

INSIGHT FROM THE TOP: EXPERIENCES THAT
BEST PREPARE PRESIDENTS TO LEAD
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST
CENTURY

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Abstract: There is a growing trend of individuals coming to the university presidency from nontraditional/nonacademic pathways. However, current dialogue on the topic seems to be focused on the opinions or preferences associated with certain presidential career patterns or pathways with little emphasis being placed on what truly prepares individuals for leading institutions of higher education in the 21st century. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the preparatory (pre-presidential) experiences of university presidents, and their perceptions about what best prepared them for the demands they experience leading today's institutions of higher education

This case study of six presidents at master's colleges and universities in the Midwest resulted in three findings. The first finding documented the importance of know-why competencies: Preparatory experiences that enculturated individuals to the understood values and perceived purpose of the Academe were critical to their abilities to successfully navigate the academic cultures of their respective institutions. The second finding documented the importance of know-how competencies: Experiences that helped individuals develop knowledge and expertise for specific job functions or duties were important preparation for the presidency. The third finding documented the importance of know-who competencies: Experiences that fostered opportunities for individuals to develop interpersonal skill sets and to learn to navigate social networks were essential preparation for the university presidency.

Therefore, this study transitions discussion on presidential preparation from a pathway based perspective to a competency based perspective.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The university president in the United States is expected to be a friend of the students, a colleague of the faculty, a sound administrator with the trustees, a good speaker with the public, an astute bargainer with the foundations and federal government, a politician with the state legislature, a friend to industry, labor, and agriculture, a persuasive diplomat with the donors, a champion of general education, a supporter of the professions, a spokesman to the press, a scholar in his own right, a public servant at the state and national levels, a devotee to opera and football equally, a decent human being, a good husband and father, and an active member of a church. Above all, he must enjoy traveling on airplanes, eating his meals in public, and attending public ceremonies. No one can be all these. Some succeed at being none (Kerr, 2001, p. 22).

This dissertation was a case study of university presidents. The study was based primarily on the direct interviews and observations of individuals currently serving as university presidents at master's colleges and universities in the Midwest during the fall of 2015. This chapter begins with a brief background that provides a context for the study's conceptualization and execution. Next, the study's problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions are presented. Then the definitions of key terms are addressed. Following these is an overview of the study's design. There is then a brief outline of the study's methods, as well as an explanation of the significance of the study. Next is an overview of limitations associated with the study, and the chapter closes with a brief summary.

Background of the Study

In American higher education, as opposed to other systems of higher education found across the globe, the university and college president is the most centralized figure of leadership. Over the last four centuries and under the direction of great university presidents, institutions expanded their purpose, grew their constituencies, and increased their influence on society. However, within these last few decades, American higher education underwent change on a scale never before experienced. The pressures of change had significant impact on institutions of higher education, as well as on the broader higher education community. The university presidency itself was not immune to these changes. University presidents play a central role in the change process, and the university presidency shifted because of this process. This recent pattern of rapid change will likely continue to have a substantial effect on nearly every aspect of higher education. In the middle of all this change is the university and college president.

What makes this era of change concerning to colleges and universities is that it coincides with an unprecedented drop in the stability of university presidents. Fewer and fewer candidates are seeking out the college and university presidency (Barden, 2010; Fain & June, 2006; Basinger & Henderson, 2004; Fain, 2004; Basinger, 2001). This trend may be due to the increasing pressures placed on the position. Internal groups like provosts, academic administrators, and university professors are increasingly less likely to position themselves to be university presidents (American Council on Education, 2012; Tilstey 2010). Moreover, many university presidents are nearing retirement age, and will likely leave their offices in record numbers in the near future (Tilsley, 2010; Shults, 2001). To respond to all these factors, those responsible for hiring and attracting university presidents are redesigning their processes, reconsidering the traditional pathway to the presidency, and increasingly hiring individuals with little or no experience in academia. Therefore, a new trend is forming as nontraditional candidates come into the university presidency.

The traditional pathway to the presidency was well documented and studied over the past century (Foster, 1913; Kruse & Beck, 1928; Cohen & March, 1974; Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, & Bragg, 1983; Wessel & Keim, 1994). Most university presidents follow, but with the potential for variation, a path that progresses from the professorship upward through academic administrative responsibilities toward the university presidency. This pathway is a logical pathway and provides for the enculturation of a presidential candidate in many of the values most important to the Academe, namely, shared governance, the pursuit of knowledge, and academic leadership. However, there are limitations associated with the pathway. For instance, this pathway does little to expose internal leaders to external constituent bases. The traditional pathway neither provides for the development of the management experience necessary for the oversight of a highly complex organization, nor does it usually provide the exposure of individuals to a decision-making process that utilizes limited information and a rapid response time.

The nontraditional pathway to the university presidency is developing and less studied. This pathway represents a relatively small number of current university presidents; however, the rate of growth associated with this pathway is increasing faster than any other (American Council on Education, 2012). The nontraditional pathway is associated with individuals that come into their presidencies with little or no previous experience in higher education. Often these individuals are hired for their external experiences and skill sets rather than for their dedication or exposure to educational values. Nontraditional presidents often include business executives, political actors, and fundraisers. The growth of this trend and the environment of change surrounding the industry are impacting significantly the roles and expectations placed on U.S. university presidents.

Statement of the Problem

Traditionally university presidents in the United States came from within academia. However, with the changing demands of the role of the university president, a new trend is emerging of university presidents coming from outside of higher education. Regardless of the

pathways they take to the university presidency, all presidents face significant obstacles in leading complex institutions of higher education in the 21st century. While the arguments about the viability of these two pathways have received much attention, the opinions and preferences are anecdotal and often driven by embedded cultural beliefs about the university environment. The real need for knowledge is about what types of experiences university presidents believed best prepared them for leading today's institutions of higher education. To gain this understanding, this study focused on the university presidents themselves.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the preparatory (pre-presidential) experiences of university presidents and their perceptions about what best prepared them for the demands they experienced in leading today's institutions of higher education. Traditional and nontraditional university presidents at master's colleges and universities in the Midwest served as the study's population.

Research Questions

What experiences do university presidents identify as having best prepared them to lead 21st century institutions of higher education?

1. Where and how were these experiences gained?
2. What experiences do current presidents believe will be the best preparation for those who move into the university presidency in the next decade?

Definitions of Key Terms

Key terms must be defined to provide a foundation for their use and meaning within the context of this study. These include:

University President: An individual that is the head of a college or university within the United States. This individual may also be referred to as "chancellor" of his or her respective university or system.

Traditional University President: A university president whose professional career has been primarily spent with academia, and followed the traditional pathway to the presidency as documented by Cohen & March (1974).

Nontraditional University President: A university president whose professional career has been primarily spent outside of education, or an individual with significant experience outside of academia.

College/University: An institution of higher education that offers at minimum four-year degrees. (These two terms will be used interchangeably throughout the text)

Study Design

Chapter three of this study provides a detailed analysis of this study's methodology; however, a brief discussion is relevant here. This study was qualitative in nature because it was concerned with the exploration of phenomena surrounding the university presidency in terms of the meaning current university presidents brought from their preparatory experiences. As discussed by Denzin & Lincoln (2003) qualitative research "implies an emphasis on qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency" (p. 13). Qualitative research shows little concern for statistical or quantifiable data measures. Qualitative research is concerned with the exploration and understanding of meanings and reality based on the views and interpretations of individuals. Therefore, a qualitative study was best suited to explore and understand the experiences university presidents claimed best prepared them to lead institutions of higher education in the 21st century.

This qualitative research study was grounded in constructionism. Constructionism holds that truth or reality is dependent on the opinions and perceptions of individuals. This paradigm includes the subjective nature of individuals in the process of creating or interpreting meaning. Therefore, this study assumed that there is no absolute truth that can be observed and tested. In alignment with constructionism, I assumed that the study's participants, and the study's audience,

all live in a world in which they co-construct reality and meaning. That is to say that “[they] do not create meaning. [They] construct meaning. [They] have something to work with” (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). Thus, this study developed under the assumption that both meaning and reality are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Additionally, it was assumed that reality is what people perceive it to be, and that their perceptions are interpretations of their engagement with their worlds. A constructionist paradigm was necessary for the purpose of the study, and served as the underlying epistemological view.

Any well-designed study must have an alignment between its epistemological stance and its theoretical perspective. Crotty (1998) identifies a theoretical perspective as the “philosophical stance lying behind a methodology. The theoretical perspective provides a context for the process involved and a basis for its logic and its criteria” (p. 66). Guba (1990) calls this a “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (p. 17). Theoretical perspectives have also been referred to as paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln 2003), theoretical traditions (Patton, 2009), and theoretical stances (Merriam, 2002). At the most basic level it has been claimed that theoretical frameworks are theories that help us understand the various aspects of phenomena (Anfara & Mertz, 2006).

Symbolic interactionism served as the theoretical perspective for this study. This perspective falls underneath the broader interpretivist framework and is primarily concerned with the interpretations of experiences, perspectives of reality, and ascriptions of meaning that individuals make as social beings. In particular, symbolic interactionism focuses on experiences, activities, symbols as well as other components of social life that influence or create meaning within and among groups or individuals. Crotty (1998) states that “interpretation is essential to an understanding of experience and the experience includes the interpretation” (p. 106). Using symbolic interactionism as the paradigm for this study, I worked from its assumptions -- namely that individuals, including me, socially interact with the world around us and that, in conjunction with these interactions, individuals interpret and ascribe meaning to the world (Blumer, 1986). For this study, an interpretivist stance was essential to understanding and exploring the

descriptions provided by university presidents of the experiences they felt best prepared them for their roles. Understanding their experiences provided a deeper context through which to analyze and document how participants described the various aspects of their preparatory experiences. As such, the use of symbolic interactionism was justified and provides for a rich exploration of such experiences.

Case study methodology served as the methodology for this study. Case studies are focused on understanding the influence of contextual elements on a particular phenomenon. As such, case study methodology was well suited for informing the exploration and understanding of the primary questions outlined in this study. Both Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) recognize the importance of context in understanding reality and meaning for individuals. Case study analysis helped shed light on the experiences university presidents described best prepared them for their roles of leading institutions of higher education. Understanding the experiences of university presidents, and the interpretations of their experiences, provided a meaningful exploration of this phenomenon.

Procedures & Methods

Data Collection

Case study research is guided by various methodological dimensions and data sources including observations, documents and records, and interviews (Creswell, 2009). This multi-dimensional approach enhances credibility (Patton, 2009; Yin, 2003). Therefore, within this study, I explored the experiences of university presidents through participant interviews, observations, and document analysis. Interviews were focused on exploring the research questions presented by the study. I employed open-ended questions to solicit in-depth responses from the study's participants. These questions provided an avenue for participants to voice their description of the experiences they felt best prepared them to serve as university presidents. Moreover, observing university presidents during interviews and other processes allowed me to gain additional insight into the contextual components of the participants' stories and responses.

Campus documents, university websites and archives, and presidential documents also provided a lens to examine the preparatory experiences of the participants. The descriptions and interpretations from interviews, observations, and document analysis provided new avenues for me to explore and understand the types of experiences that prepare individuals to lead institutions of higher education in the 21st century.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process for the study included multiple steps and processes. I first recorded and then transcribed participant interviews. Follow up review of the transcriptions by participants (known as member checks) served as a tool for accuracy. After I received transcripts back from my participants and made any requested changes, I read and reread all sources for an initial immersion in the data. During data review, I used jottings and reflections to document initial reflections and thoughts. Then, I provided initial inductive coding (Patton, 2002) and made use of memos as discussed by Creswell (2009) and Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995) for the development of potential patterns. In pursuit of member meanings (Emerson, et al., 1995), I sought to evaluate participant stories. My next step in the analysis process was the development of themes grounded in the consolidation and grouping of patterns that emerged during the coding process. The consolidation and grouping process were facilitated by linking analytic statements and memos that I developed in the initial stages of data analysis.

I focused on integrating multiple data sources into emerging themes to support credibility through triangulation (Patton, 2009), and I used several techniques to achieve credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability within the study. The trustworthiness of the study was grounded in Lincoln and Guba's (1985) evaluative criteria and is further discussed and outlined in chapter three of the study.

Research Sites

Exploring the experiences university presidents claimed best prepared them for their roles in leading today's universities helped to reveal the nature of their preparatory pathways. Because

presidential duties can be different across institutional type, and because these differences can be amplified as a result of classification, this study focused on master's colleges and universities, as designated by Carnegie classification, in the Midwestern United States. However, because every sector of the higher education industry is experiencing new trends in presidential hiring and evaluation practices (American Council on Education, 2012; & Schultz, 2001), no other limitations were placed on selection of the research settings.

Research Participants

This study focused on the preparatory experiences of six university presidents at master's colleges and universities in the Midwest. Four were men and two were women. The study's participants were recruited by email and telephone solicitations. The assortment of final participants was based on the self-selection of presidential respondents.

