmed by the world. You have to keep some part of yourself growing intellectually to be ready for the many challenges of these jobs, and every college is different.” She also recommended that aspiring presidents systematically nurture relationships. President P said that a president has to “believe” in education and “that education will produce a good life. Then you have to be living that life. It has to be alive in you in order to bring it to other people” (President P).

*Develop a “thick skin” / Maintain balance and health / Adapt.* President B recommended developing “a thick skin,” which she suggested is “easy to say, it’s hard to do.” She said that it is difficult to prepare for “criticism” that a president receives. Despite the fact that a president receives “a lot of kudos,” she said that it is the one negative comment that one tends to “obsess” about. “You remember all the bad things people say…If anybody says it doesn’t hurt, they’re wrong, it does, because we all work so darn hard, and we care so much about what we do, and when somebody lobs one at you, or attacks you, it hurts. It should be part of the job description.” President B added that presidents constantly have to make difficult and controversial decisions that subject them to public scrutiny. She said that it is important for her to make fair decisions that consider “freedom of speech,” and our “respect for everybody.” President B said, “You will get a lot of criticism for those decisions, but those, again, are value-based, and if you know what your values are, then you stick to the value rather than the substance of that one thing.”
“Get very tough skin!” (President E)

President M said that it is important to “let some of the negative…slide off you.” She said that she used to “internalize” too many negatives. She said that now if she makes a mistake, she quickly admits it and apologizes. President M said that there are substantial negatives in academia, the workplace is “truly violent” in some ways, and that at “times that’s directed toward the administration, and sometimes it’s directed from faculty to faculty.” She said that the negativism can be very “hurtful.” Because President M has always sought to actively improve her institutions, and that some of these improvements have involved controversy, she has had to develop the ability to repel the negative.

President L said that it is important to “live a life that has some modicum of balance in it” and to not take “yourself” or the position “too seriously.”

President H said that anyone wanting the position of president must have the “ability to take criticism.” She said that although she is perceived as a popular president, her primary job is to “run this institution in such a way that it remains a healthy, financially viable, growing institution,” and this may involve being “unpopular.” She said that if she had not been able to withstand subsequent criticism, she “wouldn’t still be here” (President H).

President J said that she once studied a theory in an undergraduate psychology course titled “functional fixedness,” which she described as seeing only one function for a “tool.” She gave the example of someone who sees a pair of “pliers” as a one-function tool and is therefore unable to perceive the adaptation of that tool for use in any other circumstances. She cited The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, which
has developed a “leadership envisioning” program that includes “scenario development,” where leaders think through adaptations of their tools, to succeed in various scenarios. She said the concept of “functional fixedness” is a limitation and that in the face of increasing uncertainty, leaders today must have tools “that can handle some of the extremes,” tools that can be used “in different ways.” President J said that people who only set out to develop specific skills for specific tasks will never have enough tools in their “box.” She added that “scenario planning” and developing “tools that work for an array of things,” is important. In this manner, she said, “you maximize the probability that you can get where you want as the opportunities arise” (President J).

President Y said that “achieving some sort of personal balance and healthy lifestyle is really critical.” She said it is important to have a “schedule,” to “exercise” and to “rest” and to maintain that schedule. She added that women should realize that pursuing a presidency will generally “require more than two moves” to different geographic locations (President Y).

President S said that it is critical to establish boundaries and “find space in your life for things that are important to you or you just burn out…These jobs basically have no boundaries; they could be sixteen hours a day every day.” She said it is important to be “renewed,” to keep participating in things that make you a “person,” such as “reading” and “recreation.” President S said that the presidency is “really exhausting,” particularly in the “first year.” Therefore, she advised future presidents “go rested” into a new presidency (President S).

*Network/ Develop relationships / Seek mentors.* President A advised women seeking the presidency to, “develop relationships with a broad group of people.” She said
she has a network of college presidents and provosts, on whom she can depend for “counsel and perspective.” She said that it is important to have other perspectives, particularly from outside the campus. President A added that it is “really important to seek mentors…It may not be another president, but somebody who might teach you…problem-solving, or about finance.”

President B advised women pursuing the presidency to “talk to other women who have been there…men don’t have the same job that women do. If I had known what I know now, I would have…talked to…other seasoned women presidents, particularly in big institutions, and (asked) ‘what do you face that’s different than what other people have faced?’” She emphasized the importance of networking with other women because of the greater challenges that women administrators face (President B).

“Leaders whom you admire will give you opportunities to get the experiences you need.” President I said, “Ask for them.”

President T said she closely ties the empowerment process to expectations. She said she recommends having “direct reports,” to discuss and assess plans for the coming year. According to President T, “empowerment is important,” but that it can be challenging because “democracy takes a lot of time.” She something may be more easily executed in small groups, but that there will be more “buy in” when there is a “widely representative committee.” President T also warned that, when it is necessary to make an executive decision, to be careful not to “dismember” people in the process. She added that communities that are beginning to learn the collaborative processes sometimes may feel “left out” when not included in a decision. President T said she has a wonderful network with individuals who are available to assist with “practically any issue.”
President L said that “networking” is important, especially if it relates to identifying people who can “vouch for you during the search process.” She said she is currently mentoring and assisting two people and noted that she might not be president if people had not assisted her. According to President L, it is important to “watch out for” potential mentors who have credibility. She added that it is helpful to “write your own letter of recommendation.” She always asks her mentees to draft a letter and then she adds her “touches” to the final draft (President L).

President S made the recommendation to aspiring presidents that they “find mentors who are different from you who can teach you things that are different from your skill sets.” She said that, in retrospect, it would have been a good idea to attend “some kind of institute,” and to speak to presidents “similar college(s)” before taking the presidency.

President H also said that women should “look for a mentors” and “ask if you could shadow somebody,” even if for only a week. “Let people know your interests,” she said, “and tell them you would like some help.” President H is involved with other area colleges in a women’s higher education roundtable where she mentors other women. She added that “not all women see it as their role to promote other women in higher education, but I would say most of them do… let them help you” (President H).

President V created a group of personal advisors that she refers to as the “Board of Career Advisors.” She said that these advisors do not even realize they are on this “board.” She recommended that people traveling the pathway to the presidency select “four to five people who you admire, trust, respect… who you can ask questions of,” and “be honest” with. These people should be people whom you would “like to emulate,”
who hold positions you are interested in.” She said these people will change “through life.” President V added that potential presidents should be “bold enough to reach out to some people who you may admire from afar, and see if they’d at least spend forty-five minutes with you as you pick their brain.” She said it takes work to maintain this “board,” but she clearly believes it is worth that time (President V).

*Know the “game” or “culture” / Find good fit.* President G said that it is “perfectly all right for a woman to decide she’s not going to play a particular game, but you better know what the game is.” Additionally, she said that “it’s very important to keep your mind and eyes open, figure out where the real power is, how it is exercised, and what is valued” (President G).

President I advised women involved in presidential searches to “look for good chemistry, a good fit.” She added that “culture” is another consideration and suggested that, for example, she would probably not be a good cultural fit in the “Deep South.” President Y said that there are often “built-in biases” and “prejudices that can set someone up for either success or for failure” (President Y).

President O advised women pursuing the presidency to “do it for the right reasons, and if that’s your dream, pray about it, and then work very hard to make sure you’re at institutions that are the right fit all along your way.”

President V said that her criteria for a college presidency that is a good “fit” for her includes: the “kind of community in which I want to live,” living in a “beautiful” area, a “focus” on “undergraduate residential” education, a “mission” that is “teaching focused” rather than “research” focused. She warned prospective presidents not to give
into the temptation of saying “yes” for the “limelight,” and she said that it is important to
decide what you want in the next position before leaving a current position (President V).

President I recommended that women pursuing the presidency not “worry about
going from point A to point B. If you’re at point A, just worry about being at point
A…do the best you can in that job because other people will recognize your leadership
skills.” She also said that even if potential presidents attend every “leadership workshop,
if you’re not really in tune with yourself, you’re not going to make it.” Additionally,
President I said that colleges and universities are very different and that while planning a
career, it is important to “pay attention to the kind of institution in which you would like
to lead (and)… what that kind of institution needs.” She added that other types
institutions are also vastly different and that “it is almost impossible to go from a
community college system to a research university system…and it’s easier to go from the
independent to the public than it is to go from the public to the independent.” President I
said that anyone who is unsure about which environment they want to work in, “make
sure you work in both” (President I).

President W warned that there have been people that planned their career to
achieve a presidency and along the way found that they “don’t have the talent (or the)
aptitude for it …and they feel like a failure.” She said she believes that people should
“be in the system for a while, and get a feel of the place, and not assume that the best way
to help out higher education is to be in what is considered top position.” President W
said that she would argue that “the top position is being a tenured full professor” not a
president. She advised not to “try to become a president after having three years as a
faculty member (or) when you’re a graduate student.” She also said that people in
“business” should not imagine themselves as president. “How presumptuous … would it be for me to presume that I could go run a mutual fund? Nobody would accept that. What makes business people think that they should be able to do that with higher education? They shouldn’t” (President W).

President S said that there are “huge differences in the cultures between research universities, and liberal arts colleges,” and that it is important to “understand the culture of the institution into which you’re moving, and what the expectations are for the president.”

*Study finance and accounting.* President T said she would advise women, regardless of what they are interested in, to “get a good accounting background.” She said that even a few courses in accounting greatly increase the ability to understand finances, which is important in almost any profession.

President R said that, in her opinion, “women often don’t develop enough of their financial capabilities,” particularly women in academia. Despite a prospective president possessing discipline expertise as well as excellent communication and interpersonal skills, “following the money rule is paramount.” President R added that “the budget is a metaphor for the strategic allocation of resources, and if you can’t conceptually understand it…you won’t have control of the elements of the institution that you need.” She warned that this is even true for the wealthiest institutions because “great damage” may occur when the person in charge is unable to comprehend financial reality (President R).

Knowledge of budgeting and finance, along with the ability to “manage the finances of a major institution,” is critical, according to President I. She noted that
although deans and department chairs generally have some experience in budgeting issues, most professors do not have an opportunity to learn about these issues. She recommended that those professors who desire to learn more ask the provost for an opportunity to work “university wide” with the “budget planning process” (President I).

President S recommended developing “very good budgetary skills,” because the finances are “critical to the running of an institution of higher education.”

President A also recommended developing financial skills through seeking knowledgeable mentors.

“I say no matter what, learn how to read a budget, compare a budget,” President Y noted, “One of the most important things is following the money--know where it comes from, where it goes.” She also recommended finding “good mentors” (President Y).

Important values. The following were values were identified by the presidents.

High energy, hard work, persistence, tenacity and sacrifice

President T recalled a T-shirt she saw once on a student that said, “In order to get the same job as a man, a woman has to be twice as good.” Then on the back of the shirt it said, “Fortunately, that’s not difficult.” She said that sometimes she has wished she had saved all the rejection letters, but because she was a woman, she threw them away and thought “tough luck for them.” President T added that she believed women “still have to be better. We’ve got to approach with a higher level of energy. It’s a lot of hard work, and there are a lot of things you have to give up” (President T).
President Y said that the presidency is “truly a way of life,” and added that it is important to be realistic about the hardships. “It almost demands that you give over your life to the job with very little left over,” she said. President Y said that the presidency can be very rewarding for people who “feel drawn to the job, and…have (the) aptitude for it.” However, she warned that women who have family responsibilities that require them to “take on more than an equal share of that burden,” should consider not taking on a presidency. She said that this burden “incapacitates a lot of families” (President Y).

President R said that it is important to “be prepared for the fact that there remain barriers to women,” and resist taking personally if someone says, “‘she can’t do football.’ You just have to take it on the chin, and start all over again.” She encouraged prospective presidents to nurture the twin traits of “persistence and tenacity” (President R).

Stand up for critical values– Be willing to resign if necessary

President C said to be sure that “as you’re making decisions on the way up, keep your resignation letter in your back pocket. That way you can always keep your integrity.”

During a time of turmoil over athletics at her institution, President T once placed her resignation on the table and told her board that they could pick it up anytime they wanted. She told her board that it was time to decide if the college was “going to be a great academic institution with a terrific athletic program or is it going to be a terrific athletic program, and oh yes, classes over there on the other side of campus.” She said that “student athlete” is no longer a “hyphenated word” on her campus and that the “student” is deliberately placed “first” (President T).
President G said that her most important advice to potential presidents was to “keep one’s mind first on principles. The whole point is education.”

**Excellence, courage, compassion, and integrity**

President C advised prospective presidents to “strive for excellence in what you do… don’t be afraid of making hard decisions, but always with a humane look.” President C said that she once recommended that the university not to promote two department chairs, one of whom was her favorite chair, because there was not enough “evidence” for promotion. She said it was “the hardest thing” she had ever done. However, she said that she delivered the news in person and informed both chairs of the action necessary in order to have the provost consider overturning her decision (President C).

**Remain open / Take risks.** President T advised women to be “open” to new opportunities whether through work in the church, the community, or at an academic institution. “I don’t think I’ve ever said ‘no’ when I’ve been asked to do something,” she said. “It may have changed the route of activities somehow but I have tried always to be open to things as they come along, and continue to be so” (President T).

President J said that she believes people can become too conservative “in terms of risk-taking.” She said that important opportunities and growth can be missed by either not taking the risk or remaining too “focused on a single thing.” She added that it is important to look at the array of skills that you need” to become president (President J).

President H said, “Go for it! You go girl!” She advised prospective presidents to “look for opportunities in administration, (and to) never be afraid to risk.” She said that
there is no shame in applying for a position and not being offered that position. According to President H, such an action may raise the level of awareness that you are interested in moving in that direction. “Have alternate roots… look for the opportunities, and keep taking them” (President H).

President V said that it is important to constantly reassess personal development and ask the questions, “What are my interests, what am I good at, how am I doing now, do I want to do this?” President V added that with each position she accepted, she has done so within a timeframe of when she was planning to leave that position. She said that even though she may not necessarily stay with that plan, the existence of a schedule builds a reassessment framework so that she will make an active decision whether or not to stay and will not then reflexively “just hang on” (President V).

**Be curious / Gather information.** President G said that other than the “obvious people skills,” it is important to be “curious about the way things work… to arm yourself with as much information as you can about American higher education (and) the operation of systems” to be a successful president. She said that when she left the classroom and moved into administration, she had two “Ah ha!” experiences. The first was, “Ah ha!” I see what deans do.” She said that everything that comes to her desk that is “not routine” is an “insoluble problem,” a problem that nobody at the other levels was able to solve. Additionally, President G said that there is little feedback for administrators, whereas “a faculty member has an instant mechanism for feedback--you can look in your student’s eyes and see whether they are confused. In an administrative job, you don’t know whether the silence…is despair, disinterest, or that everything is going fine” (President G)
President S advised prospective presidents to “be prepared for a real sponge phase” of learning as “you move into a presidency” (President S).

President L said that the presidential search process is “scary” and that it should be explored by candidates to aid in their understanding of the process and the “sub business of search firms.” She said that it is important to “balance the needs and aspirations of the individual constituencies in the university,” from the board the board that is “doing the hiring,” to “the media who want to know everything.” President L said that learning how to “manage” the search process has been helpful to her. The most important consideration, she said, is the “goodness of fit between the needs of the institution, and the capabilities of the candidates” (President L).

President T advised potential presidents to ask questions rather than give orders. She said she believes that a key to problem-solving is in learning to ask the right questions (President T).

*Vision-related advice.* According to President T, a president should not arrive at an institution with a vision, “because the vision needs to be generated internally, not be imposed upon an institution.” She added that, as frustrating as that may be, once it is developed internally, it is often embedded in the institution and does not disappear when the person who initiated it leaves (President T).

“You have to have ‘trifocals,’ to be able to keep a sense of the long running vision, how things play out in the intermediate--like five years--and you have to be able to deal with all of the gory details of today. I think I’m pretty good about doing all three of those,” (President J).
President S said that it is important to bring some perspective from the “outside” world and to have a “fresh vision and ideas.” However, she noted that that “balance is a tricky…to strike” (President S).

President E said that some colleges hire presidents to be “external people,” to be “fundraisers,” while the provost oversees the institutional operations. She said that does not make sense to her because “the president has to have a vision for the institution, and without that, there is not much point in raising money” (President E).

**Gender-related advice.** President T emphatically stated that academia as a whole should be committed to seeing more women presidents and “with having women who want to do this…who are facilitated through the process of provost’s offices, dean’s offices, or vice presidencies.” President T added that she believes there has been a loss of “momentum” and “interest” by potential women presidents. She said that “we’re not filling the pipeline with enough people who want to move on” (President T).

President C said, “I think that women still have to…prove success more than men before they’re going to get the job.” She also said that she believes that there needs to be “education” and “reminders” about the “subtle things” that may not be “purposeful,” but “can demean, knock you down.” She gave the example of men’s voices being “louder” than women’s voices, which makes it easier for men to interrupt during meetings. She said that it would not be appropriate to replicate a bad behavior, so she said it is important to be willing to say “Guys, whether you know it or not, you’re interrupting me,” or “I’m willing to start to talk again but if you interrupt me one more time I’m going to get angry.” President C said that is important to confront the “subtleties” and to not play “games.”
President C cited another example of gender-related issues that she had encountered when she came to be interviewed for a presidency and was having lunch with the retiring president and his wife. After lunch, the former president went back to his office, while his wife gave her a tour of the house and an overview of “all the hostess duties. I thought ‘Hmmm, I wonder if they’ve figured out that I’m not two people yet?’ I’m sure there would be some differences in the way they treated a single male and they way they treated me.” President C said that “there are still lots of gender stereotypes around,” but “fortunately,” she has approached her position with “fear and trepidation,” which has caused her to work “really hard, be an over-achiever, but it seems to serve me well” (President C).

President B said that it is difficult to be a “first” woman president. Her provost has commented that she will never accept a presidency at an institution where she is a “first.” President B said she has considered writing a book about “first” women legislators, governors, and first African-American women in positions of leadership. She said that some areas are more “open-minded” than others, while “the Midwest is very conservative.” President B said that, as a woman, people will evaluate “how you spend your time” as well as “everything you say” and “do.” She added: “Every constituency looks at you through different eyes… with more critical eyes than they do with men.” President B used the case of former Colorado President Betsy Hoffman and the recent athletic scandal at that school as an example. President B said that Dr. Hoffman is an “extraordinary person, and has given her heart and soul to Colorado,” and yet they “treated her terribly.” President B said that she believes that “people talk to women differently” that “women receive pity,” which is something that “diminishes” and
“minimizes” a person and denies them “self-respect.” Pity, she said, is also something that she “despises” (President B).

*Follow passion / Be authentic.* President J recommended women “follow your passions, not necessarily the title you want.”

President A said, “I’m convinced that whatever kind of leaders we are, we have to be true to ourselves, and lead from whom we are.” For many years, she did not envision herself as a president because she did not fit the boastful and competitive image that she had of the presidency from past experience. President A was more concerned with what an institution “stands for” and what “challenges” and “joys” presidents are facing. President A said she has discovered that “people have welcomed who I am, and what my approach for presidency meant to leadership.” She said that “the worst thing that could happen for women is they feel they have to copy a model that’s not true to who they are. I would encourage them to be authentic” (President A).

President W also said she thinks it is important for women to follow their passion. She recommended that potential presidents not set goals to be a “president,” but rather to do what they have a talent for and instead familiarize themselves with their institution.

*Wait for right hires.* According to President T, there is a saying on her campus: “A failed search is when you get the wrong person--not when you don’t get the person on the first round.” President T said that making the right hires is important. She has many techniques that she uses to insure that she is successful in this process. At one point in her career, President T took on the challenge of recruiting more faculty couples because, among other reasons, you can “get two faculty members for the cost of one and a half.”
Additionally, President T helped run an equity study and eventually set up a program to increase equity at her institution. This resulted in an increase in professional women on her board (President T).

**Warnings.** President T warned new presidents to be careful not to make “parking lot promises” when they are out on the campus or in the community. She advised that actual decisions should always be made in a more formal setting where records can be kept. Additionally, President T said that women are sometimes “charged with being too emotional.” Although she has no problem with “emotion,” and said it can be used “productively” with different groups, she said that she believes emotion should be “heartfelt” and that it is “part of what we do, but one also has to be careful as a woman that it doesn’t look like a ‘woman’s response,’ whatever that is” (President T).

President E advised to “First, think twice, because you have to love the work . . . there is a lot of hard work in it.” She added that the “faculty have lots of complaints and seldom compliments,” and asked the question, “Do you want that kind of life?” President E said that it is important to “know what you really want to do.”

President P said that “women are very good at this job” and noted that where she lived, the state college system now has more women presidents than men. The only advice she said she had was to be sure to be “able to arrange the other parts of your life, particularly if you have children.” She said that she could not have been president when her children were still in their home, because the presidency is a position where “you’re needed all the time.” She said that it would be very difficult to be president and have young children, aging parents, or other responsibilities that demanded additional time,
and advised potential presidents to be “aware that it is a very great challenge.” (President P)

President C advised women preparing for the presidency to “keep your nose clean, be willing to work hard,” and to know that “there’s always a danger in playing games, and not being forthright.” She also added that it is important to have the courage to admit when, as president, you have not done something well” (President C).

*General advice.* Serving as an interim president for a year might be a good idea for a potential college president to gain perspective on where the needs of the institution are, according to President T.

President V said, “Don’t take yourself too seriously,” and “Don’t ever forget who helped you.”

President S said that there is a period in the early presidency where a president will be forgiven much and, since it is important to have a strong staff, she advised that “if you’re going to make personnel changes, you should do them very close to the beginning of your presidency.” Additionally, she said that it is “important to create a strong bond with the faculty generally and faculty members individually” (President S).

“Just because you’re the president doesn’t mean you get to rule” President L said, “Everything that I’ve done has not turned out exactly as I might have wanted it to.” The board, faculty, staff, students, alumni, all have their “agendas.” She added that “some things are almost out of your control, and you have to find a way to manage around them, or put them back in their appropriate perspectives…it’s a tough job” (President L).
Comments

“I’d like to write an op-ed piece for the Chronicle of Higher Education on why this job is so enjoyable,” President Y said, “because most people write about how hard…and miserable it can be.” President Y said she likes that position of president. She added that she had heard that there are fewer people opting to enter the higher education administration field, “maybe it’s the fault of people like me, who haven’t done enough to make a good case (of) why this is a really satisfying, rewarding experience” (President Y).

Closing Comment

“When I first became vice president, I always thought I’d go back to the faculty…but in a sense, you transform yourself.” President V said. As a faculty member, she added, “it’s as if you lived on a street that was one way,” and when you become an administrator, “suddenly, the town decided to make it one way the other way…you have to travel down that street in a different direction, and although everything was vaguely familiar to you, it really was different.” After a few years in administration, President V said she realized,

I really couldn’t go back… I had become different. My thinking was different. I thought in terms of the whole, I no longer thought in terms of the English department or Charles Dickens, or my particular specialty. I began thinking of the college as a whole…Once you get into it, then that’s the way you think. So, I guess I’m an administrator now (President P).

Summary

The first section of Chapter Four, The Pathway to Leadership, examined the presidents’ emerging awareness of their leadership ability: the early factors, people,
events and circumstances, choices, accomplishments, beliefs, habits and skills that were perceived by the presidents of this study to have contributed to their progress along that pathway. Not all of the findings are “changeable attributes,” however, but all findings were at least listed, with the greater emphasis being placed on changeable attributes. These changeable attributes will become the primary focus in Chapter Five.

In the findings in *The Pathway to Leadership*, initial responses revealed that nearly half of the presidents in this study had held leadership positions during childhood and youth. These presidents identified these first leadership roles, along with early life experiences such as travel and athletics, as contributing to their leadership abilities. Again, almost half of the presidents said that they had an early awareness, most before adulthood, that they were destined for some kind of leadership role in society. Initially, eight of the presidents said that they had no early awareness of a leadership destiny, but two later recanted. Five presidents identified specific moments later in their careers as when they first became aware of a future in leadership.

All presidents identified influential people along the leadership pathway and these responses divided into two primary groups. The first group was the “family influencers,” most often parents, who were identified in early stages of the presidents’ lives as role-models and encouragers, who believed in their children and their abilities, and who often held strong other-centered values and set examples of service, which their children emulated. The most frequently mentioned influencers, identified by 16 of the presidents in this study, were the “non-family” mentors and colleagues. These “non-family” influencers generally first appeared in the adult lives of these presidents. These mentors and colleagues, often women, advised, supported, encouraged, set good leadership
examples, listened, set high standards and provided opportunities for, and sometimes even pushed, the presidents to fulfill their potential. A few of the presidents said that it was one of these mentors who first gave them the idea that they could move to a higher position, even the presidency. The mentoring they provided, according to most of these presidents, was a highly significant contributor to success in moving forward down the leadership pathway.

“Events and circumstances” also had a significant impact on leadership advancement for many of the presidents in this study. Ten presidents identified “learning opportunities,” mostly academic, as major influencers on leadership direction and advancement. For them, the opportunity to earn a doctorate and work in academia, were critical steps in the pathway to academic leadership. Personal events also often influenced career direction for the presidents. Among the family influencers who facilitated career advancement were spouses, but ironically, some of the presidents identified other spouses as barriers to advancement. It was only following divorce from the non-supportive spouses that a few of the respondent presidents had the opportunity to step onto the leadership path. Additionally, family obligations may have slowed the advancement of the respondents from time to time. However, these obligations were generally not regretted nor were they viewed in a negative light by these responding presidents.

When the presidents of this study were asked to identify individual choices that most contributed to their success, “risk taking” – particularly in relation to choosing a new career direction – was overwhelmingly the most common response. Thirteen of the presidents responded that these risky choices were significant. Most presidents, at some
point, ventured into unfamiliar arenas, became deans after teaching, made lateral administrative moves to increase their options, changed institutions, and sometimes, even temporarily left their families behind. Many had to leave the security of tenure once they stepped onto the administrative pathway.

Along the leadership pathway emerged reoccurring revelations, characteristics and values which motivated and impacted the decisions of the responding presidents. Included among these revelations, characteristics, values and some resulting decisions were: awareness of aptitude for leadership, the decision to take on the responsibility of leadership, an ability to see the “big picture” and to detect weakness or problems within a system and find a way to solve the problems, a desire to work with others as a leadership team, power sharing and responsibility, and a sense of responsibility to “contribute,” to make things better.

These presidents generally viewed the development of leadership ability as an ongoing evolutionary process and followed the encouragement and vision of family, teachers, professors, or mentors to step out and risk taking leadership roles. They took advantage of educational opportunities, and developed the ability to learn from and integrate life experiences into their leadership role. For these presidents, it was a natural progression from the Pathway of Leadership onto the Pathway to the Presidency.

Once on the Pathway to the Presidency, the respondents identified three main types of accomplishments that in their opinions, represented common values for education and contributed to the presidents of this study advancing toward that goal: first, change or improvements to their respective institutions; second, altering the leadership style; and third, hiring the best people for key positions in the institution.
Some of the specific areas of change or improvements included: reorganization, improved technology, a move towards a more “team-oriented” leadership styles, renovations and campus beautification, flexibility, consistency, creativity, strategic planning, relationship and partnership building, community assistance, new programs, academic excellence, budget improvements, and “vision mobilization.”

Two main categories emerged in the discussion of religious beliefs and values and how they impacted the careers of the presidents in this study. The most common response, from eight of the presidents, was “value-based and non-religious.” Common values held by many of the presidents included social justice, fairness, kindness, the belief in the basic right of being treated with dignity, the right to equal opportunity, an obligation to care for the rest of society and the world, being good corporate citizens, operating ethically, honesty, integrity, compassion in a context of civility, morality, a strong work-ethic, a general sense of service, and institutional generosity. Seven of the presidents reported that their Christian beliefs impacted their careers significantly, citing such areas as Christianity’s commitment to social outreach, how it addresses justice and peace issues, equitable salaries, academic freedom and freedom of conscience, the dignity of labor, the notion of vocation, the notion of community and of sharing, and how Christianity represents a “theology of hope.” The presidents in this group said that these values inspired them to make contributions toward improving the educational system and often ultimately spurred them on to the presidency.

There were many common success generating habits among the presidents in this study. The most common habit which was mentioned by a majority of the presidents was “reading.” Among the preferred types of reading for these presidents were scholarly
materials, mysteries, biographies, news, administrative materials, The Bible, self-help books, as well as books on history, politics, sociology, business and literature. The second most common habit, with nine presidents responding, was exercise. Most of these presidents walked to improve health. Other common habits included having interests outside of academia, including entertainment and hobbies that promote a balanced life; and operational habits including a healthy mental attitude. Listed by some presidents as also among positive contributors were spirituality and hard work.

Several skills were identified as vitally important for succeeding in leadership and, ultimately, the presidency. The second most frequent response in the entire study was identifying the importance of “communications skills.” Sixteen of the eighteen presidents in this study said that various forms of communication, including writing, listening, and speaking skills, were critical in administration. Eleven presidents said that social or “people” skills were important to successful leadership. Liking and valuing people, treating them well, having the ability to “read” or understand motives, being open, being able to interact well and persuade, were all cited as being crucial to success in the higher levels of administration, according to this group of presidents. Additional skills that were considered important by more than four presidents in the study were strategic planning or problem solving skills, as well as skills in the finance and accounting arena.

The presidents were asked what changes they would have made in their careers if they had the opportunity to make changes. Fourteen presidents said that they would make changes and the most common response category was “career and timing changes.” Several presidents said that in retrospect they would have moved to another position or
institution, or that they would have made a career move sooner. Some of the presidents said that they might have changed fields completely to pursue music or science rather than administration. Still other presidents said they believed that at least on one occasion they remained in a position or institution too long. One president said that after six or seven years in one position it is difficult to accomplish much more and there is a danger of becoming bored. President L said that she wished she had been more forthright about her career and recommended that women “get planned, get focused…get help, and you’ll get there.” Five presidents expressed the desire to have made changes in their education. Some presidents said in retrospect that they would have attended more prestigious institutions or focused on a discipline that would have served them better in a presidency. One president identified the life-lessons and writing skills gained in literature as direction she might have benefited more from. Study abroad was also recommended, as was study on finance and leadership.

Several barriers were identified by the respondent presidents, the most frequent of which was “gender.” It is important to note that although gender is not a changeable attribute, the fact that women have become leaders and even presidents is evidence that the response to gender is changeable. This concept will be examined further in chapter five. In the findings, the experiences of gender discrimination varied from non-admittance to study at an institution, rejection for a position where the respondent was the best candidate, pre-judgments made based on gender stereotypes, higher and more expanded expectations based on gender biases, and an increased level of criticism for women in leadership positions. Five of the presidents identified “themselves” as barriers,
which manifest in complacency, non competitiveness, and not understanding the process, as well as the lack of self-belief, confidence, and assertiveness.

In the third section, *Success in the Presidency*, respondents were asked what “specific things” had contributed most to their success. Eleven presidents said that it was “teamwork” and “valuing people.” Presidents identified team-building, being receptive to input, working via committees and taskforces, nurturing relationships, empowering others, communicating personally, bringing people “on board,” choosing good people, giving good workers freedom to do their jobs, and praising good work as elements that had contributed to whatever success they had enjoyed to this point in their careers.

Also deemed important to their success according to seven responding presidents, were qualities, traits, and characteristics collectively depicted in the following description:

The ideal president’s president is a smart, honest, quick, self-aware, self-examining, fearless, creative, organized, intellectually lively, perceptive extrovert with the highest integrity and a commitment to excellence. The president’s president is someone who manages time well even under pressure, is a good public speaker, has a wide range of interests, loves and connects with people, listens well, flexibly embraces new knowledge, and then, by using good judgment, intuition, and rigorous prioritizing, operates efficiently. This president makes tough decisions, sticks by them, follows through and weathers adversity with a sense of humor, and all the while looking and sounding unfailingly presidential (adapted from the responses of Presidents C, G, H, M, R, S, and V).

“Problem-solving” and “having and articulating a vision” were also each seen as important variables to four of the respondent presidents. However, it is interesting to note that “vision” was only identified as significant by 22% of the presidents in this study as compared to 57% of the presidents and chancellors in Mendonca’s study (1995, p. 112).
The most influential “variables” contributing to success in the presidency were identified as experience and appearance. Many of the presidents said they valued having had broad work and life experiences including teaching, diverse administrative experience, travel, terminal degrees, preparation for the presidency, as well as business and fundraising experiences.

Additionally, many responding presidents concurred that, on paper and in person, presidents must appear “presidential.” Important within the appearance category were such things as “looking healthy,” dressing conservatively and professionally, appearing “elegant yet understated,” dressing more authoritatively and assertively, wearing larger jewelry, suits, and “becoming colors” or school colors, as well as demonstrating energy, poise, confidence, charm, and social graces. A few other recognized contributing variables were having a sense of humor, knowing and believing in one’s self, open decision-making, and shared governance, among others.

Because some people are naturally reticent to trumpet their accomplishments, the presidents were asked what their board and vice presidents would say were the attributes that contributed most to their success. The two most frequently cited categories, with seven respondents each, were: first, good leadership, ideas and decisions; and second, being energetic, passionate, and charismatic. Also mentioned by at least four presidents each were being direct, directive, goal-oriented, courageous, risk-taking, an effective communicator, smart, knowledgeable, determined, persistent, caring, responsive, an empowerer, encourager, supporter who connects well with people and has a strong work ethic. This question elicited the greatest number of response categories, with 25
additional categories, each provided by three respondents or less. These responses may be viewed in Appendix G.

The presidents in this study were then asked to identify the most rewarding and disappointing aspects of the presidency. Among the most rewarding aspects were advancing the institution (eight respondents), student and faculty accomplishments (six respondents), and working with people and receiving feedback (five respondents). Most frequent disappointments, with six respondents each, included: money-related budget and legislative issues and colleague resistance (primarily from unhappy faculty members).

When asked if they wished they had been better prepared for the presidency, ten respondents said “yes,” six said they believed that they were “well prepared,” and one respondent said it is not possible to prepare for the presidency. Of the respondents that said “yes,” the most common category cited as a desire for better preparation was in finance and money-related areas of administration. These categories sub-divided into: budget experience, economic predicting, business and finance training, accounting procedures, and fundraising and development.

The fourth section of Chapter Four was titled *Advice and Recommendations from the Presidents to Aspiring Presidents*. Included in this section was general advice from the experts, as well as recommended steps on the pathway for other women hoping to one day possibly reach the presidency. The most frequent response category in this section was related to “credentialing and experience,” with 14 presidents responding. Recommendations from this group included: diversifying experience, increasing volunteerism, serving on boards, learning about fundraising and community relations,
continuing education – particularly as it relates to higher education administration, paying attention to your career path and “where you want to go,” paying your academic dues – particularly by earning tenure on the faculty, creating a career time-table with touchstones, working with the legislature, observing other leaders, proving yourself in the hard jobs, and knowing that more will be expected of you than of men--but not whining about it. Additionally, in this category, these presidents advised prospective presidents to be open to new opportunities, become a good public speaker, understand the inner workings of the institution, network and find mentors – particularly with other women, learn about athletics, stay intellectually alive through reading, reflecting and thinking, and nurturing relationships.

Eight respondents in each category recommended that prospective presidents develop a “thick skin” and a balanced lifestyle and mentioned, again, the necessity of networking and seeking mentors. Seven presidents advised prospective presidents to understand the institutional culture and find a good fit. Six presidents, again, advised potential presidents to study finance and accounting. The following received four to five responses each: studying finance and accounting, being curious, remaining open and taking risks, developing and articulating a vision, as well as developing important values such as high energy, hard work, persistence, tenacity, sacrifice, standing up for critical values, and a willingness to resign, if necessary.

Speaking about the contributions from women in their study, Astin and Leland included the following statement related to how women leaders have help establish a pathway for the women that followed them:

They have been leaders who generated a climate of action through their individual passion, vision and sense of societal priorities. They have changed our
institutions, our concepts of gender roles and responsibilities, and the social
construction of reality. Indeed they have been leaders of a different kind.
Prompted to action by personal experience and observation of social injustices
against women, they evolved into leaders, uniquely supported by colleagues and

The presidents in this study repeatedly cautioned that the presidency is a
strenuous and demanding job. However, for the person with the sense of mission,
aptitude, energy, preparation, education and experience, talents and skills, it can be
profoundly rewarding and can truly make a difference in untold lives. These presidents
have given the next wave of women administrators a great gift with their frank and open
interviews, interviews which are full of rich examples and valuable advice for other
women wanting to follow in their footsteps. Chapter five will distill the findings into a
more tangible, useable formula that potential women administrators may find helpful, as
well as serve as a springboard for potential future research.
CHAPTER FIVE
Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purposes of study were to learn more about what contributes to women achieving a higher education presidency, including changeable attributes; to identify information that may help train and prepare women to be successful presidents; and to identify potential obstacles to the success and longevity of women in higher education presidencies. To execute these purposes, the following research questions were explored:

I. What are the changeable attributes that appear to contribute to women becoming successful presidents in higher education?