Significance of the Study

This study's findings add to existing literature on university presidents, and help better inform the gap in research regarding the pathways and preparation of traditional and nontraditional university presidents. The findings suggest a competency based view of presidential preparation, which may open a new line of higher education research. This focus on competency based preparation provided by Defillippi and Arthur's (1994) boundaryless career perspective, used in this study as an *a posteriori* lens, expands the application of theory within the context of the university presidency. Additionally, the findings of this study inform our understanding of the growing trend of nontraditional presidents, as well as more thoroughly explains the nature of the preparatory experiences of university presidents. The study findings help inform practice by providing a meaningful reference for individuals transitioning into the university presidency, and informing those interested in becoming a university president in the future. Finally, the study findings offer insights to those responsible for hiring and evaluating university presidents.

Limitations of the Study

This dissertation was bound in both size and scope. As such, the interviewer, the interviewees, the locations included in the study, and all other components of the research design function as boundaries for the study's transferability. For example, this research took place with sitting presidents at the university campuses of six master's granting institutions in the Midwest during the fall of 2015. Therefore, my research neither examined university presidents for institutions with differing Carnegie Classification types nor did it examine university presidents during any other period. Like all qualitative research, the findings and conclusions of this study are not meant to be generalizable. However, readers may consider the descriptions of contexts and participants to determine if one or more findings are transferrable to other populations or contexts.

It is recognized that the study's participants are in sensitive positions and, although precautions were taken to assure participants of anonymity, it is possible that the participants had reservations about genuinely expressing the full extent of their thoughts or opinions during the interview process.

Summary

This chapter began with a brief background that provided a context for the study's original conceptualization. Next, the study's problem statement, purpose statement, and research questions were presented. Key terms from the study were defined followed by an overview of the study's design, including study methods. The significance of the study and a brief overview of study limitations concluded this chapter. Chapter two will ground the study in the literature relevant to the purpose and topic of the research. This review will look at the historical overview of the American university president, change in higher education, roles and expectations of the presidency, and the various recognized pathways to the university presidency.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Much has been written about the importance of higher education, and it is a central to the development of an educated citizenry. Perhaps one of the most important cogs in the higher education leadership wheel is the university president. University presidents are responsible for overseeing the management and direction of our institutions of higher education. University presidents are viewed as the symbols of institutional vision, mission, and culture (Michael, Schwartz, & Balraj, 2001; Trow, 1985). They arguably hold the most important position on university campuses (American Council on Education, 1998), and they also have the capacity and responsibility for molding the future of higher education (Simon, 2009).

This literature review focuses on a narrow section of the research discourse currently taking place on the university presidency. It analyzes relevant and recognized contributions to the corpora on this important leadership position. The chapter will begin with a short discussion on the search process I used to direct and inform the review of literature. The review itself will focus on numerous issues surrounding university presidents and document as well as discuss trends and phenomena associated with the university presidency. First, the importance of the university presidency is examined from a brief historical overview of the American university president. Second, the impact of significant changes that are currently occurring across the higher education landscape is considered along with an outline of the expectations and roles placed on university presidents. These components combine to document the complexities university presidents face while leading institutions of higher education in the 21st century. Finally, the recognized

pathways to the presidency are examined. This section of the literature review helps to illuminate trends, beliefs, and assumptions associated with the various pathways to the university presidency. Each section of this literature review is distinct, yet all are intertwined. Therefore, the collective exploration of these topics was necessary and grounded the review in literature relevant for understanding the problem that was explored by the study.

Search Process

The literature review was developed and informed by a multifaceted search through relevant historical and current literature that included journal articles, books, and other supporting texts. It began with basic electronic text searches through both Google Scholar and ERIC. These initial explorations were guided by keyword searches (e.g. University Presidents, University Leadership, Pathways to the University Presidency, University President Roles and Expectations). I then examined the references of the texts first identified to further expand the search process. This process was then repeated after reoccurring themes and other keywords appeared in the review.

Additionally, *Dissertation Abstracts* was a significant contributor to the initial collection of relevant literature. I conducted a search of dissertations covering the university presidency from 2000 to the present. These sources provided a meaningful outline of current issues surrounding the university presidency and higher education leadership.

The Presidency provided significant contributions to the review as a journal primarily concerned with current and historical matters confronted by university presidents. Additionally, trade publications targeted for higher education administrative leaders were used to highlight current trends within the industry, as well as cover topics relevant to university presidents.

Finally, previous research studies and reports that analyzed university presidents were reviewed. Of primary importance to, and included in this portion of the review were seven consecutive publications from the American College President Study conducted by the American

Council on Education. The reports were published in 1988, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2007, & 2012 and reflected the most comprehensive analysis of college and university presidents. All of these components blended together to provide an overall synthesis of the literature relevant to this study of university presidents and their experiences.

Historical Overview of the American University President

The American university president is unlike any other university president found around the globe. The primary driver for this difference can be found in the historical development of colleges and universities in the United States. Harvard was the first institution of higher education in the U.S. It was developed in the image of Oxford and Cambridge; however, because there were few academics in the U.S. during the colonial period, significant variations occurred in the oversight and management of the American university in contrast to institutions of higher education found elsewhere in the world (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Trow, 1985). These variations most directly affected the power and influence of the American university president. In contrast to the shared governance and power of guilds and faculty found in Europe, American universities were more directly led by a single figure of authority. That figure was the American university president.

The first institutions of higher education in America were led by members of the clergy (Rudolph, 1990). These individuals were not necessarily sought out for their academic achievements, but rather were selected as church and community leaders who would educate society's future officials and decision makers. Specifically, these individuals would educate young men, and focus on their moral development. A significant portion of each student's day was relegated to the study of biblical texts while other periods were set aside for devotional time (Christensen & Eyring, 2011). Most universities founded in the U.S. during this period followed this model. These institutions educated a small student body, and had extremely small class sizes. University presidents would know and interact with nearly every student on campus. Course work

and classes reflected a focus on classical and religious texts and were led by faculty members with little academic specialization or training outside of religion (Rudolph, 1990).

During the 18th century universities across the U.S. experienced a growth in both secularization and specialization. No longer were institutions primarily focused on the moral development of their students. The pursuit of knowledge, academic progress, and faculty specialization that were staples of the top institutions in Europe were being further developed and mirrored in the U.S. These changes in institutional direction and mission morphed alongside changes in institutional leadership. University presidents of this period were less likely to be men of the clergy. They now possessed skills gained from significant experience in the Academe. The university leaders of this period were rising to their presidencies from within the faculty. They were gaining institutional knowledge of university operations from first-hand experience leading classroom discussions, interacting with campus wide constituents, and developing university plans. Universities of this period more closely focused on the educational development of their students. Class sizes started to expand although they were still overwhelmingly dominated by male students. However, unlike in the past, university presidents of this period were instrumental in the facilitation of pedagogical changes and faculty academic specialization (Stoke, 1959).

In the period between the Civil War and World War I the American university became increasingly more focused on academic matters and were more mission driven. For example, the Morrill Act of 1862 provided grants to states for the creation of universities specifically targeted at agriculture and mechanical arts. Also during this period, the higher education industry experienced an explosion of academic research that gave way to the rise of great research universities. Trow (1985) argues that this phenomenon can be attributed to the efforts of nationally recognized university presidents like Charles Eliot at Harvard, Cornell's Andrew Dickson White, and Daniel Coit Gilman at Johns Hopkins University. The university presidents of this period were instrumental in the recruitment, compensation, and recognition of

distinguished scholars that set the foundation for what would become the model for faculty research across the U.S. The types of students served by institutions grew significantly, and graduate students became an integral component of supporting faculty research. The overall academic direction of the Academe moved away from individual instruction to the broader development and dissemination of knowledge. However, this period also saw a significant change in the role of the university president. As the university moved toward more academic endeavors, university presidents moved in the direction of university administration. University presidents were overseeing and managing large institutions with multiple subunits, and that catered to an increasing number of constituents (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Rudolph, 1990).

This historical development of the American university president provided for the unique creation of a leader with more influence on institutional and industry direction than had ever been experienced anywhere else around the globe. As previously discussed, initially these individuals were men of the clergy. They then became academic proponents. And, later university presidents in the U.S. ushered in the foundation for the great American research universities. Today university presidents are experiencing a new set of demands. The environment in which universities operate is increasingly seeing the influence of external groups and phenomena that affect their day-to-day operations. Changes are sweeping across the industry at a pace never before seen or felt. University presidents are therefore becoming ever more involved and skilled in their navigation of change.

Change

Today's colleges and universities find themselves in a time of unprecedented change. They operate in a world of instantaneous communication, and in an environment where these institutions are no longer the gate keepers to information (Atkins, Brown, & Hammond, 2007; Vest 2004). Some higher education authors (McGee, 2015; Duderstadt, 2012; Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Bok, 2003) have questioned the importance and sustainability of the traditional

academic models of colleges and universities. There are a multitude of changes facing the industry. The financial landscape is changing. External governing bodies are increasingly prodding for more institutional oversight and accountability. Technological advances continue to change the higher education landscape. The expectations that students, society, and other external groups place on higher education seem to be shifting, and university presidents are at the center of the entire change process. The sheer volume of change confronting higher education might be considered revolutionary change in that it presents various societal shifts across several different variables. As such, university presidents are dealing with a series of demographic, economic, and cultural transitions that pressure many traditional concepts and frameworks for institutions of higher education (McGee, 2015). While the multitude of changes may seem daunting, they may also simultaneously provide opportunities for institutional survival and innovation (Albach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2011; Shirvani, 2009, Zemsky, 2009).

Financial Landscape

One of the most challenging forces of change confronting institutions of higher education is the decreasing amount of public financial support going to universities and colleges (Lambert, 2015). Historically, public universities and colleges received a significant portion of their revenue from state allocations. However, over the last few decades this support has dropped drastically (Courant, Duderstadt, & Goldenberg, 2010; Desrochers & Wellman, 2011). State governments are increasing the number of programs they are funding at a time when their revenues are decreasing. The result is that entities like higher education are asked to do more with less. This change in financial support is not relegated to public institutions. Further complicating the issues of decreasing public support are the rising costs of utilities, payroll expenses for an expanding workforce, construction for new buildings to attract students and build research programs, technology infrastructure updates and licensing, and a whole host of other cost increases. These environmental change factors are some of the most significant problems modern university leaders

must address (Shirvani, 2009; Astin, 2004; Waugh 2003). University presidents must navigate the changing financial landscape in their role as institutional leaders.

External Oversight and Accountability

One way institutions deal with increasing costs is by offsetting these new expenses with tuition increases. However, the political atmosphere can limit this avenue for some institutions. Political barriers are another factor that are changing the current higher education environment. Legislators in numerous states have attempted to regulate institutions' abilities to raise tuition above certain financial benchmarks. When efforts like these succeed, institutions are not able to successfully offset new costs with tuition increases (Astin, 2004). Moreover, these institutions must educate governing bodies, and lobby for their ability to address cost increases through tuition offsets.

Universities are also experiencing a growth in other areas of the political realm as institutions attempt to influence and engage in national debates on student access, graduation rates, and college affordability. University presidents are viewed as the primary representatives for higher education on these hot button issues, and their participation in the political process is an increasingly important component of their job.

Finally, universities are also experiencing record levels of government regulation and accountability (Sulkowski, 2016). This factor is placing a significant burden on institutions and their ability to rapidly respond to market changes, organizational needs, and student demands. One of the primary causes of the rise in regulatory oversight is the call for increased accountability due to the public financial support going to colleges and universities (Sulkowski, 2016; Shirvani, 2009). Because of this call for institutional efficiency and accountability, university presidents are becoming increasingly more focused on external demands than internal relationships (Waugh, 2003). As institutional representatives, it is necessary for university

presidents to articulate the organizational processes that safeguard against inefficiencies and capitalize on new methods of operation.

Technology

Technology is another area of change that is having a significant impact on the higher education industry. Many of today's students are coming into college classrooms with extensive experience interacting with technology (Thomas & Brown, 2011). The growth of social interactions among students through technology is affecting the way students engage other students and experience college. Both factors have pedagogical implications for higher education institutions. Moreover, new online platforms (Ingolfsdottir, 2014) are breaking down geographical service barriers for institutions. The promotion of open courseware is providing anyone with access to the internet the ability to listen and learn from the most respected and accomplished scholars across the globe. University presidents are asked to understand and leverage new technologies so that their institutions can remain relevant in today's economy (Simon, 2009).

Student Expectations

Like technology, student demographics are also changing more rapidly than ever (McGee, 2015; Waugh, 2003). Many university presidents lead institutions that are facing more students, as well as a more diverse student population. More students are seeking an education, and thus the types of students being serviced by institutions are growing. However, this trend is also the result of institutional and national priorities for increasing student access and college affordability. Correlated with this evolution in student demographics is the growth in student demands (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; Shirvani, 2009). Universities are adjusting not only to changing student demographics, but are also being forced to adjust to changes in student demands. Students' expectations for their universities have exploded into a plethora of items including the desire for new facilities, new social and academic programs, civic engagement

opportunities, lower costs, transferability of credits, faster time to graduation, and numerous others items. University leaders facilitate the process by which their institutions adapt to and meet these changing student expectations.