II. What are the changeable attributes that appear to inhibit or act as barriers to women becoming successful higher education presidents?

III. What may be gleaned from the data collected that may contribute to more women attaining and becoming successful at higher education presidencies?

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section, titled “findings and conclusions,” includes a distillation of the findings and presidential recommendations from Chapter Four and the response to the three research questions of this study. The second section contains “recommendations for practice” in the form of a “prescription for success” for aspiring women presidents, as well as recommendations for future research. The focus of this chapter is on findings, conclusions, and recommendations as they relate to “changeable” attributes, specifically those attributes which may consciously be altered or manipulated by an individual to increase the likelihood of both achieving and
succeeding in a presidency. A final version of the “conceptual framework” may be found in Appendix N titled the “Changeable Attributes Model” or “CAM Model.”

Because this study included a sample size of eighteen women presidents and not all women presidents, it is possible that there still remains important information that was not obtained by this study. However, a qualitative sample size of eighteen presidents is a large sample, increasing confidence that the research was thorough and that the results fairly represent the population of all four-year college and university women presidents (Gay & Airasian, 2003, pp. 116-117).

Findings and Conclusions

Research Question I:

What are the changeable attributes that appear to contribute to women becoming successful presidents in higher education?

There are 15 changeable attribute categories in this chapter which may impact the achievement of, and success in, a presidency (See Appendices J and K). These attribute categories are presented in descending order, beginning with the category with the greatest number of presidential responses and subsequently decreasing to the response category that generated the fewest responses. It seemed practical to combine the 61 categories of leadership traits that received less than ten responses each into one category titled “leadership traits.” All attribute categories may be seen in Figure 5.1.
Figure 5.1 represents the collective changeable attributes identified by the eighteen college presidents in this study ranked by frequency of response.

1. Leadership Traits and Characteristics Important to Success in the Presidency

There was generally agreement among presidents that they should demonstrate the best possible leadership. These presidents also agreed that there are specific traits that may enhance leadership and they offered 87 examples of such traits.

The traits identified in Chapter Four as a description of a “president’s president” (see Appendix H under “Specifics / Presidents”) were combined with the additional traits identified as originating from board members and vice presidents, as well as a few other traits dispersed among the responses to the other questions (see Appendix H in the column titled “Board, VP, Other”). These combined presidential leadership traits were grouped creating the largest category, “Leadership Traits.” Collectively, these traits
provide a description of what might be termed the “ideal president.” Eight of the most frequently identified leadership traits are briefly highlighted in this section, and are merged with the other mentioned traits in the recommendation section into a combined “leadership traits recommendation.”

*Energetic, passionate, charismatic.* Many presidents in this study spoke of the great demands of the presidency. These demands and the constant responsibility, among other reasons, led eight of the presidents to mention the importance of having energy and passion in the role of president. Additionally, “charisma” was identified as a useful trait in leading an institution.

*Articulates a vision.* Having and articulating a vision were identified by eight presidents as among the most important traits of a successful president. It is interesting to note that although “vision” was mentioned frequently, it was only identified as significant by 22% of the presidents in this study as compared to 57% of the presidents and chancellors in Mendonca’s study (1995, p. 112).

*Has a strong work ethic and works hard.* A strong work ethic and the willingness to work hard were identified as important by eight presidents, many of whom learned these values from family members. In a position as all-consuming as the presidency, these values are crucial.

*Looks presidential.* Eight presidents were in agreement that, on paper and in person, presidents must appear “presidential.” It is important for women presidents and aspiring women presidents to look healthy, dress conservatively, professionally,
assertively, and authoritatively, and appear elegant and understated. Presidents should wear suits, larger jewelry, and colors that are either personally becoming or represent the traditional colors associated with the institution. Additionally, women presidents should demonstrate energy, poise, confidence, charm, and social graces.

*Authentic.* Six presidents identified “authenticity,” being true to one’s self, as a valuable leadership trait.

*Has a sense of humor, fun, friendly, and agreeable.* Five presidents spoke of the important role humor plays in their lives and work as well as the importance of having fun and maintaining a positive outlook.

*Goal-oriented, direct, directive, determined, and persistent.* Identified collectively as five distinctive yet inter-related traits, five presidents identified these leadership traits as important to moving an institution forward and achieving critical outcomes.

*Smart, knowledgeable, and intellectually lively.* Five presidents mentioned the importance of being smart, knowledgeable, or in some way participating in mental activities to remain intellectually engaged.

2. *The Willingness and Courage to Take Risks and Make Necessary Career Changes*

The willingness and courage to take risks and make important career and life changes was identified by every president in this study as an important factor in achieving or succeeding in a higher education presidency. Fourteen of the presidents said that they would have made more changes if they had their lives to do over again. Making
the decision to leave teaching and enter administration is both a daunting change and a significant risk. Most of the presidents in this study originally emerged from tenured faculty positions. While tenure provides something close to lifetime security for faculty members, generally speaking there is no administrative tenure. Upper administrators tend to serve at the pleasure of the president and, as a rule, only receive one-year appointments to their administrative positions.

A highlight from the “keys to success” advice given by the presidents attending the ACE roundtable discussions includes the following assertion: “Don’t be afraid to take risks – even if doing so increases your vulnerability. After all, women may in fact tackle the more difficult presidencies because men are less willing to chance it – and (men are) more likely to bail out at the first sign of trouble” (2001, p. 13).

3. Obtain the Necessary Experience to Prepare and Qualify for, as Well as Succeed in the Presidency

Fourteen presidents recommended specific experiences as a type of credentialing and qualifying process for the presidency. Although there was a degree of variety for recommended experience, there were common and reoccurring threads. Eight presidents identified the fact that assuming early leadership roles positively contributed to their leadership abilities. All presidents in this study had significant leadership experience before becoming president.

To better understand what positions are most likely to contribute to an individual’s success in achieving a presidency, it is beneficial to examine the positions from which most current presidents came. ACE reported in 2001 that 20.4% of current presidents came from other presidency/CEO positions, 27.8% from Provost/CAO...
positions, 14.7% from outside higher education, 13.3% came from a senior executive
duty position in academic affairs, 12.8% were senior executives in finance or administration,
6.9% from other senior executive positions, and the remaining 4.4% were faculty chairs
(The American College President, 2002, p. 11).

Most, if not all, of the presidents in this study began their journey by serving as a
duty faculty member. Three presidents identified their teaching experience as a specific
contributor to their success. This parallels ACE’s findings, which reported in 2001 that
only 30.3% of U.S. higher education presidents had not been full-time faculty members
(The American College President, 2002, p. 10). Although there appears to be a rising
sentiment that this pathway is changing, becoming a tenured faculty member was
identified as an important step in the advancement process by several presidents.

It is important to note that only six of the presidents in this study said that they
believed they had adequate experience and were well prepared for the presidency.
Included among the experience recommendations for aspiring presidents from the
presidents of this study are: leadership, administration, teaching, tenure, public speaking,
public relations, accounting and finance, student affairs, admissions, human resources,
athletics, sabbaticals, space allocation, law, business, interdivisional work, volunteerism,
serving on boards, development/fundraising and grants, community relations, travel,
working with the legislature, observing other leaders, proving yourself in the “hard jobs,”
and networking.
4. Receive a Good Education from the Best Possible Institutions, Teachers and Professors

“Learning Opportunities” and “Reading” were the two most common education-related responses in this study, with ten presidents responding in each category. Nine presidents cited opportunities in academia, including scholarships and awards, as the key influential events and circumstances at various transition points of their lives. These opportunities included attending special institutes, taking academic sabbaticals, serving in leadership positions on academic committees, working in business firms, and teaching overseas. Self-education through reading was also stated to be an important habit for success by ten of the presidents in this study.

All of the presidents in this study had terminal degrees. Most had Ph.D.s, five of which were in the field of English. In 2001, the American Council on Education reported that 55.6% of all college presidents had Ph.D.s and 20.8% had Ed.D.s, for a total of 76.4% with academic doctorates. The profile of degrees for the other 23.6% presidents included 11.4% with Master’s degrees, 4.2% with J.D.s, and the remaining 8.1% with a variety of degrees from Associate’s to M.D.s (The American College President, 2002, p. 10). In fields of study, in 2001, 55% of women presidents emerged from education, 16.7% from humanities, and 14.5% from social sciences (The American College President, 2002, p. 17).

It is interesting that women presidents in this study had a higher percentage of doctorates than the national presidential population at large, 100% as compared to 76.4% respectively in the ACE study. Additionally, the ACE study indicated that 79.5% of women presidents as compared to 75.5% of men presidents had doctoral degrees (The American College President, 2002, p. 17). It might be reasonable to speculate that it is
somewhat more important for women to complete a doctorate than it is for men, in order to be hired as a president. Additionally, some presidents said in retrospect that they would have attended more prestigious institutions or focused on a discipline that would have served them better in a presidency.

Mentioned favorably several times throughout the interview process were advanced higher education leadership programs designed to prepare women administrators for the role of the presidency, including the following:

1. Bryn Mawr Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration
2. ACE Fellow program or the summer Bryn Mawr Summer Leadership Institute
3. Harvard Seminar for New Presidents

Finally, after receiving a good education, it is important to stay intellectually engaged through reading, reflection, thinking, and cultural activities and events.

5. Seek Mentors and Positive Influencers for Support, Advice, and Encouragement

Non-Family Influencers was the fourth most common attribute category response in this study, with all eighteen presidents identifying at least one important non-family influencer. Within this category, “mentors and colleagues” dominated the list with sixteen presidential responses. Likewise, ACE President’s Roundtable participants affirmed the importance of seeking mentorship in the book *From Where We Sit*, “…women must think strategically about their careers and actively seek mentors” (American Council on Education, 2001, p. 9). Not surprisingly, therefore, many of the presidents in this study, seven each, identified “teachers” and “professors” as powerful influencers who contributed significantly to their success.
In general, mentors and colleagues, often women, advised, supported, encouraged, set good leadership examples, listened, and set high standards. They provided opportunities for, and sometimes even pushed, the presidents to fulfill their potential. A few of the presidents said that it was one of these mentors who first gave them the idea that they could move to a higher leadership position, even a presidency. The mentoring they provided, according to most of these presidents, was a highly significant contributor to success in moving forward on the leadership pathway.

6. Develop and Implement an Effective Leadership Style

Having a particular “leadership style” was a common topic among the presidents in this study, mentioned by six presidents. When combined with the presidents who spoke of various aspects or components important to a president’s style of leadership, all eighteen presidents had input on this topic.

According to the presidents in this study, important traits that contribute to an effective leadership style include social/people skills, teamwork, valuing people, supporting shared governance, support, encouragement, empowerment, responsiveness, care, giving others credit, humility, honesty, and providing feedback.

Wenniger and Conroy highlighted the following three typical patterns of women’s leadership styles based on a study by Barbara Tedrow at Michigan State University:

1. Adapters: Women who fit in to the big shoes or “adapt” to the traditional instrumental structure.

2. Reconcilers: Women who use instrumental and relational styles in a “compartmentalized fashion,” carefully delivering “appropriate” responses in a non-threatening, conflict-avoiding manner, acting as a bridge between conflicting groups.

3. Resisters: Women who break through by taking risks, as well as by infusing relational and instrumental behaviors. They want to be themselves. They challenge the dominant
male organizational patterns whenever possible. They advance change by using an educational approach and coalitions (2001, p. 18).

7. Develop and Implement Important Changes and Improvements

Making “changes” and “improvements” were identified directly by fifteen presidents in this study as “accomplishments contributing to leadership success,” and either directly or indirectly as the “most rewarding aspects of the presidency.” “Waiting for and hiring the right people” was the most frequent response area in this category, with nine presidents responding, followed by “advancing the institution” with eight responses. Other categories included “student and faculty accomplishments,” “working with people as well as providing and receiving feedback,” “developing new programs,” “community development,” and physical improvements to the campuses.

8. Gain Encouragement and Support from Positive Family Influencers

Family influencers were identified by fifteen of the presidents in this study as important, particularly one or both of their parents. However, people have little choice in the selection of their family members, therefore it cannot be considered a changeable attribute. Still, it appears that people who have supportive, encouraging, positive role-model family members may indeed have some advantages on the success pathway. Perhaps the only changeable aspect might be that in the times when there are opportunities to choose family members with whom to spend time, a potential president should focus that time with the ones who serve as the most positive influencers. Similarly, avoiding family members who serve as poor role models or barriers to success may also be advisable.
9. Know the Culture of the Institution and Find a Fit with Personal Values and Beliefs

The most frequent advice in the category of culture, values, and beliefs, was to learn about and “know” the culture of an institution and to always seek to find a good “fit” before accepting a presidency. Institutions are as varied as individuals. They range from large, urban, liberal, research universities to small, rural, religious colleges. Included in this array are a number of vastly different cultures and beliefs, and even some differing value systems. The presidents in this study corresponded well to the variations in institutions. These presidents were evenly split between religious and non-religious individuals. Eight of the presidents could be described as value-based/non-religious, seven presidents were self-described as Christians, and one described herself as Jewish. It cannot be presumed that someone should or would alter their religious beliefs or values system to achieve or succeed in any position; however, finding a place where one’s existing beliefs and values are compatible with those of the institution is critical, according to at least seven of the presidents in this study. Since beliefs and values are not necessarily “changeable” attributes, it should suffice to say that it is important, in order to be successful and enjoy the greatest fulfillment, to find an institution that is a good fit with one’s existing values and beliefs.

Values also identified as important by presidents in this study include: high energy, hard work, persistence, tenacity, sacrifice, excellence, courage, compassion, integrity, openness, risk-taking, curiosity, information gathering, and “standing up for” critical values, along with being willing to resign, if necessary. Many of these values will be examined in other sections of this chapter. It was collectively implied by the presidents of this study that if some of these important values are not shared by
individuals pursuing the presidency, it is possible that they may find this position too daunting, and at worst, that they may fail. By the number of responses, it appears that finding a “value fit” in an institution is as important as finding a good cultural fit, and possibly more so when including religion.

10. Healthy Habits that Contribute to Success

Seven Health-related habits were identified as changeable attributes contributing to success and include the following:

Exercise. Exercise was identified most frequently by nine of the presidents in this study to be the most important of their health-related habits. Walking was most mentioned as the preferred type of exercise, followed by Yoga, kayaking, and biking.

Balance. Six presidents identified the twin challenges of successfully separating professional from personal life and keeping balance in life as the third most commonly cited habit in this study that contributes to success.

“Thick skin.” The presidency can be a target for criticism and negative feedback. It is important to be able to endure the barbs and maintain a healthy attitude and focus.

Professional modus operandi / Leadership habits of the mind / Attitude. Five presidents talked about the procedural, mental, and attitudinal habits that they considered vital to both success and mental / emotional well-being. These may include: being methodical, well-organized, improvisatory, and honest with people as well as letting people occasionally win, forming a personal operational template, having fun at work, and maintaining an appropriate attitude.
Sleep / Personal biorhythms. Four presidents said that they need very little sleep despite the great demands of the presidency and that this contributes to their success. However, several presidents mentioned how exhausting the presidency can be emphasized ensuring minimum rest. One president spoke of the importance of functioning within one’s own natural biorhythmic schedule for peek performance.

Entertainment / Hobbies / Recreation. Four presidents claimed that having hobbies and entertainment were important habits that contribute to their success.

Spiritual habits / Prayer. Spiritual habits were important for at least three presidents and involved such things as being part of a safe community, spiritually-related reading, and prayer.

11. Communication

All eighteen presidents in this study identified at least some portion of the important role of communication in the success of their presidencies. It was the most frequently cited skill set noted by these presidents. Writing or written communication, speaking or verbal communication, listening skills, and communication styles were perceived by various presidents as vital to success in the presidency. The most common disciplines from which these presidents emerged were communication-related, including five from English and one from communication studies.

Verbal and written skills. Verbal and written skills are essential for success in higher education administration. In Mendonca’s study, the second most important skill, identified by 20% of the respondents, was “verbal communication” (1995, pp. 112-113).
Listening skills. Perhaps the most important, as well as possibly the most overlooked communication skill, is attentive listening. Attentive listening, including connecting with and the effective hearing of other people, was cited by eight of the presidents in this study as critical to effective communication.

Style. Presidents discussed various characteristics of their personal communication style. These characteristics include communication styles that are open, transparent, and consultative. A successful communication style should engage people, convey energy, and use story-telling and humor.

If communications are universally excellent, then an institution is more likely to operate and serve productively and well. Listening is most important, and is the vehicle for gathering critical information and insight to formulate vision and goals that represent and value all constituents. It initiates the groundwork for shared governance. Writing and speaking are the ways that critical mission, vision, and goals are shared, and that people are appreciated, encouraged, and inspired. Communication is the way an institution is represented by others, as well as to others, and the way relationships are built. In addition, it is through relationships that individuals and institutions find fulfillment and purpose.

12. Finance

At least thirteen presidents in this study said that they wished they had known more about, had been better prepared for, or had been more skilled in finance, accounting, fundraising, money issues, and the legislature – mostly since the state legislature is directly related to financial issues. Financial training was especially
important for presidents who emerged from the humanities, as compared to the presidents who came from the sciences and business—many of whom identified these areas as important strengths. Better education, preparation, and experience in all of the above-mentioned areas of finance would be most helpful to a higher education president.

13. Strategic Planning

At least twelve of the presidents in this study spoke about the importance of strategic planning, problem-solving, effective decision-making, strategizing, as well as entrepreneurship, marketing, and creative skills as part of good leadership and as contributors to success.

Having the ability to think and act strategically on a macro-level, seeing the big picture, and having the experience and insight to be able to anticipate and hopefully avoid problems, is critical. Additionally, building towards goals and fulfilling the mission of the institution is complex and demanding and requires an intelligent and talented leader. The more challenges facing an institution, the more gifted the leader needs to be.

Research Question II:

What are the changeable attributes that appear to inhibit or act as barriers to women becoming successful higher education presidents?

Related to Research Question II, the final two changeable attribute categories, “personal events” and “gender issues,” emerged as the most significant inhibitors or barriers to women achieving and succeeding in presidencies.
14. Personal Events

Personal events significantly influenced career direction and advancement for at least ten of the presidents in this study. Among the family influencers who facilitated career advancement were spouses, but ironically, some of the presidents also identified spouses as barriers to advancement. It was only following divorce from non-supportive spouses that a few of the respondent presidents had the opportunity to step onto the leadership path. Additionally, family obligations, such as having children, may have slowed the advancement of the respondents from time to time. However, these obligations were generally not regretted nor were they viewed in a negative light by these responding presidents.

Personal events will doubtless occur in the lives of all people. For some, these events will impact advancement along the pathways to the presidency. Planning for these events and finding ways to meet personal, as well as professional, goals and obligations may be challenging, but is certainly possible. Of course, personal events are often impossible to predict, in which case, being flexible and adaptable is helpful.

15. Overcoming and Removing the Gender Barrier

Gender issues were mentioned 16 times in this study and they may constitute the greatest barrier for women in leadership roles. While gender is not changeable, the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to gender acting as a barrier are changeable. One of the primary motivators for this study was the large discrepancy between the percentages of women and men serving in higher education presidencies. It is therefore important that women are aware of gender as a barrier and are able, as much as possible,
to overcome this barrier. It is additionally important for women to assist in changing attitudes and behaviors so that, ideally, gender will someday become a non-issue.

Bender et al. noted that women traditionally have been socialized to “enable and empower others at the expense of developing their own talents, abilities, and activities” (1984, p. 93). They write that “being a ‘doer’ may be viewed in conflict with being ‘feminine’” (Bender et al., 1984, p. 93). Although these values are slowly changing as women continue to move into higher levels of leadership, there remains the additional burden on women of overcoming and continuing to battle traditional reactionary forces, while at the same time taking career risks and adapting to great changes. “Confidence” was also cited as a barrier to change since male accomplishments are traditionally attributed to “talent, skills, and hard work,” while female accomplishments are “more likely be attributed to luck and happenstance, attributes beyond her control, such as an easy assignment, or the fact that her boss liked her” (Bender et al., 1984, p. 95).

Women should be aware that more may be expected of them, less forgiven them, and that their average presidential terms may be shorter than they would be for men (ACE, 2002). Women must both self-empower and empower each other to overcome gender-related obstacles on the presidential pathway. In the meantime, it is equally important for women to have a thorough and realistic view of what is involved in administrative leadership as a woman, determining whether or not they perceive the risk to be worthwhile, and then finding enough support and determination to follow through.

The enormous abilities and strengths of women presidents in this study, coupled with their many accomplishments, gives hope to future women leaders. There is much to be learned from the experience and insight of these eighteen presidents, as well as other
women presidents in higher education. It is critical that women work together to support, empower, and encourage one another. It is hoped that the following recommendations may serve as a type of “prescription for success” for women aspiring to higher education presidencies.

Research Question III

What may be gleaned from the data collected that may contribute to more women attaining and becoming successful at higher education presidencies?

The findings have illuminated many specific attributes which may be intentionally changed in order to assist more women to achieve higher education presidencies. These have been discussed in this findings section, but are further condensed into recommendations for practice for women administrators in the third section of this chapter. One of the goals of this study was to contribute something of value that might assist more women in attaining higher education presidencies.

Recommendations for Practice for Aspiring Women Presidents

This section provides the continued response to Research Question III and serves as a type of prescription for success for aspiring women presidents.

The following are 14 recommendations for practice which emerged from this study:

1. Leadership Trait Recommendation:

Develop, nurture, hone, and maximize as many as possible of the following leadership traits mentioned in the description of the “ideal” president:
It is most important for the ideal president to be energetic, passionate, and charismatic, to have and articulate a vision and to look and sound presidential. This president should be authentic, friendly, fun, and agreeable, along with being smart and knowledgeable, and possessing a great sense of humor. The ideal president is goal-oriented, determined, persistent, direct and directive, has a strong work ethic and works hard. This president is an honest, quick, self-aware, self-examining, fearless, creative, organized, intellectually lively, perceptive extrovert with the highest integrity and a commitment to excellence. The ideal president is someone who manages time well even under pressure, is a good public speaker, has a wide range of interests, genuinely loves and connects with people, listens well, flexibly embraces new knowledge, and then, by using good judgment, intuition, and rigorous prioritizing, operates efficiently. This president makes tough decisions, sticks by them, follows through and weathers adversity, believes in self, is self-confident, punctual, technologically skilled, and well-known. This president pays attention to detail, focuses on education, and is able to stand back and not interfere with good performance (adapted from the responses of each of the eighteen presidents in this study).

2. Risk-Taking and Change Recommendation:

After careful assessment of the potential gains and losses that may result from accepting each leadership role, and being fully aware of the challenges, barriers, obstacles along the way, aspiring women presidents must be willing to take necessary risks. These women must make important changes in both their careers and personal
lives, and be willing to stay the course in order to successfully negotiate the pathway to the presidency.

3. **Experience Recommendation:**

   Develop a broad experiential portfolio and include as many areas of higher education as possible, particularly those areas of predominant responsibility in the office of the president. Stay long enough in each position to be successful, “pay your dues,” and be willing to pursue an indirect, non-linear pathway when it helps in understanding the institutional processes and “gestalt,” and ultimately in facilitating successes and movement toward long-term goals.

4. **Education Recommendation:**

   Attend the best schools and study with the best teachers. Always perform well. Attending prestigious colleges and university may assist advancement. Build relationships with teachers and professors and invite them to mentor academic progress. Compete for scholarships and fellowships. Travel. Earn a terminal degree, preferably a Ph.D. or an Ed.D., remembering that 55% of women presidents are from the field of education. Remain curious, keep up with current events, and continue reading for pleasure as well as education. Study accounting, finance, economics, statistics, communication (particularly writing and speaking), human resources, attend specialized leadership and presidential training programs (such as those presented by Bryn Mawr, ACE, Harvard, and others) and take advantage of appropriate leadership learning opportunities. Learn as much as possible about the operation of the many areas of higher education institutions. Continue learning from colleagues and mentors.
5. **Mentoring Recommendation:**

Actively seek mentors from the pool of available leaders who are respected, admired, trusted, and present a model that the mentee would prefer to emulate. Choose mentors who value honesty, who can teach and advise mentees—particularly in areas that are not among the mentee’s strengths— and who will help the mentee acquire needed experience. A mentor should be supportive, encouraging, and able to vouch for the mentee. Choose as many mentors as needed at each career stage, benefit from their perspective and counsel, and feel free to change mentors as needs change. Network with women leaders, both in academic presidencies as well as from outside academia. Be certain to return the gift by identifying and mentoring other women to take future leadership roles.

6. **Leadership Style Recommendation:**

Develop a personal leadership style that is honest, open, and humble, one that builds consensus, sets positive expectations, and brings out the best in others. It should be a leadership style that utilizes effective social/people skills, listening, teamwork, shared governance, support, encouragement, empowerment, responsiveness, care, honesty, and feedback methods, while it at the same time values people, and gives credit to others. Additionally, to make a difference for the women of the future, be yourself, foster relational and transformational leadership, and challenge the dominant male organizational patterns whenever possible.
7. **Change and Improvement Recommendation:**

Find and implement important ways to change, improve, and advance the institution. These may include, but are not limited to, restructuring the institution; implementing a vision; improving quality, visibility, and technology; supporting and facilitating student and faculty accomplishments; waiting for and hiring the right people; making capital improvements; solving problems; developing internal evaluation processes; providing and receiving feedback; increasing enrollment; and developing new programs – possibly including community development. To accomplish this, it is critical to engage and unite constituents and mobilize the community to get things done.

8. **Culture, Values, and Beliefs Recommendation:**

Know your personal values and beliefs and the culture in which you are most comfortable and productive, and then carefully investigate to find an institution with a compatible culture, values, and beliefs.

9. **Health Recommendation:**

Schedule regular, preferably daily, health-enhancing exercise. Maintain a healthy balance between personal and professional life, especially by insuring time for important relationships. Develop a “thick skin” to help endure the emotional barbs that go with the presidency, and a healthy mental *modus operandi* that works well for you and includes healthy attitudes. If you are a spiritual person, be sure to find time to renew and build that spirituality. Rest adequately to restore energy, and adjust schedules as much as possible to match personal biorhythms. Find time for regular entertainment and hobbies.
Practice healthy nutrition. For optimum performance, service, and fulfillment, it is critical to include maximizing health physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

10. Communication Recommendation:

Develop excellent and effective listening, writing, and speaking skills. Shape an effective personal communication style that is open, consultative, transparent, coherent, sometimes self-effacing and self-protective, conveys excitement and energy, “tells the story,” engages people, and uses humor when appropriate. Use these skills to serve the institution well by gathering optimum information and insight from all invested sources, articulating and sharing the outcome, inspiring, encouraging, showing appreciation, and building meaningful and fulfilling relationships, individually and for the institution, wherever and whenever possible.

11. Finance and Accounting Recommendation:

Take courses in finance, accounting, economics, investing, development, entrepreneurship, or any course that will strengthen knowledge and skills related to the financial responsibilities linked to the presidency. Gain as much experience as possible in managing budgets, fundraising, accounting, business, investing, and working with the legislature. Be sure, particularly if there are identified weaknesses in these areas, to find mentors for whom these traits are strengths.

12. Strategic Planning and Problem-Solving Recommendation:

Develop, practice and hone anticipatory strategic-planning and proactive problem-solving skills. Work on moving away from short-term reaction and toward long-term goal setting and development. Learn from other successful leaders and ask
skilled strategists for advice. Share good ideas with peers. Additionally, develop and hone related planning and problem-solving skills such as entrepreneurship, creativity, marketing, and analytical ability.

13. **Personal Event Recommendation:**

Build a support base of family and friends who will assist during personal crises. Plan carefully, and if planning to marry, choose a spouse very carefully. It is critical that the people closest to you are supportive and able to endure professional demands, particularly in the highly demanding position of the presidency.

14. **Gender Issues Recommendation:** Prepare, be informed, and find other women mentors who will support, advise and encourage, and then boldly pursue your vocation while promoting gender equity in all aspects of the institution, confronting and dispelling negative gender stereotypes. Then empower others to do the same.

*Contribution to Body of Knowledge*

Although there have been numerous studies of higher education presidents, including several on women presidents, there have not been any studies with the same focus as this study. Specifically, there has not been a previous study of changeable attributes, or particularly how changeable attributes may contribute to the success of women presidents. From reviewing literature related to successful women leaders, the researcher observed commonalities and subsequently developed a definition of “attributes” to represent those common characteristics, experiences, beliefs, accomplishments, skills and habits which may either contribute to or inhibit success. Attributes that could be changed at will were defined as “changeable,” and those that
could not be changed were identified as “unchangeable” attributes. The discovery of the common characteristics, experiences, beliefs, accomplishments, skills and habits emerged primarily from Astin & Leland’s book titled *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*. Additionally, Mendonca’s study of women presidents and chancellors affirmed the earlier observations and was utilized in subsequent comparisons of attributes.

Along with identifying and defining “changeable attributes,” this study identified and prioritized 15 changeable attributes contributing to success which may be viewed as a type of “formula for success” for women administrators. Additionally, these identified changeable attributes and their detailed recommendation may be used to develop a curriculum to help train women administrators to be more successful.

Lastly, the following conceptual framework was developed to help diagram the impact of changeable attributes on a higher education administration career:

**Recommendations for Future Research**

It might be expected that a large a number of research topics could emerge from a broad qualitative study such as this one. It quickly became apparent that equity remains a significant topic for further research. There is still much more to be accomplished to achieve equity in all areas of society, but certainly higher education should be among the first to address these issues and advance toward equity. In the spirit of this study, it is recommended that further research be promoted to find solutions and foster progress for future generations of all women leaders. Some suggestions for future research include:

1. A study similar to this study should be undertaken with women community college presidents.
**Darden Changeable Attributes Model (CAM Model)**

Attributes Impacting Higher Education Administrators

- **President**
  - Successful

- **Higher Education Administrator**

  - **Unchangeable Attributes**
    - Gender
    - Race

  - **Changeable Attributes**
    - Gender Issue Barriers
    - Personal Event Barriers
    - Lack of Contributing Attributes
    - Self

  - **Contributing Attributes**
    - Leadership Traits
    - Risk-Taking & Change
    - Experience
    - Education
    - Mentoring
    - Leadership Style
    - Change & Improvement
    - Healthy Habits
    - Culture, Values, Beliefs
    - Communication Skills
    - Finance & Accounting
    - Strategic-Planning
    - Personal Events
    - Gender Equity

**Figure 2.** Darden Changeable Attributes Model–Final
2. Research should be targeted specifically at each changeable attribute category to more fully understand each attribute, as well as better determine the most successful course of action.

3. Research should be initiated to benchmark progress in gender equity in higher education and to reassess current needs.

4. Although racial inequity was outside the scope of this study, primarily because it is such an enormous topic, it is nevertheless a vital area of concern. Although race, like gender, is not a “changeable” attribute, attitudes about race are changeable. Just as higher education is still plagued by gender inequity, so is it plagued with racial inequity (American Council on Education, *Breaking the Barriers*, 2001). Higher education should also lead the way toward racial equity in society. Perhaps the findings from this study may be expanded to advance racial equity and possibly encourage further related research in these areas. It is quite likely that many of the findings of this study that may be used to help advance women in higher education may also help people of color advance as well.

5. Research on recognized personality types of women presidents may reveal a number of interesting findings. For example, research determining whether more women presidents are “extroverted,” and even perhaps whether that trait has facilitated their rise to the presidency, could be included in such a study (as suggested by President Y).

6. Further research is recommended on the topic of being a “first” woman president at an institution. Perhaps this would raise understanding of what it is like to be a “first” and assist women in preparing for these positions.

7. Further research could identify similar and unique challenges facing aspiring women presidents “of color.” Perhaps this would raise understanding and assist women of color in preparing for these positions.

8. A comparative study of male presidents may reveal similarities and differences of the various changeable attributes contributing to success relative to gender.

*Final Comment*

Some factors remain constant: There are still too few women in academic leadership roles and those who are make less money and have shorter tenures than their male counterparts. Thus, the programming designed to identify, develop, advance, and support emerging female leaders continues to be crucial (American Council on Education, 2003, p. 16).

It is the sincere hope of this researcher that the findings on changeable attributes will serve as an instrument for increasing success for women, particularly in higher
education administration. It is also hoped that research and its application related to
gender equity should continue until absolute equity is achieved. This researcher is
grateful for other and previous researchers, like Astin and Leland, who have articulated
the lessons from so many great women leaders.

Women presidents owe a great debt to those women who paved the original
pathways to the presidency and made the way easier for those who followed. Because of
the great accomplishments and sacrifices of women predecessors, today’s women are
assuming many of the highest leadership positions in this country, including presidencies
of many of the largest and most prestigious universities. Perhaps, someday, women will
be equally represented in those high places. To paraphrase a passage from John Donne’s
Devotion XII, to deny even one woman her calling to leadership diminishes all humanity.
APPENDICES
Attributes Impacting Higher Education Administrators

Unchangeable Attributes
- Gender
- Race
- Birth-Order

Changeable Attributes
- Characteristics
- Experiences
- Beliefs
- Accomplishments
- Skills
- Habits

President
Successful

Higher Education Administrator

Unchangeable Attributes
- Gender
- Race
- Birth-Order

Changeable Attributes
- Characteristics
- Experiences
- Beliefs
- Accomplishments
- Skills
- Habits

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Diagram – Initial
# Table B.1. President/Institution Color Codes and Demographics

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Private: 9
Non-Religious: 13

Public: 9

Completed

Scheduled

Doctoral: 6
Master’s: 6
Bachelor’s: 8

259
Interview Questions

1. When and how did you first know that you would be destined for a leadership role in society?

2. What early factors, experiences in your life do you think contributed to your leadership capabilities as an adult?

3. Who were the most influential people during the different time periods of your life and how did they influence you?

4. What were some of the key events or circumstances that influenced your direction at the various transition points in your life?

5. What were the most important choices that you made that may have contributed to your success in leadership?

6. What do you feel are your most important accomplishments in relation to achieving leadership roles and success in the presidency?

7. What specific things do you believe have contributed the most to your becoming a successful college president?

8. What are your beliefs (religious, spiritual, and/or value related) and how do they impact your career?

9. Do you have any habits that you believe contribute to your success?

10. What skills do you have that you feel are most valuable in your presidency?

11. What would you have done differently in your career, if you had the chance to make change
12. What do you believe were the most influential variables that contributed to your achieving and succeeding in the position of the presidency?

13. What do you believe your Board and your vice presidents would say are the attributes that contribute most to your success?

14. What variables do you believe acted as barriers to your elevation to and success in your presidency?

15. What has been the most rewarding part of your current role as president?

16. What has been the most disappointing or discouraging part of your experience as president?

17. Do you wish you had been better prepared for the presidency, and if yes, how so?

18. What advice do you have for other women who aspire to higher education presidencies?

19. How would you recommend women prepare for success in higher education presidencies?

20. Is there anything that you would like to add?

21. Have we missed anything that may be important to this study?
APPENDIX D

President’s Background Data Sheet

(Adapted from the Participant Profile designed by Astin and Leland in *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*).

1. Your name (please print): _____________________________________
   (Last)  (First)  (Middle)

2. Date of Birth: _______ / _______ / _________
   (MM)        (DD) (YYYY)

3. Marital Status:
   1. Single (never married)
   2. Married
   3. Remarried
   4. Separated
   5. Divorced
   6. Widowed

4. Children: (Ages)
   Female: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
   Male: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

5. Highest level of education completed by your current spouse/partner
   1. Less than high school
   2. High school graduate
   3. Some college
   4. College graduate
   5. Some graduate school
   6. Graduate or professional degree, please specify ___________________

6. Spouse/partner occupation (specify):________________________________________

7. Information about your education (If desired, attach resume):

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<th>Bachelor’s Degree</th>
<th>Year Awarded</th>
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<th>Major Field</th>
<th>College/University</th>
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8. Please list your current position:

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<th>Title/Rank</th>
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9. Please list three positions you held prior to your current position:

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<th>Dates / From-To</th>
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10. Religious Background/preference (circle one in each column):

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<td>Jewish</td>
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<td>Other (specify)</td>
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11. What professional, volunteer, and women’s organizations have you been most involved with during your career and would you please list them in order of importance to their impact on your success?