Community Engagement

Colleges and universities are also no longer separate from the communities that surround them. University presidents are expected to foster collaborative relationships with the communities that house them (Gavazzi, Fox, & Martin, 2014; Weill, 2009). A significant factor of change in the higher education environment is the acknowledgement that institutions are agents for the development of societal needs. Simon (2009) identifies that universities are continuously evaluated on their abilities to adjust to the growing demand for their presence in matters of local, national, and international economic development. As symbols of their universities, and as leaders in public affairs, university presidents are expected to participate in community events and speaking engagements. The importance of these efforts has increased in recent years as technology has lowered the barriers for presidential participation in such affairs, as well as provided the ability for constituents to acknowledge when presidents fall short of these expectations.

Industry Partnerships

This era of change is also linked to the ever-increasing expectations that business places on today's colleges and universities. Moreover, national and state leaders often make a connection between new industry innovations and university sponsored research discoveries, and they call for university presidents to develop a culture of collaboration between higher education institutions, government entities, and private industry (Morgan & Mulligan, 2014). Documenting the importance of this change is the fact that outside entities are increasingly utilizing university space and talent to conduct research. The relationships being built and the cohabiting of institutional resources have been critiqued for their effects on the broader commercialization of

higher education (Bok, 2003). University presidents must weigh the costs associated with their relationships with commercial and external funding entities to make sure that the expectations of such groups do not undermine the overall interests and purposes of their institutions.

Roles and Expectations

Much of the complexity surrounding the university presidency is not only due to change, but is also due to the multitude of expectations placed on individuals who are selected to lead institutions of higher education. For example, McLaughlin (2004) provides a broad analysis of the roles and expectations placed on university presidents, and categorizes them into leadership, management, and governance. However, the multitude of expectations placed on presidents is also clouded by the various perceptions that exist about the mission of higher education (Fleming, 2010; Borstein, 2003; Trow, 1985). Presidents are expected to balance relationships and foster collaboration. They are also expected to be visionary leaders for their respective institutions. Presidents are expected to be champions of traditional academic values while also skilled at overseeing the operational aspects of their campuses. These individuals are expected to engage in external relations and, of primary importance, is their ability to bring resources to the table. Presidents are expected to focus on educational values, establish institutional purpose, and serve as institutional representatives.

Balancing Relationships, Fostering Collaboration, and Shared Governance

University presidents attend to the needs of numerous stakeholders, many of whom have conflicting expectations of the president. The success or failure of an individual's presidency may rest on his or her ability to juggle these various interests. For example, Naumann (1990) found that most presidential self-reported errors relate to the expectations of their various relationships. Therefore, one of the primary roles and expectations of university presidents is that of balancing relationships. Multiple authors agree that this is an essential component of university leadership (Feinburg, 2012; Denton & Moore, 2009; Gumport, 2003). University presidents are expected to

advocate for the various constituencies of the university. This includes both internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, in an attempt to create an atmosphere of collaboration and understanding, the university president must educate the various constituencies about the concerns and desires of others. University presidents are expected to lead their institutions with respect for shared governance. Presidents have limited authority to make unilateral decisions without integrating numerous stakeholders into the decision-making process. To deal with shared governance structures associated with leadership within higher education (Legon, Lombardi, & Rhoades, 2013), university presidents must be master communicators.

Visionaries

University presidents are also expected to be visionary leaders for their respective institutions (Denton & Moore, 2009). In this regard university presidents are looked to provide institutional direction. Presidents are not necessarily expected to create the vision, but rather are expected to identify the vision. This multifaceted process includes discussions on institutional vision with key groups, as well as the university president's interpretation of this process. The president is then responsible for the clarification and dissemination of this vision to the broader university community. The proclamation of institutional purpose lies at the center of the university president's duty in the visioning process for his or her institution (Kerr, 2001).

Academic Leadership

Still of great importance is the university president's role in academic leadership. Whether an individual is an accomplished academician or passionate about education, those who serve as university presidents are expected to understand and respect the values of the Academe (Fleming, 2010; Ekman, 2010). Despite the waves of change that have coursed over American institutions of higher education, the truth remains that traditional values of the Academe still run deep in the industry. Presidents are viewed as the symbols of institutions. They are evaluated by many on their academic accomplishments or for their commitments to the promotion of academic

values. This is important because the prestige of their institutions is often gauged by the quality of education, and the prominence of scholars, associated with their organizations.

Administration and Operations

University presidents are also increasingly expected to deal with institutional operations (Denton & Moore, 2009). Many presidents oversee institutions with campuses the size of small towns. The operation of these campuses is a complex task that is managed and administered by a growing number of university employees. These employees may construct new facilities for the institution or this process may be handled by an outside group. Either way, these areas of institutional operation are becoming a key component in the role of the modern university president. These leaders understand the link between institutional recruitment and the need for state of the art facilities. On the opposite end, university presidents understand that the modification and upgrading of old facilities is an essential component of lowering operating costs for their institution. Additionally, university leaders are called to integrate sustainability practices into campus operations (Cox, 2015). Therefore, campus operations have a broad impact on the learning environment and planning process, and are a significant issue to be dealt with by college and university leaders.

External Engagement

Today's universities also expect that their presidents spend a large portion of their time engaging with external constituencies. Both private and public university presidents devote a substantial amount of their time working with groups outside of their institution. The requirement for university presidents to engage these external forces is limiting the amount of time that individuals can spend in more traditional academic capacities. In relation to the increasing external focus of university presidents, having a large network of contacts is essential to the relationships that the modern university must leverage (Chema, 2012). Presidents are well served by the connections their networks provide. These connections can provide a university with

access to potential resources, expertise, partnerships, and numerous other benefits associated with the duties of presidents.

Barden (2010) argues that university presidents are predominately focused on external affairs. In this regard, presidents are primarily focused on activities that are important for, but indirectly touch, internal constituencies. One of the primary roles for university presidents is one of managing governance relationships. University presidents are constantly interacting with their institutional governing bodies. Those candidates with previous experience interacting and engaging governing bodies will likely have an advantage over those who do not as this is one of the most dynamic roles and responsibilities of the modern university president – and one that can often be difficult to navigate for university and college leaders. Presidents are responsible to members of the governing board; however, university trustees or regents may appear to be ineffective in their ability to oversee and manage institutions of higher education. This appearance is due to the fact that trustees often have limited time and energy to devote to the oversight of their respective institutions (Dowdall, 2001). There are multiple other components that complicate this relationship for university presidents. Barden (2010) argues that trustees are likely to be highly politicized in their support for or against a particular president, absent in their trusteeship with little knowledge of institutional operations, overly concerned with micromanaging internal processes without a focus on institutional direction, or overly empathetic to presidents.

University presidents spend a great deal of their time engaging their governing bodies, but another growing expectation for university presidents is the growing expectation that they serve on external boards. The nature of what university presidents do, and their position with organizations important to their communities, leads to presidents being targeted by numerous organizations for external board service. These external groups are interested in the wisdom and judgment associated with individuals that serve as university presidents (Barden, 2010). A large

portion of university presidents serve on corporate boards. These endeavors provide university presidents with meaningful management experience, lucrative additional income, and an array of new network connections. However, with the rise of board liability, visibility, and time requirements, their service on corporate boards is increasingly coming under scrutiny (Fain, 2010a).

Resource Acquisition

Resource acquisition is a fundamental role and expectation of university presidents (Feinburg, 2012; Barden, 2010; Denton & Moore, 2009; Dowdall, 2001). Whether they are experienced fundraisers or not, most candidates fully understand that this function is a necessary part of their duties as university or college presidents (Masterson, 2010). Institutions of higher education are organizations like any other and require resources to maintain their operation. The financial woes confronting colleges and university across the nation are the primary causes in the growing demand for industry leaders to bring resources to their respective institutions. With declining state and federal support, university presidents find themselves educating and engaging legislators and the public about the funding and resource issues confronting higher education.

The acquisition of resources is also closely tied to the prestige of an institution. New resources are necessary for an institution to build new facilities to attract the top students and staff (Masterson, 2010). University presidents are therefore expected to engage in activities that assist in the attainment of these components. Moreover, presidents are expected to devote time to expanding an institution's access to federal funding and research dollars. Fundraising is not relegated to regional boundaries. Rae (2011b) indicates that university presidents are commonly traveling nationally and internationally with expectations to meet with alumni, raise money from donors, and build relationships with national and corporate leaders. Further amplifying these presidential expectations are the endowment fluctuations that have been experienced by a large percentage of institutions across the nation.

According to the 2007 American Council on Education report university presidents classified fundraising as the activity that occupied the largest share of their time. However, they also reported that this activity was the duty that they felt least prepared to perform. These two findings were still accurate of participant responses in the Council's 2012 report. University presidents face significant obstacles when working on advancement activities. Building consensus on fundraising goals while working with diverse fundraising priorities, and communicating a need to potential donors places significant time constraints on university presidents (Shaw & Shaw, 2014). And, as one fundraising campaign ends it is becoming the norm for another to begin. Therefore, university presidents with prior advancement experience may have a better understanding of the complexities and demands associated with college and university fundraising.

Institutional Representative

Another role placed on university presidents is that of institutional representative. University leaders are expected to keep their respective institutions in the public (Barden, 2010). They are expected to engage in public affairs and make appearances at community events. Additionally, university presidents commonly write for local, state, and national papers. Many times these efforts are aimed at addressing societal concerns of educational matters like access, affordability, and accountability. However, not all efforts are intended to touch college and university issues but, in a symbolic form of leadership, are an attempt to weigh in on matters of broader concern for society. University presidents are expected to help address social goals and promote the development of an educated society. University presidents are expected to lead their institutions in a manner that promotes access to higher learning for those underrepresented at colleges and universities. Similarly, university presidents are expected to lead their institutions to make available opportunities for instructional growth to those wanting an education. Part of this equation deals with monetary matters. University presidents are expected to operate their

institutions in a manner that promotes the affordability of higher education. Moreover, university presidents are expected to focus on providing quality education to a growing and diversifying student body.

Presidents are also expected to be involved with areas of change. They have an impact on how, when, and why institutions engage in matters of change. In the face of shifting demands and demographics, university presidents engage in the process of change to demonstrate the relevance of their institutions, as well as the higher education community (Feinburg, 2012; Kelly, 2002; Gumport, 2003) This effort can be tied to the expansion or elimination of programs, or it can be tied to the promotion of athletic events and extracurricular activities. A university president may choose to target a new market or develop a new strategy to attract students. In whatever manner, university presidents are expected to be highly engaged in matters of change at their respective institutions.

Summary of the Section

The number of roles and expectations placed on university presidents is enormous. They are expected to be involved in nearly every aspect of their institutions. They balance the demands of various constituents. Presidents touch various levels of leadership including the management, visioning, and governance of their institutions. The job requires them to constantly be engaging in the process of resource acquisition. They must ensure that their institutions are operating effectively and efficiently, and manage the processes associated with these issues. They engage in political and public affairs. They must be the symbolic leaders of their institutions. And, presidents are expected to keep their institutions in the eye of the public, as well as deal with matters of local, state, and national concern. University presidents must be involved in the process of change currently confronting the industry. But, most importantly these individuals must be the academic leaders of their institutions through their promotion of educational values. At the end of the day, the success of one's presidency will likely be tied to how well he or she

navigates the various roles and expectations placed on his or her position from the numerous constituencies associated with the modern university (Birnbaum, 1992).

Impact on the University President

To deal with this time of unprecedented change and the complexities associated with the university presidency, universities and organizations involved in the industry's leadership are increasingly reevaluating the candidates they select as university presidents. Additionally, they are reevaluating the processes by which these candidates are selected. The selection of the right university president is a crucial component of any institution's success (Michael, Schwartz, & Balraj, 2001). Moreover, finding someone to fulfill the various roles of the university presidency is a challenging task (Denton & Moore, 2009). The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (1996) conducted a study to analyze this phenomenon and their conclusions foregrounded questions related to the pathways of contemporary university presidents:

No task is more important for any board than the selection of the campus president.

While many candidates will be found on campus, a reservoir of talent remains to be tapped in the worlds of business, government, the professions, the nonprofit sectors and the military. Trustees should not shy away from potential presidents from nontraditional backgrounds. The new challenges facing higher education may lead institutions to look beyond the ivy walls of the institution...the essential requirement is experience in the leadership and management of a complex organization. Boards should seek candidates who are consultative yet decisive, respectful of academic traditions yet unafraid to use nontraditional strategies (p. 36).