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<thead>
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<th>Organization Name</th>
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<th>Role/Title</th>
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12. Please list your current interests/hobbies/leisure and recreational activities:

________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________
13. Please list any artistic/musical talents and/or inventions/discoveries:

________________________________________________________________________
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14. Please rate (#) yourself on the following personal characteristics:

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<td>Intelligence / related aptitudes</td>
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<td>Creativity</td>
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<td>Adaptability</td>
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APPENDIX E

Appendix E.1.a. Letter from Researcher

Mary Landon Darden
118 North 30th Street
Waco, Texas 76710
(254) 752-1468
Mary_Darden@Baylor.edu

Today’s Date, 2005

Dr. Jane Doe, President
Office of the President
University
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear President Doe:

I am a higher education administrator who, through working in the system for many years, has become increasingly aware of the challenges that women continue to face in a system traditionally dominated by men. I’m sure you already know about the 2001 study by ACE that shows that women only hold 13.3% of the presidencies at national doctoral granting institutions.

In an effort to assist more women in the successful pursuit of academic presidencies, my dissertation is based on Helen Astin and Carole Leland’s study *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*. My goal is to identify contributing changeable attributes from the most successful national university women presidents. You are among the population of the top ten women presidents whom I wish to study. I know from reading your letters and biographical information on your website that you are committed to transforming the lives of others. Participating in this study would provide a unique opportunity to significantly help rising women leaders.

Would it be possible to have no more than one hour of your time for an interview? I would be delighted to fly out to your university or anywhere else in the nation to meet you at any time or place at your convenience. All participants’ names in this study will be kept confidential. I am hoping to complete the interviews by the end of March. Please let me know of any time between now and late March that I might be able to meet with you. I know you are extraordinarily busy and I promise I will be extremely careful with your time. I look forward to hearing from you at your convenience.

Gratefully,
Mary Landon Darden
Today’s Date, 2005

Dr. Jane Doe, President
Office of the President
University
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear President Doe:

Please accept this letter by way of an endorsement of Mary Darden's dissertation *Women Presidents in Universities of the United States: Analysis of Reported Changeable Attributes Which Contribute to Their Success*. Ms. Darden is a first-rate, highly committed scholar and this is a valuable, significant study.

Mary has eight years of higher education administration experience, where she won a national exemplary award in her field. She has published and presented at national conferences on administrative topics. Additionally, Mary will be presenting a leadership paper at Cambridge University this summer.

I believe that this dissertation has exceptional publication potential. A study of this kind is, as I think you will agree, long overdue.

Please give her request every consideration.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Robert C. Cloud, EdD
Professor of Higher Education Administration
Baylor University
(President of Lee College for ten years)
Appendix E.1.c. Self-Addressed Return Envelope

Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope
Appendix E.2.a. Letter of Response from Researcher

Mary Landon Darden
118 North 30th Street
Waco, Texas 76710
(254) 752-1468
Mary_Darden@Baylor.edu

Today’s Date, 2005

Dr. Jane Doe, President
Office of the President
University
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear President Doe:

Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in my dissertation study. I am so excited to have your valuable input! I am grateful that you are willing to take the time to participate and I assure you that this will be a study that you will be proud of. All of the data will be coded, grouped and kept in confidential files. It is my sincerest hope that the study will allow other women to learn from your success in higher education administration.

I am enclosing a copy of the interview questions for you to review ahead, if you should wish to do so. I will be available at any time to answer any questions that you might have. I am also enclosing an optional background information form that parallels data collected in the Astin and Leland study. If you elect to provide any of the background information, most of it could be filled out by an assistant. Additionally, in compliance with requirements of the IRB, I am enclosing an informed consent for your signature, at your convenience. I look forward to my visit with you on (Month, Day at Hour) your time.

Most gratefully,

Mary Landon Darden.
Interview Questions

1. When and how did you first know that you would be destined for a leadership role in society?

2. What early factors, experiences in your life do you think contributed to your leadership capabilities as an adult?

3. Who were the most influential people during the different time periods of your life and how did they influence you?

4. What were some of the key events or circumstances that influenced your direction at the various transition points in your life?

5. What were the most important choices that you made that may have contributed to your success in leadership?

6. What do you feel are your most important accomplishments in relation to achieving leadership roles and success in the presidency?

7. What specific things do you believe have contributed the most to your becoming a successful college president?

8. What are your beliefs (religious, spiritual, and/or value related) and how do they impact your career?

9. Do you have any habits that you believe contribute to your success?

10. What skills do you have that you feel are most valuable in your presidency?

11. What would you have done differently in your career, if you had the chance to make changes?
12. What do you believe were the most influential variables that contributed to your achieving and succeeding in the position of the presidency?

13. What do you believe your Board and your vice presidents would say are the attributes that contribute most to your success?

14. What variables do you believe acted as barriers to your elevation to and success in your presidency?

15. What has been the most rewarding part of your current role as president?

16. What has been the most disappointing or discouraging part of your experience as president?

17. Do you wish you had been better prepared for the presidency, and if yes, how so?

18. What advice do you have for other women who aspire to higher education presidencies?

19. How would you recommend women prepare for success in higher education presidencies?

20. Is there anything that you would like to add?

21. Have we missed anything that may be important to this study?
This form asks for your consent to participate in a higher education administration research study. You will be interviewed on topics related to your leadership position as president of a university and the interview will be audio-recorded for accurate transcription. The interview should take place in one session and should take approximately one-two hours to complete. There is no physical risk involved in this study. Your participation is voluntary and you may elect at anytime to withdraw from the study with no penalty of any kind.

For the purposes of this study, you will be guaranteed complete anonymity. No names will be used and all files will be maintained at a private location.

The result of this study will be made available to you, if you wish to see the outcome. It is hoped that this research may be used to assist more women in rising to, and succeeding in, the role of president of higher education presidencies. A copy of this informed consent is available to you at any time.

Please direct all inquiries to Mary Landon Darden, 118 N. 30th Street, Waco, TX, 76710 or phone at (254) 752-1468, or email at Mary_Darden@Baylor.edu.
If you have any questions regarding your rights as a subject, or any other aspects of the research as it relates to you as a participant, please contact Dr. Matthew S. Stanford, Chair of the Baylor University Institutional Review Board, P.O. Box 97334, Waco, TX 76798-7334. Dr. Stanford may also be reached at (254) 710-2961 (MWF) and (254) 710-2811 (TTh).

I have read and understand this form, am aware of my rights as a participant, and have agreed to participate in this research.

Please Type or Print Full Name and Title

___________________________________________________     _________________
Signature                                      Date
Appendix E.2.d.  Self-Addressed Return Envelope

Self Addressed Stamped Envelope
Appendix E.2.e. President’s Background Data Sheet

(Adapted from the Participant Profile designed by Astin and Leland in *Women of Influence, Women of Vision*).

1. Your name (please print): ________________________________
   (Last)   (First)   (Middle)

2. Date of Birth: _______ / _______ / _________
   (MM)        (DD) (YYYY)

3. Marital Status:
   1. Single (never married)
   2. Married
   3. Remarried
   4. Separated
   5. Divorced
   6. Widowed

4. Children: (Ages)
   Female:    _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
   Male:      _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

5. Highest level of education completed by your current spouse/partner
   1. Less than high school
   2. High school graduate
   3. Some college
   4. College graduate
   5. Some graduate school
   6. Graduate or professional degree, please specify ________________

6. Spouse/partner occupation (specify): ______________________________

7. Information about your education (If desired, attach resume):

   | Year Awarded | Major Field | College/University |
   |_____________|____________|__________________|
   | Bachelor’s Degree | | |
   | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ |
   | Master’s | | |
   | ____________ | ____________ | ____________ |
8. Please list your current position:

Title/Rank  Name of Institution / Organization  Dates / From-To

9. Please list three positions you held prior to your current position:

Title/Rank  Name of Institution / Organization  Dates / From-To

10. Religious Background/preference (circle one in each column):

    Raised in  Current preference

    None  1  1
    Protestant  2  2
    Catholic  3  3
    Jewish  4  4
    Other (specify)  

11. What professional, volunteer, and women’s organizations have you been most involved with during your career and would you please list them in order of importance to their impact on your success?

Organization Name  Years  Role/Title

12. Please list your current interests/hobbies/leisure and recreational activities:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
13. Please list any artistic/musical talents and/or inventions/discoveries:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

14. Please rate (#) yourself on the following personal characteristics:

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<th>2</th>
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<td>Self-confidence</td>
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<td>Risk-taking</td>
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Dear President Doe:

Thank you so much for the thoughtful and informative interview. I am certain that your experiences and advice will help many other women be more successful in their higher education administration journey. I will send you a copy of this study once it is complete. Thank you again for giving so generously of your valuable time and expertise.

Gratefully,

Mary Landon Darden
Dear President Doe:

Thank you again for participating in the study Women Presidents in Four-Year Colleges and Universities of the United States: Analysis of Reported Changeable Attributes Which Contribute to Their Success. As you can see, the title has been adjusted slightly. My committee is very excited about this study and about the fascinating findings thus far. However, they have asked me to narrow my focus to four-year institutions and to enlarge my sample from eleven to eighteen. The difficult part is securing interviews with presidents of three additional Doctoral and Master’s institutions that I need to add. As you know, this is a very small group.

I realize that I have already asked a great deal from you by asking you to give your time for interview – I am profoundly grateful for. We are still hopeful of obtaining information from the most successful women presidents, and receiving referrals from peers is possibly the best way to approach these last interviews. Additionally, without direct referrals, it is possible that I may not be able to obtain those additional interviews needed.

I am attaching a section (below) for possible presidential referrals, along with a stamped return envelope. Would it be possible for you to fill in a name or two of women presidents that you know who might be willing to participate in this study if I were to mention that it was recommended that I contact them? I will find the contact information for each president so that you need not take the time to look it up. The form should not
take more than a minute and it will help tremendously. Again, thank you so much for your support, encouragement, and wonderful advice for other women administrators. I believe you will be very happy with the results of this study.

Again, most gratefully,

Mary Landon Darden
Baylor University

PS: Please let me know if you would like to have a copy of the transcript of your interview sent along with a final copy of the study. Some presidents have requested a copy for their archives.

Referring President’s Name: President Doe

Below are the names and institutions of women presidents whom I consider to be successful and who might be willing to participate in the study: *Women Presidents in Four-Year Colleges and Universities of the United States: Analysis of Reported Changeable Attributes Which Contribute to Their Success.*

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___ You may mention my name when contacting these presidents
___ You may mention my name when contacting presidents in numbers: _________
___ Please do not mention my name when contacting any of these presidents

Please enclose this page in the attached return envelope. Thank you so much for your assistance!
APPENDIX F

Pilot Study

Interview with a Community College President

Mary Landon Darden

Baylor University

March 2003
1. What early factors, experiences in your life, do you think contributed to your leadership capabilities and your ultimate pursuit of the community college presidency?

First of all, I never wanted to be a community college president. That was never a lifetime goal, it evolved, which I think probably a lot of careers do. But as far as early factors or experiences, the opportunity to participate in a lot of different types of extracurricular activities as well as school activities--in elementary school and junior high--gave me the opportunity to try out leadership roles, to be part of a group, to learn about group interaction, to observe other leaders, either adults or other students, and see how they were effective in leadership roles. Having those opportunities, and observing, (both) contributed a great deal to where and how I became the leader that I am.

2. What were the most important choices that you made that helped lead to your success in leadership?

I think primarily it was observing, listening to people, and asking lots of questions of people in leadership roles. Those are some of the best choices that I made. I don’t think it was necessarily the college degree that I happened to go into early on, or later on, although I’ll get to that later. It was more of talking to leaders from CEOs of corporations, to academic leaders, to non-profit leaders, and just asking, listening, and observing what was effective and what wasn’t, and also reading a great deal about people’s lives, and leadership philosophies.
3. **What do you feel are your most important accomplishments in relation to achieving and successfully filling the position of community college president?**

I think one of them was being a good faculty member, and enjoying being in the classroom. That has contributed a lot to success in understanding and working with faculty. Another opportunity I had was (that) I actually started out in student services, and so by having that opportunity--well as (being) a faculty member--it gave me a broad understanding of the community college. I could work with all areas. I think another important accomplishment in the past that helped has been being involved at the national level with a lot of different committees, both in the psychology discipline, and then also in community college (and) in higher education because I got a better understanding of things beyond just the local college. At the time I would not have thought that’s why I was getting involved in the committee by any means, but that was a by-product that really has provided for me a better understanding of how to address issues as they come along, and to network with some people outside of the immediate area.

4. **What made you chose the community college arena?**

It was partly because of Dallas County community college district, and the opportunity that they were giving people, when I got out of graduate school, in the student services area was were I started. Also, the (overall) philosophy was the big draw for me. Anybody that wants higher education should be provided that opportunity, not because of any socio-economic reason, or because of some problems they’ve had in their past. If they wanted that opportunity to fulfill that dream, then here was a college that
provides the opportunity. It didn’t guarantee success, but it definitely gave you the opportunity to be successful. Once I was in it, I was hooked.

**So you feel like your value system played a large part in the choice you made?**

I think so, it’s probably very idealistic, but it’s very democratic idealism. I think that, to me, what has been really exciting. (You) just feed on the success stories that you hear from people.

5. **What are your beliefs and how do they impact your career?**

You probably heard part of it in the last question, of believing in people, and believing in giving people every opportunity, every chance to be successful. I don’t necessarily mean the community colleges are a second chance, they’re the first chance for a lot of people to be successful. That’s a big belief: That people can make a difference in their own lives if they choose to, and that if you give them opportunity, and they want to succeed, they can. Another thing that’s real important to me is honesty and integrity. You have to be honest with people, honest with the community, and honest with your board. Sometimes that’s not easy, but in the long run it’s the absolute best thing. (You must have) integrity about your own personal career, your own personal life, but also integrity for the institution because the college president represents the institution, and you can’t ever forget that outside of the college and inside. That belief system is pretty strong; how it impacts (your) career is where you end up, (whether) you are a president, or a faculty member. You make choices, and you’re a good fit or you’re not a good fit based on your belief system. You sort of move or change as those beliefs either coincide or contradict where you currently are. (I) also believe that a college president isn’t there
forever. I think that there are phases of an organization, just like there are phases of people’s lives. You provide what a college needs, and there may be a time when what you provide and what the college needs don’t necessarily agree. At that point, it’s time to move on. You’re always looking out for the best interest of the student and that is in the best interest of the institution.

6. Do you have any habits that you believe contribute to your success?

One is to have a pretty strong work ethic, and a pretty strong honor of commitments. If you make the commitment, stick with it. The other thing is working out physically—aerobics—those types of things; I think that helps a great deal. Also, trying to keep a balance—it’s not easy, don’t think that I always keep a balance in life—but making sure that you get some time away, making sure that there is a balance of other things in your life. It’s real easy to get all consumed with the college, and think about it 24/7, but you won’t be nearly as successful. I wouldn’t be nearly as successful if I didn’t have some other things outside of the institution such as working out, and traveling, and spending time walking on the beach, or other things that really provide that balance.

7. What skills do you have that you feel are most valuable in your presidency?

Probably the most important is listening, and sometimes it’s the hardest, but it’s vital. The other thing is being able to communicate your vision for the institution, communicate the future. It’s easy to get caught up in the day to day, and forget the big picture—even for the president. But if you do that, you really get bogged down, and don’t ever move forward too well. Communication of the vision is real important. The other thing is
people-skills, being able to get out and meet the community, feel comfortable with any type of individual that you’re working with. Being comfortable with going out and asking people for what you need, being able to explain a college to the people who don’t necessarily understand the college. Again, communication—but it’s a communication with a variety of constituencies. Another skill is to be able to assimilate information very quickly from a number of sources, and then disseminate what’s in the best interest of the institution. (Additionally, it is important to have the necessary skills in dealing with the media).

8. How would you describe your current role as president?

Right now it’s fighting with the legislature. The current role as president is very different than it was a few years ago, it is very much fund-raising, very much working with your grant-writer, and it’s very much a looking for alternative revenue sources. It is still, to some extent, an academic leader, but it’s becoming less and less of that. The excitement comes with talking with faculty about what’s going on in the classroom, helping to provide incentives and support as faculty move in new directions, and looking at new programs. But that’s becoming less and less of a role of the president—it’s more of community building, and more of fund raising.

9. What are your biggest challenges as president of your College?

Probably for the long term, it’s being able to stay abreast of the economic and workforce changes. Being proactive so that you’re one step ahead, being able to respond to business and industry, but also to be able to provide the training on education that
people need so they can get a job that makes a good living, so their education is profitable whether it’s the two-year, the four-year, (or) the Ph.D. degree. The biggest challenge is making sure that you keep up with all of that. Another big challenge is working with the community on a regular basis to make sure that not only are you keeping up with the workforce, but you’re in tune with your community. They provide so much support to the community college, you want to make sure you’re providing everything the community needs within your mission. The other challenge is money, but we’ve already talked about that. Probably the last (challenge) is working with your board of trustees or board of regents, because every two years there is a possibility that they change, and you have to be able to work with them. It’s the care and the feeding of the board, and that’s always a challenge because you never know how that board is going to mesh or not mesh. As different issues come up, providing them with the information they need, and how do you deal with that (is a challenge). It just takes some time getting to know the different needs of each individual board member, (and) at the same time realizing that the board is a unit, and not just each individual.