Because the higher education industry is facing changes that are so wide spread, colleges and universities are diverse in their desires and often unique in their priorities when selecting new presidents. Depending on an institution's needs, it may look for a candidate with a particular set

of skills or personal qualities. One candidate may be a perfect fit at one institution, and completely different from the type of individual desired at another institution. The selection process itself is undergoing change that mirrors the larger shifts occurring across the industry. In general, the selection process is overseen or conducted by the institution's governing board; however, there are several key constituencies that are generally included in the process to mitigate perceived imbalances in the priorities of the whole institution (Barden, 2010). These key constituencies often include: faculty members, students, staff, community members, alumni, and organizational leaders.

There are numerous challenges associated with the selection process of university presidents in its current form. Chema (2012) argues that institutions are neither proactive in their recruitment of individual candidates nor robust in their institutional network of potentially qualified candidates. Moreover, few universities or colleges are aggressive in their development of internal candidates. Representative of this concern is the fact that institutions are increasingly likely to use search firms in the selection process of their university presidents. The American Council on Education (2012) found that the use of search consultants grew from 49% in 2006 to 56% in 2011. The use of a consultant may increase the likelihood of an organization finding a candidate that will have long-term success, and their use may also ease the pain of an institution that is navigating the complex search process. Moreover, an institution that is seeking diversification of its leadership may look to an outside search consultant to facilitate this process (Dowdall, 2012).

The issue of transparency is also a highly-debated topic in the presidential selection process (Tilsley, 2010). Presidential searches are, for many public institutions, subject to sunshine laws that require the overall selection process to be open to the public. The theory behind these laws is that the public's right to know about the process of a president's selection should be given priority over the individual's right to privacy. However, this transparency has become a barrier in

attracting qualified candidates to the position. As universities look to hire high profile and qualified candidates as their presidents, these individuals are increasingly reluctant to participate in a process that will bring to light the fact they are making a career transition (Dowdall, 2012; Rae, 2011a; Barden, 2010). The implications for such transparency can have a significant impact on a candidate's current employment, political involvement, community connections, and a host of other areas that candidates may not be willing to expose during the selection process. Also, with a limited pool of qualified presidential candidates, universities and colleges are increasing the presidential compensation packages they offer to lure candidates to their institutions. However, board members fearing the political repercussions of such arrangements are often reluctant to share these compensation packages with the public (Basinger, 2001).

Larger than the issue of transparency is a growing concern about the limited pool of applicants qualified for the university presidency. This is made worse by the fact that a growing number of individuals within this pool are choosing not to pursue the presidency (Wilkins, 2012; Barden, 2010; Fain & June, 2006; Basinger & Henderson, 2004; Fain, 2004; Basinger, 2002a). Those responsible for selecting university presidents understand that the pool for qualified candidates is small (Rae, 2011a; Fain, 2010b). Hiring university presidents is even more difficult for public institutions because they cannot provide the same incentives as private institutions; in addition, the political environment is more daunting, and confidentiality is not guaranteed (Greenwood & Asher, 2011). Moreover, colleges and universities are competing against numerous other institutions and organizations for a limited number of leaders. Included in this list of competitors is a candidate's current employer. These competitors will often provide multiple incentives to retain their most successful performers (Barden, 2010; Fain & June, 2006; Basinger & Henderson, 2004; Basinger, 2002a). Representative of this trend the American Council on Education (2002) found that from 1998 to 2001 the number of university presidents hired away

from their institutions decreased as university presidents retired, and competition grew between organizations.

Another issue confronting institutions is presidential retirements. Colleges and universities are expected to experience a significant number of presidential retirements in the near future (Tilsley, 2010; Shults, 2001). This trend has been documented and is referred to as the graying of university and college presidents (American Council on Education, 2007). The American Council on Education (2012) found that the number of university presidents over the age of sixty-one grew by nearly 10 percent over a recent six year period. In 2006 only 49.3 percent of university presidents reported being over sixty-one, however in 2011 this number grew to 58 percent. As current university presidents start to retire many of the new leaders selected to replace them will need a much broader array of skills, attributes, and experiences to function as a university president in its current form (Kelly, 2002). Closely linked to these new skills is the fact that those responsible for governing institutions of higher education are placing a larger emphasis on the evaluation process of university and college presidents. Experts believe this may be due to increasing demands for clear linkages to presidential performance, governmental and regulatory accountability, and the growing trend of business executives serving on boards (Masterson, 2011). However, there are differing opinions on how university presidents should be evaluated (Michael, Schartz, & Balraj 2001). In sum, there are significant implications associated with this coming tide of presidential retirements (Monks, 2012; Tilsley, 2010; Shults, 2001). Therefore, understanding how to best prepare individuals for these upcoming openings is of primary concern to those responsible for university governance and hiring.

As previously discussed, university presidents find themselves in a time of unprecedented change. Their institutions are being stressed by factors that are surfacing in the form of both internal and external pressures. And, the very model by which universities have operated for centuries is being questioned. Costs are increasing and traditional avenues of support are

dwindling. New competitors are entering the market, and institutions of higher education no longer are the gatekeepers of information as the internet becomes more prevalent and user friendly. New student types are making their way into university classrooms, and their demands are more diverse. Moreover, the number of students seeking a higher education continues to increase. External partnerships are increasingly more important, but with them come new challenges for colleges and universities. Presidents also find themselves in a time of unprecedented expectations. Each year they are expected to wear more hats. As a result of this combination those tasked with selecting college and university presidents are increasingly looking to individuals with alternative experiences as potential candidates for the university presidency. These individuals are coming into their presidencies from nontraditional pathways.

Pathways to the Presidency

There are multiple pathways that may be used by individuals ascending to university presidencies (Song & Hartley, 2012). The pathway from within the Academe is often believed to be the pathway most likely to bring an aspiring individual to the position of university president. This position is often referred to as the traditional or normative pathway. In 2001 nearly half of all university presidents were from the traditional pathway (American Council on Education, 2002) and the traditional academic pathway is the norm by which candidates for the presidency are often judged (Dowdall, 2001). However, this pathway is incrementally losing its foothold as the leading pathway. Pathways outside of those found within academia are growing at the largest rates. More and more individuals are coming into the university presidency with no or little experience in the higher education industry. These individuals are taking nontraditional pathways to their presidencies.

Traditional Pathway

The traditional pathway to the presidency was first acknowledged on a large scale by the work of Cohen & March (1974). Their expansive study is a seminal work within the field, and it

is one of the first and most comprehensive investigations on university presidents. From their research, they developed a multi-tier hierarchy to explain the standard promotional pattern of institutional leaders; one of the most referenced components of their work describes the pathway one takes to the presidency. Below is a visual depiction of the hierarchy developed by the authors.

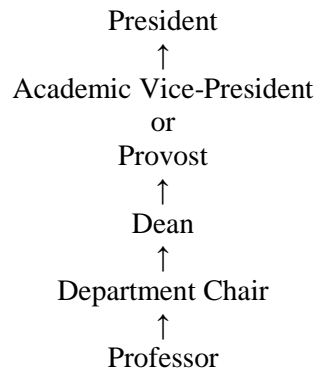


Figure 1. Normative career pattern of university presidents as developed by Cohen & March (1974).

The data analyzed through their study revealed a logical academic flow through various stages in a traditional pathway to the university presidency. Within this model individuals start at the lowest rank on the academic scale, and progressively work their ways up the hierarchy toward the presidency. Initially an individual starts as a professor and then becomes a department chair. After becoming a department chair he or she becomes a dean. After deanship he or she assumes the role of provost or academic vice president. And, finally he or she becomes a university president. More than a rung of career steps, the authors claim that this normative career pathway is a socialization process by which those who reach the presidency will behave in predictable and acceptable manners.

Following Cohen & March's seminal work Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, & Bragg (1983) conducted a similar study to evaluate the career patterns of university presidents and deans. From the collection of their data on university presidents they identified fourteen variations to the normative trajectory model provided by Cohen & March (1974). Moore et al. (1983) claim that

the normative pathway assumes that the university president is an academic. However, upon further analysis they concluded that the normative pathway exhibits variations within its component stages; most respondents of their survey did not experience the exact route outlined through the traditional normative model developed by Cohen & March (1974).

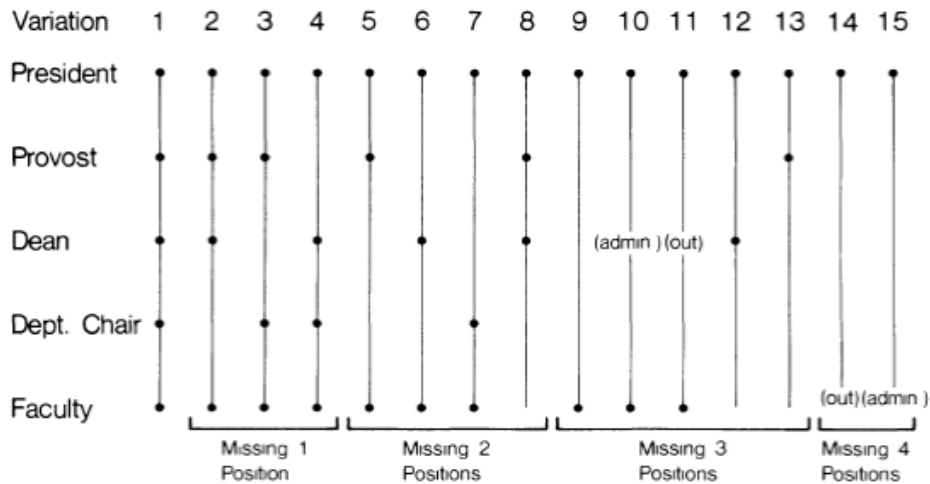


Figure 2. Variations of normative presidential path developed by Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, & Bragg (1983).

According to Moore et al. (1983) only 3.2 percent of the 156 university presidents surveyed followed each step within the normative pathway. Conversely, over 4.5 percent of the university presidents came to the university presidency from outside of the higher education industry, meaning that participants were more likely to move into the presidency from outside of higher education than they were to hit every rung outlined by Cohen and March (1974). Nineteen percent of university presidents missed at least one position, and 30.7 percent missed two positions. A majority (32.1 percent) of presidents missed three positions on their pathways to the presidency. Fourteen percent of university presidents missed five of the positions. Although Moore et al.'s (1983) findings identify that a significant number of candidates came to their positions without following the exact normative pathway, the authors do suggest that the pathway is a series of generalized variations. As such, an overwhelming majority of candidates made their

way to their presidencies by touching multiple positions within the normative hierarchy. Moreover, 95.5 percent of the presidents in Moore et al.'s (1983) study came to their current post from some position within academia.

Continued documentation of the normative pathway was also outlined by Wessell and Keim (1994). These authors conducted an analysis of the career patterns of 270 individuals serving as university presidents at private four year institutions. Their study documented that the predominant career pattern of presidents at these institutions followed the normative pathway developed by Cohen and March (1974) and expanded by Moore et al. (1983). Wessel and Keim (1994) found that nearly 70 percent of the participants from private institutions followed the normative pathway: 31 percent of the participants were hired into the presidency because of administrative experience, and only 10 percent of their respondents were hired into the presidency with no previous higher education experience.

Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) also studied pathways to the presidency and developed four new categories for career trajectories into these positions. Their study built on the seminal work of Cohen & March (1974) with a continued analysis of the normative pathway to the presidency. Within Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) the normative pathway was recognized and divided into two subcategories: "Scholar" and "Steward." This study found that an overwhelming majority, 88 percent of participants, followed traditional pathways to the presidency. The "Scholar" represented an individual who had full-time teaching experience, and whose previous two jobs before their presidency were within higher education. Of the over 2,000 university presidents analyzed in this study, 66 percent of them followed the "Scholar" pathway to their presidency. Twenty-two percent of individuals followed the "Steward" pathway. The "Steward" represented an individual with no full-time teaching experience but whose previous two jobs before their presidency were within higher education.

The single most common rung within the normative ladder is the presidential position. Those currently serving as university presidents are extremely likely to be hired as a university president at another institution. Therefore, one of the most successful indicators of being selected as a university president is experience serving as a university president. Experienced presidents can more easily demonstrate their expertise to a selection committee. Moreover, the fit of experienced candidates is more easily justified when their experience is with an institution of similar size and scope, or when a university would like to aspire to an institution where a candidate is currently serving as president (Dowdall, 2001; Cohen & March, 1974).

A key component to understanding the presence of a normative pathway to the presidency is through an analysis of the traditional academic values associated with leadership within the industry. A traditional view of the need for a university president to be an accomplished academician has been entrenched within the higher education community for decades. At the turn of the 20th Century and after three years of researching more than 100 university presidents from across the United States, Foster (1913) found that the first obligation of a university president was that he must be a leader within the academic community with continued academic contributions to knowledge from a specific field of study. Foster (1913) concluded that without this qualification the university president would not be viewed as a leader worthy of an institution of higher education, and would not be respected by the faculty of the institution.

Bolman's (1965) analysis of the presidential search process further highlights the traditional values held by those within the academic community. Within Bolman's (1965) study the author illustrates the various constituent perceptions and expectations placed upon university presidents. Each participant group within the study articulated the necessity of academic qualifications in their desires of presidential candidates. When speaking of the president, one board chairman stated that "[h]e should have a sound educational background, sufficient to be

accepted among educators. If his peers can't accept him, we shouldn't want him" (Bolman, 1965, p. 205). Additionally, one professor from the study stated that a university president must have "a capacity for perception and understanding of the relevance and interrelatedness of ideas in fields other than that of his own specific scholarship" (p. 205). Both responses indicate that the abilities and expectations of university presidents are entrenched in the very fabric of traditional values of the Academe. Consequently, this dedication of academic values may be so strong that it creates a bias for presidents in specific academic disciplines. At institutions with significant grant resources, selecting scientific research candidates with academic specialties in the traditional sciences may be more highly valued than academics from other academic fields (Dowdall, 2012). Aligned with these traditional academic values is the opinion that even nontraditional university presidents are seen as more successful if they have experience in higher education and report having a doctoral degree (Basinger, 2002a).

Besimon (1991) found four gestures that faculty interpret that have a positive impact on the image of new presidents. These gestures are central to the understanding of the importance placed on traditional academic values experienced by those taking the normative pathway to the presidency. These gestures include giving the impression of joining a team of faculty members instead of leading them, letting the voices of faculty be heard by facilitating open forums of dialogue with university faculty members, assuming the role of followers in which they listen and act upon the desires of the faculty, and advocating for faculty interests to external authorities.

Similarly, Fleming (2010) found that normative patterns of behavior exist for university presidents and found that constituent groups, other than faculty, evaluate presidents based on these norms. These norms regulate a multitude of presidential behaviors. Birnbaum (1992) found that the success or failure of a president is directly related to the communication and interaction he or she has with faculty. Within Birnbaum's (1992) study, presidencies were seen as failed when there was a breakdown in shared governance exemplified by instances where faculty rights

were violated or individual action by the president was seen as unsuccessful. By contrast exemplary presidencies revolved around the promotion of faculty interaction and influence. Besimon (1991), Fleming (2010), and Birnbaum (1992) all emphasize the overall process of socialization that occurs within the traditional pathway discussed by Cohen and March (1974).

Teaching has been a cultural component of the university presidency, and is a significant component of the traditional pathway. Historically, individuals who were leading institutions of higher education would be expected to stay abreast with the issues of the students and faculty by gaining first-hand experience of such issues from the classroom (Foster, 1913). However, the relevance of such experience is still touted a century later. Dowdall (2000) argues that presidential candidates are more likely to have success when they have experience as full-time faculty members. Faculty experience is thought to bring a better understanding of the core function of institutions of higher education, as well as expose individuals to a critical aspect of faculty life.

Even though it is the most common pathway, and often the most desired by internal groups, there are numerous limitations associated with the traditional pathway to the presidency. Dowdall (2012) suggests that traditional candidates need additional preparation for a transition into the presidency in four specific areas. First, traditional candidates generally do not spend much of their time in their faculty or administrative positions engaging with diverse groups or projects. These two areas are common in the duties of a modern university president. Second, traditional candidates lack substantive management experience in the areas like institutional planning, budgeting, and communication. Third, leadership in the form of the articulation of institutional vision is not aligned with the traditional pathway to the presidency. And fourth, experience managing rapid-pace decision making with little time or input is not associated with traditional academic candidates. These are a sampling of factors associated with the growth of a

new trend in higher education leadership. However, now more than ever university presidents are coming into their positions from outside the traditional pathway.

Nontraditional Pathway

Individuals are increasingly coming into the presidency from outside of higher education. This trend is not just becoming more prevalent, it is also becoming more accepted (Waugh, 2003; Basinger, 2002a). Nontraditional presidents are those who have little professional experience within the higher education industry, or have had significant experience outside of the industry. Governing boards for both public and private institutions of higher education are increasingly looking to nontraditional candidates to lead colleges and universities (American Council of Education, 2012; Basinger, 2002a).

Wessel and Keim (1994) found that 10 percent of university presidents in their study came into their presidencies from outside of higher education. This is a significant increase from the 4.5 percent found eleven years earlier by Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, & Bragg (1983). When evaluating independent colleges and universities Hartley and Godin (2009) found that from 2001 to 2006 the number of individuals serving as president who came from outside of higher education rose from 9 percent to 13 percent. Moreover, when evaluating university presidents with extensive experience in higher education, and those new to the industry, the authors documented another example of the growth of nontraditional candidates: of the respondents with fourteen years of experience in their presidency 4 percent came from outside the industry. However, respondents with three years of experience or less were four times more likely to have come into their presidencies from outside of higher education.

Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) categorized nontraditional presidents into the two groups of “spanners” and “strangers.” Spanners were those individuals with experience within higher education, but who also reported having significant professional experience outside of the industry. Strangers in contrast were those individuals who came to their presidencies with no

professional experience within the industry prior to their current position as president. Below is a representation of the traditional and nontraditional pathways discussed within the authors' study and their various hierarchical points.

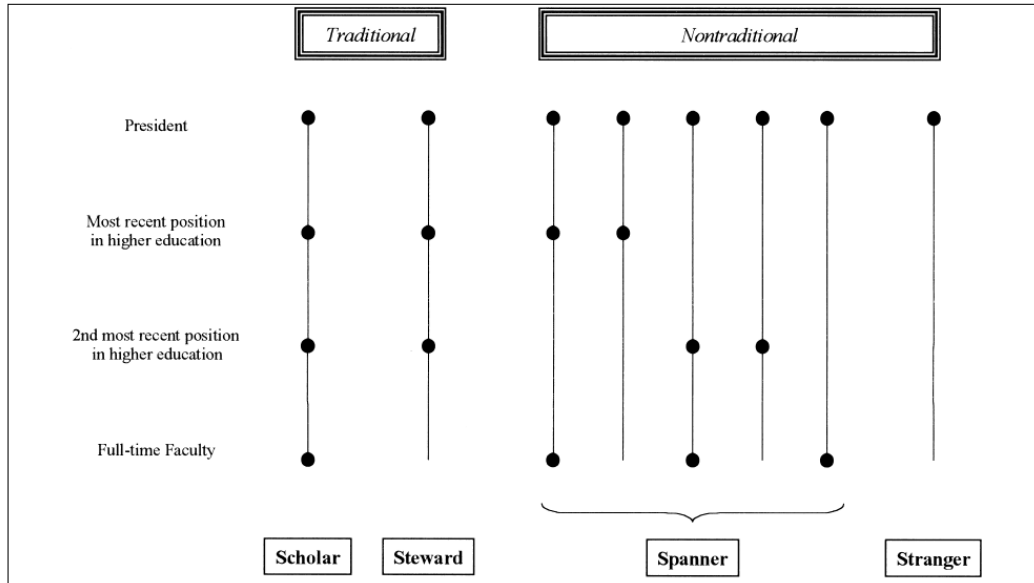


Figure 3. Variations of presidential pathways developed by Birnbaum and Umbach (2001).

Within this study spanners represented 7.4 percent of the respondents. Strangers accounted for 3.9 percent of university presidents. Combined, these two groups formed the nontraditional pathway and accounted for over 11 percent of the presidential respondents. This is consistent with the growing trend for nontraditional university presidents.

According to the American Council on Education (2002) the percentage of individuals who came into their presidencies directly from a position outside of higher education doubled from 6 percent to 12 percent in only 4 years. The growth of internal academic officers coming into the presidency grew by only 8 percent over the same period. The growth of nontraditional presidents exploded at public universities. In 1998 only 2.2 percent of presidents at public institutions were nontraditional, and by 2001 this group represented 10.6 percent of presidents. This growth at public universities may be the result of governing boards looking to individuals with external fundraising or financial experience needed to offset the decrease in public support

experienced by these institutions. Another indicator that more nontraditional university presidents are leading higher education institutions is the documentation of the decreasing number of presidents having advanced academic degrees. In 1998 almost 81 percent of surveyed presidents held doctoral degrees, while only 76 percent reported having a doctoral degree in 2001.

The American Council on Education (2012) found a 7 percent growth in nontraditional presidents between 2006 and 2012. In 2006, the number of university presidents hired from outside of the industry was roughly 12 percent. By 2011 this number increased to nearly 20 percent of respondents. This represents more than 400 percent growth from the number reported by Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, & Bragg (1983), and a 100 percent growth from the number reported by Wessel and Keim (1994). More recently, this represents more than a 60 percent increase from the number reported by Hartley and Godin (2009). This growing trend of nontraditional candidates coming into the presidency appears to be continuing, and it has been well documented over the last three decades.

Nontraditional candidates are often chosen for a particular skill set they possess that may be lacking at an institution, or that aligns well with a certain goal for the institution (Dowdall, 2000; Wessel & Keim, 1994). However, Ekman (2010) argues that the Academe should be very concerned about the growing trend of nontraditional candidates coming to the university presidency. Such individuals, the author claims, do not fully understand the higher education industry, and under their direction universities run the risk of commoditizing the production of knowledge. At the other end, the author claims that the best candidates for the university presidents are those with extensive academic experience. Further complimenting this point is that nontraditional candidates tend to be more desirable if they have some sort of academic experience (Basinger, 2002a). The historical context and academic values rooted in the industry place emphasis on university presidents having earned an advanced degree. Academic programs that prepare potential presidential candidates still utilize an advanced degree model. However, few

university presidents admit to continuing their academic pursuits during their presidency (McFarlin, Crittenden, & Ebbers 1999). And, with the changing environment surrounding the higher education community many are now arguing for the utility of nontraditional university presidents (Chema, 2012).

One of the most obvious correlations associated with the advance of nontraditional university presidents is the growth of presidential compensation. This trend can likely be attributed to market forces. Universities are competing for a limited number of individuals with executive leadership experience. Thus, executive pay has grown increasingly more complex and is necessary to attract qualified candidates (Fain, 2005). Moreover, many nontraditional presidents are increasingly accustomed to high executive compensation packages. Many universities have developed private avenues to supplement compensation packages to increase their abilities to attract external leaders (Basinger & Henderson, 2004; Basinger 2001). This trend seems to be most closely associated with the top public research institutions who are vying for leaders within private industry and at the nation's top private institutions (Stripling & Fuller, 2011; Fain & June, 2006; Basinger, 2002b).

The Boundaryless Career

While this literature review, due to the focus of my study, relies almost exclusively on higher education literature and especially that related to the university president, great insight may be gained from considering perspectives, thoughts, and theory from fields other than higher education. Particularly given the growing prominence of nontraditional pathways to the university presidency, and without clear higher education theory to guide analysis of the data collected for this study, I reviewed literature in a wide number of non-higher education fields.

Defillippi and Arthur's (1994) boundaryless career perspective was one that offered insight into changes related to pathways to the university presidency. As such, it was the lens I chose, *a posteriori*, to discuss the themes that resulted from openly-coded data themes. While this

perspective is detailed in my last chapter as an entrée to the discussion of my findings, a brief overview of the perspective completes this literature review

Defillippi and Arthur (1994) describe the effects of environmental change factors that are occurring around organizational, occupational, and community contexts that, in turn, are promoting boundaryless career opportunities for professionals. These change factors include among other things “disconfirming traditional belief[s] about the stability of jobs...and inviting people to...adopt a more entrepreneurial approach in their work behavior” (p. 312). The authors argue that competency based accumulation “at the level of the person is better served by boundaryless career principles” (p. 312). Moreover, the authors’ shared perspective is that “competency accumulation through boundaryless careers can make a critical contribution to the unfolding competencies of firms and their host industries” (p. 312).

Conclusion

The pathway to the university presidency may take many forms. However, the most typical pathway is the traditional route. This internal pathway typically brings individuals from a faculty position upward to the presidency. Within this pathway are a multitude of variations. This pathway is also entrenched in the traditional values of the Academe, and the socialization process associated with this pathway may be as valuable to an individual as experience found elsewhere. However, there are also limitations connected to this pathway. As changes abound across the higher education, institutions are experiencing changes at the top leadership position. Therefore, individuals are increasingly coming in the university presidency with little or no experience in higher education. Whichever pathway individuals assume to the presidency, they face significant obstacles leading complex institutions of higher education in the 21st century.

With the importance of the role of the university president, it is easy to recognize why researchers have made an effort to better understand university presidents and the presidency. A better understanding of these individuals, the issues they face, and the concerns they have is

essential for the future development of university presidents. University presidents are the recognized leaders of our institutions of higher education. These institutions are responsible for educating millions of students, for advancing knowledge through academic research, and for investing billions across the global economy. However, most studies to date have focused on quantifying the demographic information of university presidents to describe the types of individuals that are currently serving as university presidents. These studies were also aimed at documenting the titles individuals wore before their presidencies. However, the real need for knowledge is about what types of experiences university presidents believe best prepared them for leading today's institutions of higher education. To gain this understanding, the study turned to the university presidents themselves. Through this study, I explored the preparatory (pre-presidential) experiences of university presidents, and their perceptions about what best prepared them for the demands they experienced in leading today's institutions of higher education. The next chapter, chapter three, details the study's methodology.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will outline the overall methodology employed by the study. It begins with a statement of the problem, a review of the purpose statement, and an outline of the research questions. It then turns to an overview of the research design that guided the study, including a description of qualitative methodology and the study's conceptual components. A discussion of the research sites, participants, data collection, and data analysis are then covered in the procedures and methods section of the chapter.