10. What places did you primarily decide to put your time into, and why you chose those things?

The Board of the Chamber of Commerce, because that’s where most of your business leaders are. Another place is economic development, because that’s part of the mission of the community college. Economic development boards are vital to helping you. To some extent the City Council, but not nearly as much--that’s another elected group. You do want to know the City Council, and the Mayor, I spend quite a bit of time with (the
Mayor), because you get the pulse of the city, the direction of the city, and how you can work with the city. Then, of course, the other one is the local school district superintendents. Now different communities have different things, in some communities the United Way Board is a really big one to be on, and in other communities it’s not. In Waco, the Heart of Texas Coliseum board was a big deal, and the rodeo board is (big) down here in Houston, so you just have to assess what community organizations have the pulse of the community and most of the movers and shakers of that community. You learn which social events to go to--associated with which fundraiser--because that’s where you’ll see the people that you need to talk with. The other day I walked into one of the chamber’s monthly meetings, and, by the time I walked out, I had three different cards from people that wanted to do something with the college. When you walk in you’re the college, you’re not (me). That’s how they see you. That’s why you’re there. It’s pretty important to assess with the community what are the big organizations there. Usually your Chambers of Commerce have everybody there, so it’s the big one.

11. How is the role of community college president changing and what do you believe will be the biggest projected changes for the community college presidencies in the future?

I think that the community college president is becoming much more of a fundraiser, it’s becoming much more like a university president than it has been. Also, I think community college presidents need to become much more politically savvy. Your university president’s have been that way for a while. The biggest projected changes for the community college presidency in the future are not only that segment, but also the
diverse population, and how do you address all the issues when you have such diversity in the classroom and on your campus? Also, the retirement of a lot of faculty, and how are you going to replace those (people), and how do you reflect with the diversity of the community in hiring practices--or do you--and how do you address that? (Another thing) is the entrepreneurial spirit of a community college president, (more) than we’ve seen in the past. How do you do things a little bit differently without relying on the traditional methods of how instruction was given, and how finances were given, and how you address the needs of the community, because you’re going to have to work, as the corporate world says, “Faster, harder, smarter, with less money.”

12. What would you have done differently along the way in your career, if you had the chance to make changes?

I probably would have learned more about the financial side of the house than I did if I would have known. I’d never wanted to be a president, but even when I was working in graduate school on my Ph.D. in Higher Ed Administration, (I should have spent more time talking) to people, to gather more information about the finances. I’m not talking about reading the spreadsheet, or reading the financials, but more of all the different kinds of bonds, all the different ways that you can do creative financing, it’s legal, and very much an option for colleges. You don’t get very much of that until you actually talk to people. I think it’s real important for presidents to be real aware of that. You can’t rely (solely) on your chief financial officer, you really have to be knowledgeable about it. So that’s probably one thing I would have done differently, to learn a lot more about the financial side of the house. As far as other things, probably not a whole lot, I would have
never chosen this career path the way it has gone, but in looking back it has been pretty
good training for a college president, because of the diversity of positions I’ve had in
higher education. I guess probably, maybe what we all say, I wish I had taken advantage
of talking to more people, and sinking more information into my head ahead of time.

*On the chief financial officer statement you made, I was curious about that. Is that
mainly because they’re more into the accounting, and the paperwork, and not as
into investment concepts?*

They know about investments, and I think most of them do a pretty good job. They
tend to be extremely conservative, and there is nothing wrong with that--you want your
chief financial officer (to be) very conservative. But I think you have to be able to
present a broader picture, and they do tend to look like at the day to day. They tend to
look at the immediate, the conservative investments, which is where you might want your
money invested, but they don’t, many times, know all the options of the different kinds of
bonds that you can get. They’ll know bond rating, but they won’t know all the different
kinds of bonds, general revenue, and general obligations, some of those things. If you’re
in the state university, tuition revenue bonds, and how those work, (are) something that
you always have to keep your eye on. You want them doing the day to day; you want
them keeping an eye on every dollar. You want to make sure that nothing is being
embezzled, that there is no skimming or anything like that, so you really do need that.
13. What advice do you have for others who aspire to higher education presidencies?

I would say get as much experience in different areas of the college as you can, even if it’s an internship in different areas. Talk to as many presidents as you can because they are interesting people to talk with. Visit board meetings and see how that board interacts with the president, how that president works with that board in a public meeting, what’s going on from the audience, those types of things. You really get a better understanding of the issues. I think people need to know it’s not an easy job, it’s a 24/7 job, and you never know what your next day is going to be like. If you’re comfortable with that ambiguity, and comfortable with that kind of commitment, it’s a terrific job. Talking to other presidents, and observing other presidents in action is invaluable.
## Table G.1. Presidents Response Grid

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<td>Support</td>
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### 12. Most Influential Variables Contributing To Successful Presidency

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<td>Networking / Volunteerism</td>
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### 13. Attributes Identified by Board Members & Vice Presidents as Contributing to Success

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<td>Innovative / Intellectual</td>
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<td>Determined / Persistent</td>
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<tr>
<td>People Skills / Care / Responsiveness</td>
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<td>Work Ethic</td>
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<td>Empower / Encourager / Supporter</td>
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<td>Humble / Give Others Credit</td>
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<td>Good People</td>
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### 15. Most Rewarding Part of Presidency

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<td>Know &quot;Culture&quot; / Find Fit</td>
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<td>Remain Open / Take Risks</td>
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<td>Be Curious</td>
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<td>Follow Passion / Be Authentic</td>
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<td>Wait for Right Hires</td>
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## Table H.1. Presidents’ Qualities and Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traits / Characteristics of Successful Presidents</th>
<th>Specifics / President</th>
<th>Board, VP, Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 able to tackle new knowledge</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 attention to detail</td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 authentic</td>
<td>A, C, G, J, M, W</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 believes in self</td>
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<td>6 commitment to excellence</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 connect with people</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 conscious about appearance</td>
<td>V</td>
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<td>9 creativity</td>
<td>G</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 determination and persistence</td>
<td>A, E, L, R</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 direct, directive, goal-oriented</td>
<td>C, E, L, S, Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 efficiency</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 energetic / passionate / charismatic</td>
<td>B, I, J, L, M, T, V, W</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 extrovert</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 fearless</td>
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<td>16 flexibility</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 focuses on education</td>
<td>E, T</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 follow-through</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19 friendly / fun / agreeable</td>
<td>G, H, L, M, T, V</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 good intuitions</td>
<td>H</td>
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<tr>
<td>21 good judgments</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 good public speaker</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>23 high expectations</td>
<td>H, O</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24 honest / honesty</td>
<td>C, R</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 humor / sense of / positive disposition</td>
<td>G, V</td>
<td>L, O, S, T, V</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 integrity</td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 intellectually lively / intellectual</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>I, J, O</td>
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<tr>
<td>28 interested in people</td>
<td>V</td>
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<td>29 knows-self</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 listens to people</td>
<td>G</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 loves administrative work</td>
<td>A</td>
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<td>32 loves people</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>33 makes a decision</td>
<td>G</td>
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<tr>
<td>34 makes tough decisions</td>
<td>H</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 manages time well / under pressure</td>
<td>M, S</td>
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<tr>
<td>36 not devious</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>37 organizational skills</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>O, P, V</td>
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<tr>
<td>38 perceiving</td>
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<td>39 practical approach</td>
<td>T</td>
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<tr>
<td>40 punctual / early-arriver</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>41 quick / quick on feet / quick study</td>
<td>V, R</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>42 reflective</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
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<td>43 rigorous prioritizing</td>
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<td>44 self-aware</td>
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<td>45 self-confident</td>
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<td>46 self-conscious</td>
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<td>47 self-examination</td>
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<tr>
<td>48 smart / knowledgeable</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>C, G, I, V</td>
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<tr>
<td>49 stands back / doesn’t interfere with good performance</td>
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<td>G</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 stands by commitments and promises</td>
<td>R</td>
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<td>51 stick by decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>52 strong booming voice</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>53 talk to anyone</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>54 technology skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>55 think on feet</td>
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<tr>
<td>56 vision (have / articulate)</td>
<td>A, B, E, J, L, R, S, T</td>
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<tr>
<td>57 weather adversity</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>58 well-known</td>
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<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>59 wide range of interests</td>
<td>V</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>60 work ethic</td>
<td>B, C, I, L</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>61 works hard</td>
<td>R, S, V, W</td>
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APPENDIX I

Findings Outline

Chapter Four - Findings

1. First awareness of leadership destiny

Have not had awareness of leadership destiny

Childhood/Family

Unrestricted Family Support

Early Leadership Positions

Later in Career

2. Early factors and experiences contributing to leadership ability

Gender and Racial Equity

Girls Schools and Women’s Colleges

Athletics

Took responsibility and leadership roles early

Parental / Family Influence and Expectations – Consider Moving to #3

Life experiences / Travel / Exposure to different cultures

3. People and their influences

Parents and family

School Teachers
4. Events or circumstances of influence

Personal Event or Decision

Scholarships/Awards

Divorce

Travel

Academia

Personal Charge / Desire to contribute or improve conditions

Change in Profession / Career/ Location:

Learning to deal with disappointment

Contacts

5. Choices that contributed to leadership success

Education / Training

Spouse / Family

Choosing new directions/ Choosing to take risks, take action/Liability of not doing so

Importance of moving

6. Accomplishments that contributed to leadership and success

Find and hire the right people and then trust, empower and nurture them
Institutional Culture and Values

Change: Improvement, Innovation, Courage and Seizing Opportunities

New Programs

Leadership style

Early Appointment to the Presidency

Education / Having degrees from prestigious institution

7. Specific things that contributed the most to becoming a successful college president

Problem-solving / analytical and math abilities

Know about money and technology

Teamwork / Valuing People

Risk Taking

Energy, Endurance and Accessibility

Experience / Teaching

Support

Personal Qualities / Personality Traits and Characteristics / Self-Knowledge

Genuine honesty //
Integrity /
Love people /
Flexibility /
Sense of humor /
Creative /
Quick, smart/ intellectually lively, Quick on Feet / //
Good public speaker /
Don’t get nervous up in front of thousands of people /
Wide range of interest & knowledge / can talk any discipline, to student, to maintenance man //
Interested in people, and I can connect with them in an effective way /
Look presidential /
Conscious about dress /
Fearless /
Self-Aware / Self-Consciousness / Self-Knowing / Self Reflective /
Ability to manage time very well /
Rigorous prioritizing /
Doing things efficiently, in organized manner /
Ability to weather adversity /
ENFP / ENFJ /
Ability to make tough cuts and stick by them /

Self-Examination

Commitment to Excellence

Keep up with current events and interpret for staff

Having and Articulating a Vision

Work with state and legislature

8. Beliefs (religious, spiritual, and/or value related) and their impact on your career

Christian / Value-Based

2 United Methodists / Methodist Church (grew up – not attending)--strong work ethic, strong values that I adhere to.

2 Christian / Christian

3 Roman Catholic / Catholic –believing and practicing / Christian--Presidency of Catholic University, a calling

Other Religions (Non-Christian)

1 Jewish – more secular than religious

1 Jewish - religiously
Deism

2 Spiritual–Deist / the infinite by whatever name, creator, God, Allah

Value-Based / Non-religious

Agnostic--values of social justice, of fairness, of kindness, right to treated with
dignity, equal opportunity--take care of one’s self first - obligation to rest
of the world and society

Agnostic--strong sense of the responsibility’ to making the world a better place,

sense of honesty, of fair dealing, institutional generosity, public
responsibility. (President S)

Ethical person--lead with an ethical standard – ethical organization--secular

values. (President W)

Morality / Spirituality / Work Ethic--value system

Spiritual person--deeply committed to a set of values--honesty, integrity,
compassion

Not traditionally religious. I’m the granddaughter of a Baptist minister.

Values of civility, trying to do the right thing…on behalf of other people –
compassion.

Spiritual with no religious beliefs--raised Catholic believe in the potential of
people. Margaret Wheatley’s--my roles is to help that energy be released,
not get in the way of it. I believe we’re here to make a difference –
leave this place a better place than it was when we came. I believe in
servant leadership. (President V)
Humanist / Spirituality in terms of Relationships--Episcopalian until age ten / attended Catholic school--integrity (President R)

9. Habits that contributed to success

Professional Modus Operandi / Leadership Habits of the Mind / Attitude

Give Feedback

Separate professional life from personal life

Personal habits

Balance -V / Balance - L--take care of self and continue to develop (President V)

for the people you love (President L)

Organizational habits

Sleep / Personal Biorhythms

Punctuality / Early Arrival

Reading

Spiritual Habits / Prayer

Exercise

Eating

Entertainment / Hobbies

Hard Work

10. Skills most valuable in presidency

Social / People Skills

Communication Skills
Stimulus or motivational skills

Accounting / Finance / Math / Statistics

Computer/Technology Skills

Disposition – Positive, calm, and focused / Sense of Humor

Organizational Skills

Intellectual Skills

Strategic Planning / Problem Solving Skills

Decision-Making Skills

Hard work

11. Would have changed, if could

No Changes

Changes

Very Little Change

Educational Changes

Gone to Yale

I would have studied abroad (President V)

Stronger undergraduate education

Gone to medical school after graduate school (President B)

Wish I had gone into science. When I think of fields that are really making a difference today I wish I hadn’t been so closed to the possibilities as I was. (President S)
Leadership Training

Courses in Finance, Accounting, Statistics, and/or Business

Career or Timing Changes

Personal Changes

Have more children (President O)

Be less of a workaholic (President R)

12. Most influential variables that contributed to achieving and succeeding in the presidency

Support

Strong support in the people I’ve worked with, having a wonderful board (President S)

Practical Approach

Take practical approach, dressing professionally but wear walking shoes when walking around the campus.

Listening / Remaining Open / and careful decision-making

Hear and Listen,

Look for opportunity to (advance)--stay way open. (President H)

Experience / Background / Prerequisites

“I grew up in a farm town… (and) never learned how to play games with people.”

(President C)

Teaching for thirty-two years, being an associate dean, and running an overseas program
Career as a naval reserve officer; along with being an administrator of a school of theology --

The Degrees - the “technical” prerequisites (President V)

Preparation for the job –

Through all of the steps, starting as a student, to a graduate student, faculty member, department chair, associate dean, dean, vice president, provost (President B)

Business experience (President E)

Teaching high school (President M)

Marketing and Entrepreneurship (President R)

Networking / Volunteer (President B)

Leadership Style President V. “Theory of leadership”-- (President L)

Institutional Fit / Timing

Assisting Others (President T)

Teamwork and Shared Governance President T

Sense of Humor President O and President L

Appearance / Presentation and Effective Communication / Poise and Confidence

Knowing Ones-Self / Believing in Ones-Self

Love of administrative work

Accent

Sexual Orientation

Gender / Race
13. Attributes that board members and your vice presidents would say contribute most to your success

*Breath of fresh air, taking to new level of excellence, courageous, taking on tough issues.* (President O)

*Self confident enough to pick good folks and step back, very accessible, treat them the way I like to be treated, I’m smart communication skills, giving them the full picture, I’m honest.*

Energy, and work ethic (President B)

**Performance-Related Attributes**

I know who I am; I know strengths, work hard, I communicate well, sensitive, knowledge base, understanding ethos & culture, get people on board, not afraid, communication styles, honesty, openness, and direct manner with people. (President C)

*Smart, quick, that I’m energetic I know higher education as a profession. I’m well known, organized, figure out a strategy, connect with people well.* (President V)

**Courage and Determination, vision, entrepreneurship, a willingness to take risks, communication skills, finance, ability to manage scarce resources.**

(President R)

**Determination, focus, ability to see how parts fit together, ability to keep my eyes on the prize**, and know steps it takes to get there (President E)
Good leader of the institution (President P)

Attention to detail, energy, love what I do, I’m smart. (President I)

Energy, understanding the goal, where we’re going, hard driving, long serving, persistent.

Willing to take on hard problems and make difficult decisions, sense of directive action, good financial manager, good at developing relationships (President S)

I’m effective (President M)

(I Use) argument where you find common ground and proceed from there

Support and Empowerment of others (President V)(President A)

(President M)(President H)

Passion / Creativity President W President J’s

Goal Orientation (President Y)

Humility Pres. T President (President J)

Having Fun on the job (President T) (President V) (President L)

Keeping the Focus on Education (President T)

Support from significant others (President O)

Listening (President Y) (President P) (President I)

Charisma/Authenticity (President M)
14. Variables that acted as barriers to achieving and succeeding in the presidency

Self-Confidence (President G)

Gender / Race (President Y) (President W) (President V) (President R) (President A) (President B) (President P) (President I) (President S) (President M) (President H)

Pedigree (President Y) (President A)

Ourselves as barriers (President C) (President T) (President W) (President G) (President L)

Other People (President B)

The Press (President B)

Lack of information (President T) (President R)

Handwriting (President R)

Being an internal candidate / Place-boundness (President A) (President I) (President L)

Background / Perception (President E)

Appearance (President M)

No barriers (President O)

15. Most rewarding parts of role as president

Advancing the Institution (President C) (President T) (President G) (President E) (President P) (President I) (President L) (President H)
Student and Faculty Accomplishments (President C) (President T) (President O) (President Y) (President B) (President M)

Working with people / Growth / Feedback (President W) (President G) (President J) (President A) (President E)

Love the university and the challenge of the job (President V)

Community Development (President R)

Meeting Alumni (President S)

16. Most disappointing or discouraging part of experience as president

It is Difficult to Get Things Done (President L) (President C) (President W)

Budget / Money / State Legislature (President J) (President V) (President I) (President H)

Resistance from colleagues (President T) (President Y) (President R) (President E) (President P) (President S)

Student-Related (President O) (President I)

Aloneness / Isolation from colleagues (President G)

Lack of Forgiveness / Judgment / Liabilities of being a Public Figure (President G) (President V)

Gender Barriers (President A)
Women who won’t help other women (President M)

Obsession with Athletics (President B)

Education has a long way to go (President M)

Nothing discouraging or disappointing

17. Preparation for the presidency – were there things you wished you’d known?

General “Yes,” some. If possible. (President Y) (President G) (President B)

(President P)

Experience working with Legislators (President Y)

Athletics (President C)

Money: Finance, Accounting, Budgets and Fundraising (President C) (President Y)

(President G) (President R)

(President A) (President H)

Human Resources Training (President A)

Communication / Interpersonal / Learning more about the presidency (President O)

(President S)

Well prepared (President T) (President W)

(President J) (President E)

(President I) (President L)

Cannot Prepare for the Presidency (President V)

Be flexible / Let others help / Absorb the culture (President B)
18. Advice for other women aspiring to presidencies

Get planned, get focused, and get help, and you’ll get there.” (President L)

*Excellence, Courage, Compassion, and Integrity*  
(President C) (President O)

*Follow your passion, not a title / Be authentic, true to self*  
(President J) (President A)

*Remain open and take risks*  
(President T) (President J)  
(President H)

*Study Finance and Accounting*  
(President T) (President R)  
(President I) (President S)

*Network/ Develop Relationships / Seek Mentors*  
(President T) (President A)  
(President B)  
(President I) (President S)

**Warnings**

Not to make “parking lot promises”  
(President T)

*Think twice, know that what you really want to do, do you want that kind of life?*  
(President E)

*Have to arrange the other parts of your life, because these are very demanding jobs.*  
(President P)

*Vision*  
(President T) (President J) (President S)

*Be willing to wait for the right hiree*  
(President T)

*Learn to ask the right questions*  
(President T)

*High energy, hard work, persistence, tenacity and sacrifice*  
(President T)  
(President Y) (President R)

* Maintain a healthy, balanced lifestyle*  
(President Y) (President S)
Be cautious with emotion  (President T)

Stand up for critical values and principles – Be willing to step down or resign if necessary  (President C) (President T) (President G)

Know the “Game” or the Culture of an institution / Find a good fit  (President G)

(President V)

Do the hard jobs to prove yourself / Know that more will be expected of you  (President W) (President S)

Get the proper credentials and experience/ Pay your academic dues  (President V)

(President I) (President L) (President S)

19. Recommended preparation for women seeking success presidencies

Prepare by focusing on current position and doing best possible at best fit  (President I)  (President W)

Broaden portfolio, perform well, stay with it, make connections / Instruction training is helpful

(President C) Pres. T.  (President O)

(President Y) (President G) (President J)

(President V)(President R) (President B)

(President I) (President L)

Network / Find Mentors  (President L) (President S) (President H)

Be Curious / arm yourself with information  (President G) (President S)

Take Risks / Stay Open  (President H)

Learn more about the search process  (President L)
Develop a thick skin (President B) (President E) (President M) (President H)

Keep intellectually alive / Read / Get a good education and continue to learn (President O) (President P)

Learn about budgets (President Y) (President I)

Learn to adapt (President J)

Go Rested (President S)

20. & 21. Other

Ask for advice from people you admire (President V)

General Advice

Having an interim president for a year might be a good idea for a college to get some perspective on where the needs of the institution are, according to Pres. T. President V said, “Don’t take yourself too seriously…Don’t ever forget who helped you.”