Statement of the Problem

Traditionally university presidents in the United States have come from within academia. However, with the changing demands of the role of the university president, a new trend is emerging of university presidents coming from outside of higher education. Regardless of the pathways they take to the university presidency, all presidents face significant obstacles in leading complex institutions of higher education in the 21st century. While the arguments about the viability of these two pathways have received much attention, the opinions and preferences are anecdotal and often driven by embedded cultural beliefs about the university environment. The real need for knowledge is about what types of experiences university presidents believed best prepared them for leading today's institutions of higher education. To gain this understanding, this study focused the university presidents themselves.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the preparatory (pre-presidential) experiences of university presidents and their perceptions about what best prepared them for the demands they experienced in leading today's institutions of higher education. Traditional and nontraditional university presidents at master's colleges and universities in the Midwest served as the study's population.

Research Questions

What experiences do university presidents identify as having best prepared them to lead 21st century institutions of higher education?

1. Where and how were these experiences gained?
2. What experiences do current presidents believe will be the best preparation for those who move into the university presidency in the next decade?

Overview of the Design of the Study

Research is all about the pursuit of knowledge. It may be concerned with single, tangible, and fragmental understandings of reality or with multiple, holistic and constructed forms of reality. As such, the nature of research is diverse. To fit the diverse needs of differing pursuits of knowledge researchers use a multitude of tools to document, create, and understand knowledge. Like the various tools used by researchers, Creswell (2009) describes three different research designs utilized by researchers including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The social sciences tend to be more focused on the forms of research that are best suited for qualitative designs. Qualitative research is ever evolving, and is exploratory in nature. This exploratory foundation is the primary reason a qualitative design is best suited for this study. Qualitative research is concerned with deep understanding and investigation of phenomena. Moreover, qualitative research is concentrated around research foci that are best served by depth of exploration. Qualitative research is all about experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge, as well as understanding activities, behaviors, and actions (Patton, 2009).

Additionally, qualitative research assumes that reality is dynamic in nature and that it changes over time, place, and people. The purpose of qualitatively-designed studies is to better understand. It is concerned with the insider and the interpretations and perceptions of insiders. The qualitative researcher is universal in nature, and utilizes qualitative design to produce in-depth and holistic descriptions of individuals' interpretations and perceptions. Because qualitative research places emphasis on in-depth and detailed understandings of perceptions, interpretations and meaning making (Patton, 2009; Locke, Spirduco, & Silverman 2007), it was the most conducive research design for this particular study. This study focused on the exploration, description, and understanding of preparatory experiences for university presidents *from the perspectives of presidents*. As such, the study's purpose dictated the use of a qualitative research design.

Researcher's Statement

The nature of qualitative research utilizes the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. However, the influence of the researcher is not relegated to these areas of a particular study. At the initial stages of development a project is influenced by a researcher's values, passions, and preoccupations (Russell & Kelly, 2002). This study was no different. Prior to starting this study, I spent six years working closely with two university presidents who at different times served as the president for the same institution of higher education. My experience working with these individuals directly influenced my decision to pursue this topic. One individual would be classified as a nontraditional university president, and the other would be classified as a traditional university president. However, I felt that both individuals were highly qualified, and both were successful and productive presidents. I noticed that both individuals often received critiques from others about performance and leadership. Often these critiques were based on the pathways each individual took to the presidency. Some were extremely critical of the traditional pathway and others critical of the nontraditional pathway and the impact either played on how each individual ran the institution. I decided to look further into this phenomenon,

and after an initial review of the literature I decided that this was the topic I would pursue for my dissertation. I recognized that these factors coupled with my previous experience inside higher education influenced my perceptions of the presidency, as well as the overall direction of this study.

Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective

The overall conceptual fit of a study is a key component of any research design whether quantitative or qualitative, and it begins with the epistemological stance. Patton (2009) describes epistemology as an ongoing debate to the question “how do we know what we know?” (p. 134). As such it is a paradigm about the nature of knowledge in the context of objectivity and subjectivity. It is concerned with the interaction of individuals with the world that surrounds them and this interaction’s impact on the nature of reality, the scope of reality, and the sources of knowledge that it produces. There are a multitude of lenses under the epistemological umbrella. However, because this study was focused on the social and personal experiences of university presidents, constructionism was the most relevant epistemological stance. Constructionism holds that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). In alignment with constructionism, I assumed that the study’s participants, the study’s audience, and I live in a world in which we help construct reality and meaning. That is to say that “[we] do not create meaning. [We] construct meaning. [We] have something to work with” (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). Therefore, it was assumed that reality is what people perceive it to be. And that their perceptions are an interpretation of their engagements with their worlds.

This way of interpreting the world was the underlying framework for the next component within this study's conceptual outline. Any well-designed study must have an alignment between its epistemological stance and its theoretical perspective. Crotty (1998) identifies a theoretical perspective as the “philosophical stance lying behind a methodology. The theoretical perspective

provides a context for the process involved and a basis for its logic and its criteria” (p. 66). Guba (1990) calls this a “basic set of beliefs that guides action” (p. 17). Theoretical perspectives have also been referred to as paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), theoretical traditions (Patton, 2009), and theoretical stances (Merriam, 2002).

Symbolic interactionism served as the theoretical perspective for this study. This perspective falls underneath the broader interpretivist framework and is primarily concerned with the interpretations of experiences, perspectives of reality, and ascriptions of meaning that individuals make as social beings. In particular, symbolic interactionism focuses on experiences, activities, symbols, as well as other components of social life, that influence or create meaning within and among groups or individuals. Crotty (1998) states that “interpretation is essential to an understanding of experience and the experience includes the interpretation” (p. 106). Using symbolic interactionism as the paradigm for this study, I worked from its assumptions that individuals, including myself, socially interact with the world around them, and that in conjunction with this interaction individuals interpret and ascribe meaning to the world (Blumer, 1969). Understanding and exploring the descriptions provided by university presidents of the experiences they felt best prepared them for their roles provided a deeper context through which to analyze and document how participants described the various aspects of their preparatory experiences. As such, the use of symbolic interactionism was justified and provided for a rich exploration of presidents’ preparatory experiences.

I integrated reflexive opportunities in an attempt to document how my interactions and interpretation of the world might impact the overall study. The inclusion of myself in the process is a central tenant of any interpretivist perspective, including symbolic interactionism, as the researcher is interdependent and inseparable from what is known. To this point, Creswell (2009) stated “researchers recognize that their own backgrounds shape their interpretation, and they position themselves in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (p. 8). More directly Denzin and Lincoln (2003)

claim that “all research is interpretive, it is guided by the researcher’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (p. 22).

Research Strategy

The research strategy for this study was case study. Case study methodology was best suited for this study because of the influence of the unique contexts within which presidents gained their preparatory experiences and carried out their presidencies. Both Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) recognize the importance and the influence of context for case studies. Patton (2009) argues that the only way to understand what another person experiences is to “experience the phenomenon as directly as possible for ourselves” (p. 106), which is a unique capability of case study. Therefore, the use of the case study methodology was the best choice for this study’s focus on the exploration and understanding of the experiences university presidents say best prepared them for their role in leading institutions of higher education in the 21st century. Understanding and exploring the context of current and past experiences of university presidents, and pursuing an understanding of the complexities, was essential to the purpose of this study.

Methods and Procedures

This study consisted of in-depth, one-on-one interviews with six university presidents. It also included observations of these individuals and the examination of documents and artifacts from these presidents and their respective institutions.

Research Sites

The data collection for this study was conducted on the campuses of six U.S. master’s colleges and universities in the fall of 2015. Presidential duties can be different across institutional type, and because these differences have the potential to be amplified as a result of classification, this study focused on master’s colleges and universities in the Midwest as designated by Carnegie Classification. Because every sector of the higher education industry is experiencing new trends in presidential hiring and evaluation practices (American Council on Education, 2012; & Schultz, 2001), no other limitations were placed on the research settings. To

provide a point of ongoing reference a short list of descriptors for the individual research sites can be found in the table below.

Table 1

Descriptors of Research Sites

Institution	Rural/Urban Classification	Community Population	Student Population
University 1	Rural	~ 5,000	~ 2,200
University 2	Urban	~ 81,000	~ 17,000
University 3	Rural	~ 11,000	~ 4,500
University 4	Rural	~ 16,000	~ 5,200
University 5	Rural	~ 16,000	~ 4,500
University 6	Urban	~ 105,000	~ 6,000

Note. Information derived from www.census.gov/2010popmap and institutional websites

The various research sites were geographically situated in the Midwestern part of the United States and were distributed across two different states. The sites were in both rural and urban environments. There were size differences in student population at the respective research sites with the smallest institution having roughly 2,200 students and the largest institution having roughly 17,000 students. The nature of these sites was well suited to case study research, and provided for alignment between the study's design and its individual research sites.

Research Participants

In considering the purpose of the study to better understand and explore the types of experiences the participants believed best prepared them for their roles leading institutions of higher education in the 21st century, I developed a list of participants with diverse professional backgrounds who were serving as presidents at universities meeting the institutional classification focus of the study. Soliciting participants who were currently serving as university presidents was an action referred to as criterion or purposeful sampling. Patton (2009) writes that the "logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding" (p. 46). The purpose of this study required the utilization of purposeful sampling of university presidents.

Participants were recruited by email (email solicitation scripts can be found in Appendix A). The contact information for eligible participants was generated from their respective institutions' employee directories. At the time of contact, potential participants were informed of their rights and about the commitments of participating in the study (a participant consent form can be found in Appendix B). Additionally, participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time for any reason without repercussion.

Six respondents who replied to the initial solicitation served as the study's participants. Of the six respondents two were female, and four were male. Three of the respondents would be classified as traditional university presidents by Birnbaum (2001). These candidates spent most their professional careers within higher education, and specifically in academic affairs or on faculty. The other three candidates would be considered non-traditional candidates by Birnbaum (2001) with significant professional experience outside of higher education. Two of the non-traditional participants did have previous experience within higher education, and one non-traditional participant had no professional experience prior to his presidency where he worked in higher education. Table 2 provides a summary of descriptors of the study's participants.

Table 2

Descriptors of Research Participants

Participant	Tier 1 Classification	Tier 2 Classification	Gender
President 1	Traditional	Scholar	Female
President 2	Traditional	Scholar	Male
President 3	Non-Traditional	Spanner	Male
President 4	Non-Traditional	Spanner	Male
President 5	Non-Traditional	Stranger	Male
President 6	Traditional	Scholar	Female

Note. Classifications based on presidential pathways developed by Birnbaum (2001)

Data Collection

The methods utilized within the study aligned with case study methodology. Creswell (2009) describes methods as "techniques or procedures used to gather and analyze data related to some research question or hypothesis" (p. 3). Case study methodology employs the use of multiple data sources. The use of multiple data sources provides a variety of lenses to explore and understand a particular phenomenon. This approach also enhances credibility (Patton, 2009; Yin, 2003). However, following the norms of case study research the primary source of data collection for this study was participant interviews.

Interviews. Participant interviews consisted of one-on-one interviews between the participant and me and were conducted at each individual campus. These interviews lasted one hour each. Only through insightful and well-designed interviews was I able to explore, observe, and understand the opinions, perceptions, and attitudes of the participants through the context of the participants' own words (Glense & Peshkin, 1992).

I developed a list of questions to serve as the guiding prompt for participant interviews (a copy of the interview guide can be found in Appendix C). I developed this guide from an in-depth analysis of relevant literature, and it guided the overall data collection process. The interview guide was designed to elicit descriptive data from participants about the nature of their preparatory experiences with consideration given to relevant documents, artifacts, and participant observations.

Open-ended questions provided the participants the opportunity to describe in their own words and interpretations of the experiences they felt best prepared them for their roles as university presidents. The opportunity for university presidents to communicate their stories and experiences was an essential component to the success of this study, and provided the basis for utilizing case study research. The interviews gave voice to the participants, and helped me understand and explore their experiences from the participants' points of view. With each participant's permission, every interview was recorded. To help ensure the integrity of each

interview, participants were asked to review a transcript of each session (i.e. to complete member checks).

Observations. In addition to interviews, observations served as another data source. I took field notes describing the physical surroundings of each interview and to provide context for each observation. Observations were conducted following each participant interview. I stayed with each participant for one hour in their offices immediately following our interview, and recorded their activities in my field notes. These notes included descriptions of observed participant behavior, and descriptive portraits of the participants' interactions. Moreover, these efforts included descriptions of events and activities that took place during my observations within the office of each president. These observations were important as they provided a glimpse into the daily activities and actions of the participants. Additionally, I included reflective descriptions about my thoughts, assumptions, and experiences in my field notes.

Documents. The examination of documents and artifacts from university presidents and their respective institutions also served as primary data sources for the study. I collected relevant documents to help explore and understand the preparatory experiences of the study's participants. These documents included biographies, participant resumes, curriculum vitas, as well as other descriptive information about the individual journeys of each participant. Other artifacts that helped document and explore participant experiences served as additional data for the study, and included participant writings, commentary, and other published work.

Data Analysis and Reduction

There were multiple steps included in the data analysis portion of the study. The transcription of interviews served as the first step in the analysis process. After the completion of participant interviews, I transcribed verbatim the audio recordings. After completing each transcript, the interviewee was asked to review his or her transcript for accuracy. Any revisions or omissions requested by the participants were integrated into the transcripts.

Next, I started the data immersion process. At the beginning of this step, I read and reread the study's transcripts, field notes, documents, and artifacts. I reviewed each data set first by participant, and then a second time by source type. This process fully engaged me within the data. During this immersion process, I jotted down ideas that came to mind while reading and reviewing the data. These ideas took many forms, and I put no restrictions on allowing these emerging ideas to come forward during these short jottings. Generally, these jottings were hand written in the margins of the texts being reviewed.

Prior to this point, I did not fit the data into any previously constructed themes or patterns. The next step of data analysis included the use of multiple tools and conceptual processes to explore data as discussed by Crotty (1998). I started this phase by openly coding every line of collected data. I did not use any coding software to assist in the process. The coding process used was emergent in nature, in that I allowed for the natural emergence of patterns from within data sections. Specifically, I made use of memos as discussed by Creswell (2009) and Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) for the development of patterns.

Over eighty distinct codes initially materialized from analysis of the study's various data sets; however, as the coding process progressed, a series of overarching meta-themes (first-level) emerged and provided a participant-guided road map for understanding, contextualizing, and collecting numerous sub (second-level) codes. A significant amount of data was analyzed during this process, and the need to consolidate and prioritize useful codes, patterns, and themes was apparent. I utilized my jottings, memos, and code list to support the development of themes grounded in the consolidation and grouping of patterns that emerged during the coding process. Moreover, I focused on integrating multiple data sources into data analysis, and to assist in identifying the emerging themes, and to support credibility through triangulation (Patton, 2009).

Trustworthiness

Every substantive study must be cognizant of the trustworthiness of its data, findings, and conclusions. The trustworthiness of this study was grounded in Lincoln and Guba's (1985)

evaluative criteria. I used several techniques to achieve credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability within the study. Table 3 outlines the trustworthiness criteria, and the associated techniques that were utilized within the study.

Table 3

Trustworthiness Table

Criteria	Technique	Examples
Credibility	Prolonged Engagement Persistent Observation Triangulation	Time with Presidents Multiple Observations Multiple Research Sources
Transferability	Thick Description	Descriptive, Relevant Data
Dependability	External Assessments	Member Checks
Confirmability	Triangulation Reflexivity	Multiple Research Sources Reflexive Notes

Note. Information based on Lincoln and Guba (1985)

Summary

This chapter outlined the overall methodology employed by the study. It began with a statement of the problem, a review of the purpose statement, and an outline of the research questions. It then turned to an overview of the research design that guided the study, including a description of qualitative methodology as well as the study's conceptual components. A discussion of the research sites, participants, data collection, and data analysis were then covered in the procedures and methods section of the chapter. Chapter four will provide a more detailed explanation of the data, as well as provide an outline of the overarching themes that emerged from data analysis.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND THEMES

This study explored the preparatory (pre-presidential) experiences of university presidents and their perceptions about what best prepared them for the demands of leading today's institutions of higher education. This chapter will present findings from the process of data analysis. Over eighty distinct codes initially materialized from analysis of the study's various data sets; however, as the coding process progressed, a series of overarching meta-themes (first-level) emerged and provide a participant-guided road map for understanding, contextualizing, and collecting numerous sub (second-level) codes. Meta-themes include: academic culture, formative experiences, specific experiences, and soft skills. These overarching meta-themes provide the framework for the remainder of this chapter, and serve as an outline for greater description and detailed consideration, through the sub codes, of contemporary presidential preparation.

Tables 1 and 2, previously discussed in chapter three, are re-presented below to remind readers of important details related to six research sites and six study participants.

Table 1

Descriptors of Research Sites

Institution	Rural/Urban Classification	Community Population	Student Population
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University 2	Urban	~ 81,000	~ 17,000
University 3	Rural	~ 11,000	~ 4,500
University 4	Rural	~ 16,000	~ 5,200
University 5	Rural	~ 16,000	~ 4,500
University 6	Urban	~ 105,000	~ 6,000

Note. Information derived from www.census.gov/2010popmap and institutional websites

Table 2

Descriptors of Research Participants

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President 4	Non-Traditional	Spanner	Male
President 5	Non-Traditional	Stranger	Male
President 6	Traditional	Scholar	Female

Note. Classifications based on presidential pathways developed by Birnbaum (2001)

Academic Culture

The influence of academic culture on the contemporary university president was a prominent meta-theme. Higher education has a strong and historically rich culture, and this culture was perceived by presidents to have significant implications on their duties and power. Multiple participants highlighted, both explicitly and implicitly, the importance of recognizing academic culture, and having an appreciation for the embedded ways of the Academe.

When speaking about potential presidential candidates president five stated that “I would want them to have a broad understanding of higher education.” Similarly, president two expressed that he would want candidates to have a “strong familiarity with university persona, and the importance of academic culture.” President four had limited experience within higher education prior to his current position, but still identified how his brief experience working directly for a president in the early part of his professional career benefited his appreciation for the Academe “The two years I spent with the university president [as a special assistant] gave me the basic understanding of the university culture, and in dealing with the faculty.”

Three subthemes emerged beneath the umbrella of academic culture. First, participants identified the influence of faculty. Faculty play a significant role in academic culture and, as such, affect many facets of the university presidency. The participants spoke to the influence of this

constituency more than any other group. Second, participants discussed the implications of academic culture for those who come to the presidency from outside of higher education. Participants discussed many obstacles that academic outsiders face in the presidency. Third, participants emphasized the influence of academic culture identifiable through the value placed on PhD's, as well as in the enculturation that occurs within the credentialing process in higher education. These items affect how presidential candidates were evaluated, perceived, and accepted.

Faculty. *“Presidents do not always enjoy the goodwill, and in some cases, the respect of faculty. They have to work hard to earn it.”*

The importance of faculty emerged across the interviews of all the study's participants, who emphasized the influence this constituency has on academic culture. Moreover, the influence faculty have on academic culture was inextricably woven into the participants' descriptions of their preparatory experiences and their acceptance as viable candidates for the university presidency.

President one stated that “I think the fact that I also had been on faculty for several years gave me some credibility with the faculty, and so I think that was beneficial to me.” Further explaining this credibility, president one clarified that “being a member of the faculty at this institution let me develop a lot of relationships obviously because for a while I was one of them.” Being “one of them,” emic language used by the participants when referring to being a faculty member prior to the presidency, provided a context for understanding this important constituency. President one further expanded on the importance of this experience for her preparation by saying that “knowing some of the concerns and challenges that the faculty has and have to deal with, I think, lets me be able to speak the language of the faculty because I have been there.”

President two was clear on the importance he felt the faculty had on academic culture and specifically on the presidency. In his opinion, every potential president needs to have “a personal deep appreciation of the role of faculty.” President two also provided an overview of the

importance of his experience as a faculty member during his preparation for the university presidency. He stated that,

Presidents do not always enjoy the goodwill, and in some cases the respect of faculty. They have to work hard to earn it. I found that in all three cases [referring to his three presidencies], because of what I had done, that faculty were a) accepting or b) eager to have me serve in those capacities. So each of the three instances I had a very strong affirmation in the search process from the faculty associations about my candidacy. I know two instances of the three [referring to his three presidencies] that would have not come about had I not had a successful career in what they call a member of the faculty in the trenches. Obviously there is some sense of comradery, or understanding that they assume, because some of these people had been colleagues of mine in the past.

President three outlined a list of his most importance preparatory experiences, and his experience within education topped the list alongside his experience as a legislator (discussed in a later section). His description of his educational experience (as a primary education teacher), as well as teaching within the Academe, provided a picture of the influence a continuing perception of faculty identify has on faculty members' perceptions of their university president.

I think that's been very helpful dealing with faculty and knowing education issues. Keep in mind having been [at] a normal school, training teachers is one of our primary missions. I think that probably helped me with faculty relations. I still teach three hours of US History, one because I love to do it, and the other thing is that keeps me in the classroom. Faculty see that, but also I think it's a great connection with the students.

President four had no direct experience as a faculty member, and provided an outsider's view of the importance of serving as a faculty member prior to the presidency,

Well one thing I don't have, that I think you really should, is not having spent time in the classroom as a professor so you truly know why you are there. We are all here because of one thing, and that is the students. So I would think that I would cite that as a deficiency

in my record. I think it would have been important to have walked in the shoes of the tenure-track faculty member. And, I did not do that.

President six had faculty experience, and underlined the importance of this experience for her preparation for the presidency because, in her words, “it made it easier to collaborate with faculty.” She further explained that “I think it has been easier for me to have an academic background, and to have a faculty mentality. You are certainly accepted more quickly by people on the campus, deservedly or not.”

Implications for academic culture outsiders. *“...if you bring in someone as president of the university [who] has very little educational experience, I would presume that the faculty is going to be somewhat skeptical.”*

An additional layer within the influence of academic culture on the experiences of university presidents was the implication it held for those who came to the presidency as outsiders to the Academe. Many of the participants indicated that a president does not need to come from within higher education, and that a traditional pathway is not necessary for one to be successful as a university president. However, there are idiosyncrasies associated with academic culture that have serious implications for outsiders.

President five, who came to the presidency as an academic outsider, articulated various areas of concern associated with his lack of knowledge linked to academic culture. Specifically he stated that,

I was told I would be ill-prepared for shared governance. I think that kind of goes back to the culture thing a little bit. Those are easy words to say, and they have meanings that you think you know what they mean. But, exactly how far does that go, and at what point do you say this is how we're going to do it? I just didn't know the boundaries.

This president appeared unsure of the power that he would be afforded by the various constituencies across his campus. He felt his previous experience outside of higher education

provided him little context for this implication of both organizational structure and related academic culture.

President two felt there were benefits to traditional experiences in that they gave individuals an appreciation for the goals and outcomes of the Academe. He felt an unintended, and perhaps significant, negative consequence for outsiders was that their nontraditional experience limited their exposure to these goals and outcomes,

I know we have presidents coming from all over now and there is no pathway, but I still believe a strong familiarity with the goals at least of higher education if not the structure [is important]. I mean eventually you figure out how it works, but if you don't embrace the goals I don't think you can be really successful. I think you have to at least be able to talk about outcomes that positively affect other people. You have to have learned that somewhere. You have to appreciate that to be successful.

President three had a slightly different perspective on the implications for outsiders. Although an outsider to higher education, he did have previous experience within public education that he felt dampened the resistance he might experience as an outsider. He also specifically highlighted his experience as a state legislator,

There are some people that look at it and say oh hell here's another politician that couldn't find another place to go, and so he's going to higher ed. So there is a negative side to that. But in my unique case having my educational background, and that education was my vocation, I think helps a little bit take that political edge off. Some people might see me as the ex-politician legislator, but other people will look at it and say you know he's got a background in education, and he was in education before he was in politics. I think that education background helps tremendously. One because I know public education, but also because it helps offset what negatives there might be from my political background.

Moreover, president three went on to contextualize how an individual may be perceived based on his or her previous experiences through the lens of academic culture.

I would tell you this and not trying to stereotype all faculty or anything, but if you bring in someone as president of the university that has very little educational experience, I would presume that the faculty is going to be somewhat skeptical. They understand probably that part of the university is a business. You have got to be able to balance budgets. You have got to be able to raise money. But, faculty is a large part of that as well. They are the ones that carry out the educational mission. So I think for me having taught in the classroom, and having taught adjunct here, gave me some credibility when I became president. Had I not had that experience I think there would've been more skepticism. I'm not saying that it would've been long-lasting, but I think initially it would've been a lot more well this guy has to prove himself. I think that's fair anyway. I knew a lot of the faculty and that helped.

When speaking to the how an outsider candidate might gain some insight into academic culture, president one said,

I would say start talking to a lot of people who are in higher ed, and try to build your knowledge base. Right now we have two presidents who in our system kind of came from outside of higher ed, and I think what they would say is to do a lot of listening to try of find out about the environment that you're in, and embrace that environment and kind of find out as much as you can about it.

President one further outlined that it is important for an outsider to have an appreciation for the influence of academic culture, but also said that there are things an outsider can do to gain this appreciation for the implications associated with understanding the significance of academic culture across the various constituencies within higher education.