Colleges and Universities are very different / Know the culture and values of each Institution (President I) (President S)

If you are going to make big personnel changes, make them early (President S)

Gender-Related Issues (President T) (President C) (President B)

Myers-Briggs Score (President Y)

Possible Future Studies

See if more women presidents are extroverted, perhaps that’s been something that’s helped them get where they are.” (President Y)
Things don't always work or turn or the way you want them to / It's a tough job

(President L)

Comments

Closing Comment
APPENDIX J

Table J.1. Response Organizational Grid for Chapter Five

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question Topic</th>
<th>Attribute Category</th>
<th>Emergent Response Category</th>
<th># Presidents Responding in each Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Aware of Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Factors Contributing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential Events and Circumstances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishments Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Beliefs &amp; Values and How Impacted Career Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health - Nutrition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health - Physical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental / Emotional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents: 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents: 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondents: 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Respondents: 18</td>
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### Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Attribute Category</th>
<th>Emergent Response Category</th>
<th># Presidents Responding in Each Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership/WorkEthic</td>
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### Specific Things Contributing to Successful Presidency

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Attribute Category</th>
<th>Emergent Response Category</th>
<th># Presidents Responding in Each Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### The Press

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Attribute Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politics and External Relations</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Handwriting</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Qualities / Traits / Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute Category</th>
<th>Emergent Response Category</th>
<th># Presidents Responding in Each Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organizational</td>
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### Variables that Acted as Barriers

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<th>Emergent Response Category</th>
<th># Presidents Responding in Each Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
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### Total Respondents

<table>
<thead>
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<th># Presidents Responding in Each Category</th>
<th>Total Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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### Additional Details

- **Interview Question Topic**
- **Attribute Category**
- **Emergent Response Category**
- **# Presidents Responding in Each Category**
- **Total Respondents: 18**

(table continues)
# APPENDIX K

Table K.1. Responses in Final Attribute Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question Topic</th>
<th>Attribute Category</th>
<th>Emergent Response Category</th>
<th># Presidents Responding in each Category</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variables that Acted as Barriers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variables that Acted as Barriers</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Best Rewarding Aspects of Presidency</td>
<td>Change / Improvements</td>
<td>Working with People / Feedback</td>
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<td>Best Rewarding Aspects of Presidency</td>
<td>Change / Improvements</td>
<td>Student / Faculty Accomplishments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accomplishments Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Change / Improvements</td>
<td>New Programs</td>
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<td>Attributes Identified by Board &amp; VPs</td>
<td>Change / Improvements</td>
<td>Hire the Right People</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accomplishments Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Change / Improvements</td>
<td>Community Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advice and Recommendations from Presidents</td>
<td>Change / Improvements</td>
<td>Wait for Right News</td>
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<td>Accomplishments Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Change / Improvements</td>
<td>Advancing the Institution</td>
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<td>Attributes Identified by Board &amp; VPs</td>
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<td>Variables that Acted as Barriers</td>
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<td>The Press</td>
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<td>Variables that Acted as Barriers</td>
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<td>Reacting</td>
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<td>Attributes Identified by Board &amp; VPs</td>
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<td>Communicates Well / Connects</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Lobbies</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>Open</td>
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<td>Uses Board &quot;Pull&quot; Power</td>
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<td>Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Listen / Open Decision-Making</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency</td>
<td>Appearance</td>
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<td>nonexistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency</td>
<td>Culture / Values / Beliefs / Fit</td>
<td>Knows Ethos / Culture / Profession</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency</td>
<td>Culture / Values / Beliefs / Fit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advice and Recommendations from Presidents</td>
<td>Culture / Values / Beliefs / Fit</td>
<td>Know &quot;Culture&quot; / Find Fit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency</td>
<td>Culture / Values / Beliefs / Fit</td>
<td>Institutional Fit and Treng</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Religious Beliefs, Values and How Impacted Career</td>
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<td>Other Religions (Non-Christian)</td>
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<td>Religious Beliefs, Values and How Impacted Career</td>
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<td>Accomplishments Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Culture / Values / Beliefs / Fit</td>
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<td>Culture / Values / Beliefs / Fit</td>
<td>Christian / Christian Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>Change the presidents Would Have Made</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Educational Changes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influential Events and Circumstances</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variables that Acted as Barriers</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Pedagogy</td>
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<td>Variables that Acted as Barriers</td>
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<td>Lack of information</td>
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<td>Accomplishments Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Education / Prestigious Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changes the presidents Would Have Made</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Leadership Training</td>
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<td>Specific Things Contributing to Successful Presidency</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Keep Up With Current Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Factors Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
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<td>Education / Training</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Factors Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Attract</td>
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<td>Early Factors Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Early in Career</td>
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<td>Early Factors Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Life Experiences / Travel</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Education</td>
<td>Hire the Right People</td>
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<td>Early Factors Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Early in Career</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early Factors Contributing to Leadership Success</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Early in Career</td>
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<th>Interview</th>
<th>Question Topic</th>
<th>Attribute Category</th>
<th>Emergent Response Category</th>
<th># Presidents Responding in each Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Changes the Presidents Would Have Made</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Study Finance, Accounting</td>
<td>2, P, Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192</td>
<td>Advice and Recommendations from Presidents</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Study Finance &amp; Accounting</td>
<td>6, A, B, C, T, Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>Attributes Identified by Board &amp; VPs</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Financial Skills / Entrepreneurship</td>
<td>2, R, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>Most Disappointing Aspects of Presidency</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Budget / Money / Legislature</td>
<td>6, A, H, I, J, Y, W</td>
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<td>199</td>
<td>Attr. Identified in presidency</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Accounting / Financial Data</td>
<td>8, A, C, Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>Advice and Recommendations from Presidents</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender Related</td>
<td>3, B, C, Y</td>
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<td>Most Disappointing Aspects of Presidency</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender Barriers</td>
<td>3A</td>
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<tr>
<td>186</td>
<td>Early Factors Contributing to Leadership</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender &amp; Role Play</td>
<td>1B</td>
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<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Variables that Acted as Barriers</td>
<td>Gender - Barriers</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>51, A, B, H, I, M, P, R, S, V, W, Y</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>Habits Contributing to Success</td>
<td>Healthy Habits</td>
<td>Balance in Life</td>
<td>5, B, L, P, C, Y</td>
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<td>169</td>
<td>Advice and Recommendations from Presidents</td>
<td>Healthy Habits</td>
<td>成功内驱力 / 平衡</td>
<td>6, B, E, H, L, S, T, Y</td>
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<td>63</td>
<td>Habits Contributing to Success</td>
<td>Healthy Habits</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>5A, G, I, J, P, T, V, W, Y</td>
</tr>
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<td>Habits Contributing to Success</td>
<td>Healthy Habits</td>
<td>Entertainment / Hobbies</td>
<td>4, B, G, J, W</td>
</tr>
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<td>66</td>
<td>Habits Contributing to Success</td>
<td>Healthy Habits</td>
<td>Sleep / Bedtime</td>
<td>4, B, P, T</td>
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<td>Habits Contributing to Success</td>
<td>Health - Spiritual</td>
<td>Spiritual Habits / Prayer</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>Variables that Acted as Barriers</td>
<td>Influencers</td>
<td>Other People</td>
<td>1B</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Influential People</td>
<td>Influencers - Family</td>
<td>Spouse / Family</td>
<td>5A, G, P, T, W</td>
</tr>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Influential People</td>
<td>Influencers - Family</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>2, F, P</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Influential People</td>
<td>Influencers - Family</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>8, A, G, H, L, L, O, Y</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Influential People</td>
<td>Influencers - Family</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
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<td>196</td>
<td>Advice and Recommendations from Presidents</td>
<td>Influencers - Non-Family</td>
<td>Network / Mentors</td>
<td>5A, B, E, H, L, S, T, Y</td>
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<td>111</td>
<td>Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency</td>
<td>Leadership - Mental - Humor</td>
<td>Positive Disposition / Humor</td>
<td>13, B, S, T</td>
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<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Skills Most Valuable in Presidency</td>
<td>Leadership - Mental - Humor</td>
<td>Positive Disposition / Humor</td>
<td>13, B, S, T</td>
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<td>Attributes Identified by Board &amp; VPs</td>
<td>Leadership - Mental - Humor</td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>3, B, T, Y</td>
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<td>133</td>
<td>Attributes Identified by Board &amp; VPs</td>
<td>Leadership - Mental - Humor</td>
<td>Happy / Agreeable</td>
<td>3, B, H, M</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>Skills Most Valuable in Presidency</td>
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<td>3, B, D</td>
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<td>Habits Contributing to Success</td>
<td>Mental / Emotional - Leadership</td>
<td>Modus Operandi / Mental</td>
<td>5, C, E, H, J, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Skills Most Valuable in Presidency</td>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td>Service to Mission / Motivation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency</td>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td>Networking / Volunteerism</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Attributes Identified by Board &amp; VPs</td>
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<td>Employee Support</td>
<td>4, A, H, M, Y</td>
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<td>Habits Contributing to Success</td>
<td>Leadership Style</td>
<td>Give Feedback</td>
<td>1M</td>
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<td>145</td>
<td>Attributes Identified by Board &amp; VPs</td>
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<td>Vision</td>
<td>2A, K</td>
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</table>
Interview Question Topic | Attribute Category | Emergent Response Category | # Presidents Responding in each Category
--- | --- | --- | ---
104 Specific Things Contributing to Successful Presidency | Drive / Energy | Energy, Embrunace, Accessibility | 27, V
124 Attributes Identified by Board & VPs | Drive / Energy | Energetic / Passionate / Charismatic | 7, J, L, M, V, W
125 Attributes Identified by Board & VPs | Drive / Energy | Determination / Persistence | 4, K, E, L, R
124 Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency | Staff - Aware | Know / Believe in Self | 20, T, W
124 Attributes Identified by board & VPs | Staff - Aware | Know / Believe in Self | 20, T
124 Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency | Self - Aware | Self - Aware | 12, C
124 With Better Prepared for Presidency? How so? | Leadership Traits | Flexibility | 16
117 Variables Contributing Most to Successful Presidency | Leadership Traits | Practical Approach | 17
148 Attributes Identified by Board & VPs | Leadership Traits | Attention to Detail | 17
150 Attributes Identified by Board & VPs | Leadership Traits | Authoritative with Performance | 17
153 Attributes Identified by board & VPs | Leadership Traits | Steps back | 17
61 Attributes Contributing to Success | Leadership Traits | Organizational | 17
74 Skills Most Valuable in Presidency | Leadership Traits | Organizational | 17
73 Skills Most Valuable in Presidency | Leadership Traits | Technology | 18
135 Attributes Identified by Board & VPs | Leadership Traits | Self-Focused | 17
27 Influential Events and Circumstances | Personal Events | Personal Charge | 5, J, O, G, H, M, R, W, Y
30 Influential Events and Circumstances | Personal Events | Personal Charge | 5, J, O, G, H, M, R, W, Y
29 Influential Events and Circumstances | Personal Events | Diversity | 5, J, O, G, H, M, R, W, Y
31 Influential Events and Circumstances | Personal Events | Disappointment - coping | 17
77 Changes the presidents Would Have Made | Risk / New Directions | Very Little Change | 17
123 Attributes Identified by Board & VPs | Risk / New Directions | Risk / New Directions | 17
81 Changes the presidents Would Have Made | Risk / New Directions | Risk / New Directions | 17
83 Changes the presidents Would Have Made | Risk / New Directions | Risk / New Directions | 17
86 Changes the presidents Would Have Made | Risk / New Directions | Risk / New Directions | 17
38 Changes the presidents Would Have Made | Risk / New Directions | Risk / New Directions | 17
78 Changes the presidents Would Have Made | Risk / New Directions | Career or Timing Changes | 17
32 Influential Events and Circumstances | Career Change - Indirection | Importance of Moving | 17
126 Attributes Identified by Board & VPs | Risk / Change - Institutional | Courageous / Risk Taker | 5, O, R, S, Y
87 Variables that Acted as Barriers | Self-Esteem - Barriers | Self-Esteem - Barriers | 17
177 Wish Better Prepared for Presidency? How so? | Yes, Wish Better Prepared | Yes - General | 17
179 Wish Better Prepared for Presidency? How so? | Yes, Wish Better Prepared | Yes - General | 17
174 Most Disappointing Aspects of Presidency | Student Related | Dissatisfaction with Athletics | 17
162 Most Disappointing Aspects of Presidency | Love of Institution / Challenge | 17
173 Most Disappointing Aspects of Presidency | Lack of Support from Woman | 17
169 Most Disappointing Aspects of Presidency | Lack of Forgiveness / Judgment | 17
175 Most Disappointing Aspects of Presidency | Education Has Long Way To Go | 17
176 Most Disappointing Aspects of Presidency | Difficult to Get Things Done | 17
186 Wish Better Prepared for Presidency? How so? | Cannot Prepare | 17
187 Most Disappointing Aspects of Presidency | Isolation / Isolation | 17
### Table L.1. Categories for Chapter Five

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses Category</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Risk / Change - High-Risk Career Change / High-Risk Personal Change</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Experience</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Education</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Influencers - Non-Family - Mentors / Colleagues / Professors / Teachers</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Leadership Style - People Focused / Teamwork / Networking / Responsive / Support / Collaborative</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Change / Improvements</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Influencers - Family</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Culture, Values, Beliefs, Fit</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Healthy Habits</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Communications - Public Speaking/Writing/Interaction</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Finance</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Leadership Traits - Mental/Humor/Intellect</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Leadership Traits - Strategic Planning / Problem-Solving/ Decision-Making / Creative / Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Gender - As a Barrier</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Leadership Traits - Vision</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Leadership Traits - Work Ethic</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Leadership Traits - Drive - Energy / Endurance / Passion / Charisma / Determination / Persistence / Goal-Oriented</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Appearance</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Leadership Traits - Various</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Leadership Traits - Authenticity</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Leadership Traits - Self-Aware - Self-Knowledge / Self-Belief / Self-Confident</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX M

#### Table M.1. Board and Vice President Identified Presidential Traits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th># Respond.</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Leadership, Ideas &amp; Decisions / Achieves Excellence</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>G, O, P, S, M, V, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energetic / Passionate / Charismatic</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>B, V, I, L, W, J, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct / Directive / Goal-Oriented</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>C, E, L, S, Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates Well / Connects / Good Style</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>G, C, V, R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart / Knowledgeable</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>G, C, V, I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination / Persistence / Commitment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>R, E, L, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Skills / Cares / Responsive / Relationships &amp; Community</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>G, C, S, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic / Work Hard / Long Serving / Loves Work</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>B, C, I, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerer / Encourager / Supporter</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>V, A, M, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly / Agreeable / Breath of Fresh Air / Doesn't Whine or Show Anger</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>G, O, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solver / Strategizer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>G, V, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest / Authentic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>G, C, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humble / Give Others Credit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>T, C, J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>T, V, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hires Good People</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>G, V, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Skills / Entrepreneurian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>R, S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows Ethos / Culture / Profession</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C, V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus / On Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>E, T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>O, H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listens</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Y, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>C, P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>R, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows Self &amp; Strengths</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to Detail</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doesn't interfere with good performance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative / Finds Common Ground</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives Board “Full Picture”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Confident</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steps back</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-Known</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. Final Conceptual Framework: Darden Changeable Attributes Model (CAM) for Advancement of Women in Higher Education Administration
APPENDIX O

Changeable Attributes Contributing to Success of Women College Presidents

I. Leadership Traits and Characteristics Important to Success in the Presidency

There was generally agreement among presidents that they should demonstrate the best possible leadership. These presidents also agreed that there are specific traits that may enhance leadership and they offered 87 examples of such traits.

The traits identified in Chapter Four as a description of a “president’s president” (see Appendix H under “Specifics / Presidents”) were combined with the additional traits identified as originating from board members and vice presidents, as well as a few other traits dispersed among the responses to the other questions (see Appendix H in the column titled “Board, VP, Other”). These combined presidential leadership traits were grouped creating the largest category, “Leadership Traits.” Collectively, these traits provide a description of what might be termed the “ideal president.” Eight of the most frequently identified leadership traits are briefly highlighted in this section, and are merged with the other mentioned traits in the recommendation section into a combined “leadership traits recommendation.”

Energetic, passionate, charismatic. Many presidents in this study spoke of the great demands of the presidency. These demands and the constant responsibility, among other reasons, led eight of the presidents to mention the importance of having energy and passion in the role of president. Additionally, “charisma” was identified as a useful trait in leading an institution.
Articulates a vision. Having and articulating a vision were identified by eight presidents as among the most important traits of a successful president. It is interesting to note that although “vision” was mentioned frequently, it was only identified as significant by 22% of the presidents in this study as compared to 57% of the presidents and chancellors in Mendonca’s study (1995, p. 112).

Has a strong work ethic and works hard. A strong work ethic and the willingness to work hard were identified as important by eight presidents, many of whom learned these values from family members. In a position as all-consuming as the presidency, these values are crucial.

Looks presidential. Eight presidents were in agreement that, on paper and in person, presidents must appear “presidential.” It is important for women presidents and aspiring women presidents to look healthy, dress conservatively, professionally, assertively, and authoritatively, and appear elegant and understated. Presidents should wear suits, larger jewelry, and colors that are either personally becoming or represent the traditional colors associated with the institution. Additionally, women presidents should demonstrate energy, poise, confidence, charm, and social graces.

Authentic. Six presidents identified “authenticity,” being true to one’s self, as a valuable leadership trait.

Has a sense of humor, fun, friendly, and agreeable. Five presidents spoke of the important role humor plays in their lives and work as well as the importance of having fun and maintaining a positive outlook.
Goal-oriented, direct, directive, determined, and persistent. Identified collectively as five distinctive yet inter-related traits, five presidents identified these leadership traits as important to moving an institution forward and achieving critical outcomes.

Smart, knowledgeable, and intellectually lively. Five presidents mentioned the importance of being smart, knowledgeable, or in some way participating in mental activities to remain intellectually engaged.

2. The Willingness and Courage to Take Risks and Make Necessary Career Changes

The willingness and courage to take risks and make important career and life changes was identified by every president in this study as an important factor in achieving or succeeding in a higher education presidency. Fourteen of the presidents said that they would have made more changes if they had their lives to do over again. Making the decision to leave teaching and enter administration is both a daunting change and a significant risk. Most of the presidents in this study originally emerged from tenured faculty positions. While tenure provides something close to lifetime security for faculty members, generally speaking there is no administrative tenure. Upper administrators tend to serve at the pleasure of the president and, as a rule, only receive one-year appointments to their administrative positions.

A highlight from the “keys to success” advice given by the presidents attending the ACE roundtable discussions includes the following assertion: “Don’t be afraid to take risks – even if doing so increases your vulnerability. After all, women may in fact tackle
the more difficult presidencies because men are less willing to chance it – and (men are)
more likely to bail out at the first sign of trouble” (2001, p. 13).

3. **Obtain the Necessary Experience to Prepare and Qualify for, as Well as Succeed in the Presidency**

Fourteen presidents recommended specific experiences as a type of credentialing and qualifying process for the presidency. Although there was a degree of variety for recommended experience, there were common and reoccurring threads. Eight presidents identified the fact that assuming early leadership roles positively contributed to their leadership abilities. All presidents in this study had significant leadership experience before becoming president.

To better understand what positions are most likely to contribute to an individual’s success in achieving a presidency, it is beneficial to examine the positions from which most current presidents came. ACE reported in 2001 that 20.4% of current presidents came from other presidency/CEO positions, 27.8% from Provost/CAO positions, 14.7% from outside higher education, 13.3% came from a senior executive position in academic affairs, 12.8% were senior executives in finance or administration, 6.9% from other senior executive positions, and the remaining 4.4% were faculty chairs (The American College President, 2002, p. 11).

Most, if not all, of the presidents in this study began their journey by serving as a faculty member. Three presidents identified their teaching experience as a specific contributor to their success. This parallels ACE’s findings, which reported in 2001 that only 30.3% of U.S. higher education presidents had not been fulltime faculty members (The American College President, 2002, p. 10). Although there appears to be a rising
sentiment that this pathway is changing, becoming a tenured faculty member was
identified as an important step in the advancement process by several presidents.

It is important to note that only six of the presidents in this study said that they
believed they had adequate experience and were well prepared for the presidency.
Included among the experience recommendations for aspiring presidents from the
presidents of this study are: leadership, administration, teaching, tenure, public speaking,
public relations, accounting and finance, student affairs, admissions, human resources,
athletics, sabbaticals, space allocation, law, business, interdivisional work, volunteerism,
serving on boards, development/fundraising and grants, community relations, travel,
working with the legislature, observing other leaders, proving yourself in the “hard jobs,”
and networking.

4. Receive a Good Education from the Best Possible Institutions, Teachers
and Professors

“Learning Opportunities” and “Reading” were the two most common education-
related responses in this study, with ten presidents responding in each category. Nine
presidents cited opportunities in academia, including scholarships and awards, as the key
influential events and circumstances at various transition points of their lives. These
opportunities included attending special institutes, taking academic sabbaticals, serving in
leadership positions on academic committees, working in business firms, and teaching
overseas. Self-education through reading was also stated to be an important habit for
success by ten of the presidents in this study.

All of the presidents in this study had terminal degrees. Most had Ph.D.s, five of
which were in the field of English. In 2001, the American Council on Education reported
that 55.6% of all college presidents had Ph.D.s and 20.8% had Ed.D.s, for a total of 76.4% with academic doctorates. The profile of degrees for the other 23.6% presidents included 11.4% with Master’s degrees, 4.2% with J.D.s, and the remaining 8.1% with a variety of degrees from Associate’s to M.D.s (The American College President, 2002, p. 10). In fields of study, in 2001, 55% of women presidents emerged from education, 16.7% from humanities, and 14.5% from social sciences (The American College President, 2002, p. 17).

It is interesting that women presidents in this study had a higher percentage of doctorates than the national presidential population at large, 100% as compared to 76.4% respectively in the ACE study. Additionally, the ACE study indicated that 79.5% of women presidents as compared to 75.5% of men presidents had doctoral degrees (The American College President, 2002, p. 17). It might be reasonable to speculate that it is somewhat more important for women to complete a doctorate than it is for men, in order to be hired as a president. Additionally, some presidents said in retrospect that they would have attended more prestigious institutions or focused on a discipline that would have served them better in a presidency.

Mentioned favorably several times throughout the interview process were advanced higher education leadership programs designed to prepare women administrators for the role of the presidency, including the following:

1. Bryn Mawr Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration
2. ACE Fellow program or the summer Bryn Mawr Summer Leadership Institute
3. Harvard Seminar for New Presidents
Finally, after receiving a good education, it is important to stay intellectually engaged though reading, reflection, thinking, and cultural activities and events.

5. Seek Mentors and Positive Influencers for Support, Advice, and Encouragement

Non-Family Influencers was the fourth most common attribute category response in this study, with all eighteen presidents identifying at least one important non-family influencer. Within this category, “mentors and colleagues” dominated the list with sixteen presidential responses. Likewise, ACE President’s Roundtable participants affirmed the importance of seeking mentorship in the book *From Where We Sit*, “…women must think strategically about their careers and actively seek mentors” (American Council on Education, 2001, p. 9). Not surprisingly, therefore, many of the presidents in this study, seven each, identified “teachers” and “professors” as powerful influencers who contributed significantly to their success.

In general, mentors and colleagues, often women, advised, supported, encouraged, set good leadership examples, listened, and set high standards. They provided opportunities for, and sometimes even pushed, the presidents to fulfill their potential. A few of the presidents said that it was one of these mentors who first gave them the idea that they could move to a higher leadership position, even a presidency. The mentoring they provided, according to most of these presidents, was a highly significant contributor to success in moving forward on the leadership pathway.

6. Develop and Implement an Effective Leadership Style

Having a particular “leadership style” was a common topic among the presidents in this study, mentioned by six presidents. When combined with the presidents who
spoke of various aspects or components important to a president’s style of leadership, all eighteen presidents had input on this topic.

According to the presidents in this study, important traits that contribute to an effective leadership style include social/people skills, teamwork, valuing people, supporting shared governance, support, encouragement, empowerment, responsiveness, care, giving others credit, humility, honesty, and providing feedback.

Wenniger and Conroy highlighted the following three typical patterns of women’s leadership styles based on a study by Barbara Tedrow at Michigan State University:

1. Adapters: Women who fit in to the big shoes or “adapt” to the traditional instrumental structure.

2. Reconcilers: Women who use instrumental and relational styles in a “compartmentalized fashion,” carefully delivering “appropriate” responses in a non-threatening, conflict-avoiding manner, acting as a bridge between conflicting groups.

3. Resisters: Women who break through by taking risks, as well as by infusing relational and instrumental behaviors. They want to be themselves. They challenge the dominant male organizational patterns whenever possible. They advance change by using an educational approach and coalitions (2001, p. 18).

7. Develop and Implement Important Changes and Improvements

Making “changes” and “improvements” were identified directly by fifteen presidents in this study as “accomplishments contributing to leadership success,” and either directly or indirectly as the “most rewarding aspects of the presidency.” “Waiting for and hiring the right people” was the most frequent response area in this category, with nine presidents responding, followed by “advancing the institution” with eight responses. Other categories included “student and faculty accomplishments,” “working with people as well as providing and receiving feedback,” “developing new programs,” “community development,” and physical improvements to the campuses.
8. *Gain Encouragement and Support from Positive Family Influencers*

Family influencers were identified by fifteen of the presidents in this study as important, particularly one or both of their parents. However, people have little choice in the selection of their family members, therefore it cannot be considered a changeable attribute. Still, it appears that people who have supportive, encouraging, positive role-model family members may indeed have some advantages on the success pathway. Perhaps the only changeable aspect might be that in the times when there are opportunities to choose family members with whom to spend time, a potential president should focus that time with the ones who serve as the most positive influencers. Similarly, avoiding family members who serve as poor role models or barriers to success may also be advisable.

9. *Know the Culture of the Institution and Find a Fit with Personal Values and Beliefs*

The most frequent advice in the category of culture, values, and beliefs, was to learn about and “know” the culture of an institution and to always seek to find a good “fit” before accepting a presidency. Institutions are as varied as individuals. They range from large, urban, liberal, research universities to small, rural, religious colleges. Included in this array are a number of vastly different cultures and beliefs, and even some differing value systems. The presidents in this study corresponded well to the variations in institutions. These presidents were evenly split between religious and non-religious individuals. Eight of the presidents could be described as value-based/non-religious, seven presidents were self-described as Christians, and one described herself as Jewish. It cannot be presumed that someone should or would alter their religious beliefs or values system to achieve or succeed in any position; however, finding a place where one’s
existing beliefs and values are compatible with those of the institution is critical, according to at least seven of the presidents in this study. Since beliefs and values are not necessarily “changeable” attributes, it should suffice to say that it is important, in order to be successful and enjoy the greatest fulfillment, to find an institution that is a good fit with one’s existing values and beliefs.

Values also identified as important by presidents in this study include: high energy, hard work, persistence, tenacity, sacrifice, excellence, courage, compassion, integrity, openness, risk-taking, curiosity, information gathering, and “standing up for” critical values, along with being willing to resign, if necessary. Many of these values will be examined in other sections of this chapter. It was collectively implied by the presidents of this study that if some of these important values are not shared by individuals pursuing the presidency, it is possible that they may find this position too daunting, and at worst, that they may fail. By the number of responses, it appears that finding a “value fit” in an institution is as important as finding a good cultural fit, and possibly more so when including religion.

10. Healthy Habits that Contribute to Success

Seven Health-related habits were identified as changeable attributes contributing to success and include the following:

*Exercise.* Exercise was identified most frequently by nine of the presidents in this study to be the most important of their health-related habits. Walking was most mentioned as the preferred type of exercise, followed by Yoga, kayaking, and biking.
Balance. Six presidents identified the twin challenges of successfully separating professional from personal life and keeping balance in life as the third most commonly cited habit in this study that contributes to success.

“Thick skin.” The presidency can be a target for criticism and negative feedback. It is important to be able to endure the barbs and maintain a healthy attitude and focus.

Professional modus operandi / Leadership habits of the mind / Attitude. Five presidents talked about the procedural, mental, and attitudinal habits that they considered vital to both success and mental / emotional well-being. These may include: being methodical, well-organized, improvisatory, and honest with people as well as letting people occasionally win, forming a personal operational template, having fun at work, and maintaining an appropriate attitude.

Sleep / Personal biorhythms. Four presidents said that they need very little sleep despite the great demands of the presidency and that this contributes to their success. However, several presidents mentioned how exhausting the presidency can be emphasized ensuring minimum rest. One president spoke of the importance of functioning within one’s own natural biorhythmic schedule for peak performance.

Entertainment / Hobbies / Recreation. Four presidents claimed that having hobbies and entertainment were important habits that contribute to their success.

Spiritual habits / Prayer. Spiritual habits were important for at least three presidents and involved such things as being part of a safe community, spiritually-related reading, and prayer.
11. Communication

All eighteen presidents in this study identified at least some portion of the important role of communication in the success of their presidencies. It was the most frequently cited skill set noted by these presidents. Writing or written communication, speaking or verbal communication, listening skills, and communication styles were perceived by various presidents as vital to success in the presidency. The most common disciplines from which these presidents emerged were communication-related, including five from English and one from communication studies.

Verbal and written skills. Verbal and written skills are essential for success in higher education administration. In Mendonca’s study, the second most important skill, identified by 20% of the respondents, was “verbal communication” (1995, pp. 112-113).

Listening skills. Perhaps the most important, as well as possibly the most overlooked communication skill, is attentive listening. Attentive listening, including connecting with and the effective hearing of other people, was cited by eight of the presidents in this study as critical to effective communication.

Style. Presidents discussed various characteristics of their personal communication style. These characteristics include communication styles that are open, transparent, and consultative. A successful communication style should engage people, convey energy, and use story-telling and humor.

If communications are universally excellent, then an institution is more likely to operate and serve productively and well. Listening is most important, and is the vehicle for gathering critical information and insight to formulate vision and goals that represent
and value all constituents. It initiates the groundwork for shared governance. Writing and speaking are the ways that critical mission, vision, and goals are shared, and that people are appreciated, encouraged, and inspired. Communication is the way an institution is represented by others, as well as to others, and the way relationships are built. In addition, it is through relationships that individuals and institutions find fulfillment and purpose.

12. Finance

At least thirteen presidents in this study said that they wished they had known more about, had been better prepared for, or had been more skilled in finance, accounting, fundraising, money issues, and the legislature – mostly since the state legislature is directly related to financial issues. Financial training was especially important for presidents who emerged from the humanities, as compared to the presidents who came from the sciences and business--many of whom identified these areas as important strengths. Better education, preparation, and experience in all of the above-mentioned areas of finance would be most helpful to a higher education president.

13. Strategic Planning

At least twelve of the presidents in this study spoke about the importance of strategic planning, problem-solving, effective decision-making, strategizing, as well as entrepreneurship, marketing, and creative skills as part of good leadership and as contributors to success.

Having the ability to think and act strategically on a macro-level, seeing the big picture, and having the experience and insight to be able to anticipate and hopefully avoid
problems, is critical. Additionally, building towards goals and fulfilling the mission of the institution is complex and demanding and requires an intelligent and talented leader. The more challenges facing an institution, the more gifted the leader needs to be.

14. Personal Events

Personal events significantly influenced career direction and advancement for at least ten of the presidents in this study. Among the family influencers who facilitated career advancement were spouses, but ironically, some of the presidents also identified spouses as barriers to advancement. It was only following divorce from non-supportive spouses that a few of the respondent presidents had the opportunity to step onto the leadership path. Additionally, family obligations, such as having children, may have slowed the advancement of the respondents from time to time. However, these obligations were generally not regretted nor were they viewed in a negative light by these responding presidents.

Personal events will doubtless occur in the lives of all people. For some, these events will impact advancement along the pathways to the presidency. Planning for these events and finding ways to meet personal, as well as professional, goals and obligations may be challenging, but is certainly possible. Of course, personal events are often impossible to predict, in which case, being flexible and adaptable is helpful.

15. Overcoming and Removing the Gender Barrier

Gender issues were mentioned 16 times in this study and they may constitute the greatest barrier for women in leadership roles. While gender is not changeable, the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to gender acting as a barrier are changeable. One
of the primary motivators for this study was the large discrepancy between the percentages of women and men serving in higher education presidencies. It is therefore important that women are aware of gender as a barrier and are able, as much as possible, to overcome this barrier. It is additionally important for women to assist in changing attitudes and behaviors so that, ideally, gender will someday become a non-issue.

Bender et al. noted that women traditionally have been socialized to “enable and empower others at the expense of developing their own talents, abilities, and activities” (1984, p. 93). They write that “being a ‘doer’ may be viewed in conflict with being ‘feminine’” (Bender et al., 1984, p. 93). Although these values are slowly changing as women continue to move into higher levels of leadership, there remains the additional burden on women of overcoming and continuing to battle traditional reactionary forces, while at the same time taking career risks and adapting to great changes. “Confidence” was also cited as a barrier to change since male accomplishments are traditionally attributed to “talent, skills, and hard work,” while female accomplishments are “more likely be attributed to luck and happenstance, attributes beyond her control, such as an easy assignment, or the fact that her boss liked her” (Bender et al., 1984, p. 95).

Women should be aware that more may be expected of them, less forgiven them, and that their average presidential terms may be shorter than they would be for men (ACE, 2002). Women must both self-empower and empower each other to overcome gender-related obstacles on the presidential pathway. In the meantime, it is equally important for women to have a thorough and realistic view of what is involved in administrative leadership as a woman, determining whether or not they perceive the risk to be worthwhile, and then finding enough support and determination to follow through.
The enormous abilities and strengths of women presidents in this study, coupled with their many accomplishments, gives hope to future women leaders. There is much to be learned from the experience and insight of these eighteen presidents, as well as other women presidents in higher education. It is critical that women work together to support, empower, and encourage one another. It is hoped that the following recommendations may serve as a type of “prescription for success” for women aspiring to higher education presidencies.
WORKS CITED


BIBLIOGRAPHY