Multiple participants spoke about the resignation of the university president at the University of Missouri that took place in the fall of 2015. The president resigned after campus-wide protests erupted in response to perceived inaction by the president to respond to a series of racially based incidents that occurred on campus. Participants used this event to describe the

importance of academic culture within higher education, and implications associated with outsiders who operate beyond its norms. President five provided the most succinct description of these implications for outsiders:

I am intrigued by the University of Missouri situation. And I think [understanding it] is something that I have just begun to really learn in the last couple years. It is to my understanding they brought in a president at Missouri from private business. He began making decisions about how to reform and change the enterprise as if you were making it for a corporation. And, what I've heard explained is his real mistake was he didn't appreciate that a university has its own culture and its own cultural identity. You have to work within the confines of the cultural identity if you're going to make reform. I don't know a lot about that, but I do believe that maybe instinctively you understand that. I don't think the racial issues are necessarily what brought him down, but it was more so the last straw that broke the camel's back. He made business decisions, and that simply doesn't work at a university. You have to embrace the culture of the university, and it's very different than running a private business or public corporation.

PhDs/credentials. *“So there are expectations today in the Academe for credentials that, even if they are unspoken, they are embedded in the search and the culture.”*

Another subtheme that emerged within academic culture, and that was discussed by multiple participants, was the role credentials played in how university presidents are selected, evaluated, and perceived by those in the Academe. President five spoke to the unintended consequences associated with the institutionalization of the credentialing process for university presidents:

Currently, I believe the law in this state requires someone to have a terminal degree to be considered for a college presidency. Sometimes we try to do successor planning and successor training but, if you look around your campus some the people that you think might be really good potential successors for yourself are not PhDs. Most are not

interested in getting a PhD. I see certain people on my campus that have really good skill sets that are not going to be eligible for this position. So, I think that is a question that we need to keep asking higher education. Higher education thinks that everybody should have a PhD. There are a lot of great faculty members who do not have a PhD, and we all know that. And, I know a lot of PhD's that would make very bad presidents.

Although president five spoke to the direct requirement of specific credentials and the implications of such practices, president six provided an indirect or unspoken implication of the credentialing process within academic culture,

I think it is very hard to be accepted by faculty without the PhD unless you are a rock star of some sort. I know this fellow that is just fantastic and would be a fantastic president, but he doesn't come from the academic arena that a four-year or graduate institution is going to expect. He probably would be accepted without a lot of question at a community college, and I think that it's a shame. I know another fellow who is one of the smartest people that I have ever met in my life. He had kids and he married very young. He's not going to have a PhD and he is not even going to try to be a president, but he certainly is right on par with being a president. So there are expectations today in the Academe for credentials that even if they are unspoken they are embedded in the search and the culture. You're going to be fighting a much more difficult battle if you don't have those minimal credentials.

President five highlights that, in his opinion, many great candidates are not considered for the presidency as a result of the credentialing process, and those who make it past the marker without the credentials perceived to be necessary by the Academe should be wary of potential resistance they might experience as a result of their lack of formal credentials.

Formative Experiences

A second meta-theme that emerged from the data was pre-presidential formative experiences. The participants consistently described formative experiences that they believed

were vital to their preparation for assuming the university presidency. Within the formative experiences meta-theme four subthemes emerged. First, participants described having a history working with or near a higher education president; these experiences provided the participants with insights into presidential duties and expectations. Second, participants discussed the influence of mentors and mentorship on their development; these experiences provided guidance for presidential behavior and action. Third, participants expanded on the importance of professional variation within their careers; these variations exposed them to different areas of expertise, as well as different ways of leading. Fourth, participants highlighted the importance of the previous history and relationships many of them had with their respective institutions.

History with, or around presidents. *“I know that some people go from dean straight to president and some go from business to president, but I think that there is no better preparation than the cabinet level work where you are on a team leading a university together.”*

Many participants voiced that some of the most important experiences for their preparation for the presidency came from their direct working experience with or around other university presidents. These experiences tended to expose the participants to what president six called “hands on work” and being “in the workplace doing the real work.” Being “hands on” and “doing the real work” was further explained by president six who said,

You get to see how the president interfaces with vice presidents, and you get to see the scope of work for the whole university. So although I'm not going to be very good at telling you about investment policy and I'm not going to be great with the details of deferred maintenance for depreciation or debt, I have worked through it all side by side with other vice presidents. I know that some people go from dean straight to president and some go from business to president, but I think that there is no better preparation than the cabinet level work where you are on a team leading a university together. You get to see how people get in trouble and how to make the wrong decision. You see how they recover from them, and how they don't recover from them. It really saves you a lot of

pain and anxiety when you are doing it, because you feel like I've seen how that would go and I'm not doing that. It is really helpful.

President four also addressed the influence of experience with and around presidents had on his preparation for the university presidency. He explained how working directly for a president gave him an appreciation for key components of presidential duties, university culture, and constituents saying,

I spent two years at that university as special assistant to the president and director of state and federal relations, so I worked in a president's office for those two years. And what I think is probably more interesting is I worked with a nontraditional president. He had been a United States senator, and then he moved over to be president of a large university. The two years I spent with the university president gave me the basic understanding of the how the presidency works, how important university culture is, and how to deal with the faculty.

President two also explored how working for a president exposed him to a myriad of university-wide issues. This exposure provided him with a conceptual institutional awareness that few other campus constituents experience. He was provided direct access to issues and decisions that the president was dealing with, and described the importance of this formative experience saying,

From my earliest days in the late 1970s when I was already teaching and began working closely with my first president, because of my relationship with him and serving as assistant to the president; even though I was a full-time faculty member I also had this unusual entrée to the issues. It's almost like a minister without a portfolio in a parliamentary system where I was used by the president in a variety of circumstances, and often privy to some issues even the vice presidents weren't aware of at the time.

President two expanded further on the importance of his unique experience working near a president during a transition period that provided a distinctive lens into the duties and

responsibilities of the presidency. Moreover, it provided the opportunity for him to operate in a series of presidential like capacities.

In one of those provost positions I actually ended up in a very unique circumstance because the individual who hired me stepped down as president within two months, and so the person that took his place was an absolute delight, but was very unsure of himself in that particular realm. So he was the president, but I got to be closer than a heartbeat to the presidency. So that created an anomaly in that I was involved for those five years in every major decision the president took, not just with the outcome of the decision but the deliberation. That turned out to be enormously useful for me to understand how all this works. Now that this is my eleventh year, I feel very lucky and blessed I guess I could say with some of those earlier non-presidential experiences because they really did help me in a way I probably could not recognize at that time. When you walk into a place and six weeks later the president is gone and you're there and they are floundering and you got a new guy who is wonderful, but doesn't know what he's doing he knows a lot but doesn't know this job and everyone is sort of like looking at you because you're the experienced person in the room, well you know you have got to take yourself seriously enough to respond, but you also have to have the dark night of the soul as well. There is something a little invigorating about these being the facts, and you've got to deal with them.

President six spoke to two formative experiences that she felt best prepared her for the duties of the university presidency. She explained that the first was an American Council on Education (ACE) Fellowship through which she shadowed a university president for a year. This experience provided her with direct observational opportunities for immersion into the world of a university president,

The ACE fellowship takes primarily women and minorities who are talented administratively and puts them with a president for a year. It has changed since I did it,

and it has a little different flavor now. So I went to a major university in the Southwest from the university where I was working, and I spent a year shadowing the top people there. I had access to anything they were doing. I could be in any meeting. And ACE does four professional seminars over the course of the year, so it is a lot like an executive MBA in higher ed. And so it gave you an entrée into the world where you are with the president when bad news hits. You get to see how he reacts. You're with the deans when the provost is grilling them about something. You're noticing how they are reacting even though the provost is not, and you can tell him "hey did you notice that this guy was crying?" It just gives you a complete insight into a university. You become comfortable navigating the realms of power that are so intimidating when you first enter them. You learn how to talk to a governor. You learn how to talk to a senator. You learn how to be with wealthy donors. You learn how to have days that move through twelve to fourteen hours, and how you keep your energy up. You learn how you retain friendships and connect with family in those rigorous environments.

Mentors. *"They teach you about something by the way they are, not just by the way they do it."*

A related but separate subtheme that emerged from the formative experiences of the participants was the importance of mentors and mentorship. The participants described how their mentors helped them learn important lessons, helped them learn best practices, and helped them to think like a president. President two provided a description of the lessons he took from his experience with various mentors over the course of his career. He felt that mentors and "anti-mentors" taught him to behave by the way in which they did things saying,

I am totally appreciative of what I learned by watching others. I've had some terrific mentors. Some at a distance, and then some at up close. And I've also had the anti-mentor, where I learned a great deal about what I did not want to do in this job. So those mentors are huge obviously. I'm not so much fixed that I copied somebody, I think it's

almost implicit that you acquire those senses and attributes from those who you admire who do it the way you think it should be done. They teach you about something by the way they are, not just by the way they do it. That sort of strong character issue not shirt sleeve character. I'm talking about the stuff that really matters. Those people have taught me a great deal and still do.

President six discussed the importance of mentors and mentorship through her description of being a mentor for other individuals. She felt that it was her duty to help mentor individuals who she feels are likely to become university presidents in the future. She recognized that certain experiences are beneficial for the development of such candidates, and felt it is her duty to help mentor these individuals. In her responses she described not only exposing her mentees to useful experiences, but highlighted the importance she places on discussing the ins and outs of such experiences with her mentees saying,

Well I have mentored several people who became presidents, and I really take that very seriously. I am mentoring someone here that I am absolutely convinced will be a president, and I am mentoring another person from my past institution that I am absolutely convinced will be a university president. So basically what I do with them is externalize the challenges I am facing in my job, and not just focus on what their job is. So I will sit there and tell them anything they need to know about the whole dynamic of everything we are talking about, because where else are they going to get it? Then they are more likely to come to me and say "I had this happen how would you have handled it, or how could I have handled that better?", and you create a much more collegial equitable relationship where we are both trying to think like a president. I prefer to work with people who want to think like a president, because then you have stronger minded and more engaged hard-working people at the table. They want to do the whole thing. You're not trying to pit them against each other, or being competitive with the other vice presidents. Their read of things is completely different than the other person's read of

things, so I treat them like a fellow president in a mentoring capacity. And I try to create options in their portfolio that they would not have otherwise. If I can share athletics, I will give them athletics for a year. If they've never done IR, or if there are little pieces of things that will help them I will share with them. I get them, projects that are going to really look good when they go interview for a presidency.

Another component of mentorship discussed by the participants was the importance of succession planning. Many of the participants' mentors discussed how university presidents should continuously be thinking about the transition plan in place for leadership at their respective institutions. President three mentioned that his predecessor and mentor was extremely proactive in this area. He described how he felt this focus on succession planning was a good model to follow, and provided an example to help guide others' efforts in this area saying,

They also need to think forward about their own office. My predecessor did that. I think from day one he started thinking about being the best president he could be, but he knew he wasn't going to be here forever. He thought about who was going to take his place. I've already done that. I've got a couple of people that I think at some point would make great university presidents. So right now I think about how I help them get experience or shepherd them through. Granted I'm not going to pick that person because the governing board is, but if I take these people and they get the right experience and they have the right background I already know they have the love for the university. That is part of the role, and I don't know if that is necessarily something unique to this institution. My predecessor came to me and said I think you should be president. I had never even thought about it. To be honest with you I didn't think I ever wanted to do that. But he brought me here and set me on a pathway to my doctorate. In a since everything else was history. I thought a lot about that, and I think it was a good model.

Varied experiences. *“I think what best prepares an individual to become a university president is knowing a little bit about a lot.”*

Another subtheme to emerge within the formative experiences meta-theme was the importance of varied experience. All of the participants mentioned that they felt they benefitted from the variety of experiences they were exposed to within their careers. President two mentioned the value he received from working across a wide range of institutional types saying,

The variety of my background, its longevity, plus the different kinds of institutions that I served at from small private to large public, from rural to urban, and suburban all came together to give me what I think is a healthy sense of what the [president’s] job would be like.

President one described the value she felt she received by having been a student, employee, faculty member, and administrator at her institution prior to becoming president. She said that the varied experiences within a single institution gave her a holistic understanding of the organization and its constituents.

I actually started working at the institution as a classified employee as a clerk in the registry office when I first graduated with my undergraduate degree. I finished my masters then went into teaching, and did the doctorate and continued teaching and then moved to the Vice President, and then eventually to President. So having served in every level of employee from student worker to classified worker, to faculty member to administration to president lets me I think have a unique view point of all of those different levels. So I think that was very beneficial.

When asked about what experiences would best prepare an individual to be a university president, president one described the importance of variation in the preparatory process. She suggested that individuals who are looking to become a president find a way to diversify their exposure to the different areas of their organizations.

If it's someone on the faculty side or the Dean I would tell them to try to get out of that little silo, to be interested in things that affect other parts of the institution so that they do start developing some knowledge of student services or the business area. If they're in student services develop some knowledge of the academic side and the business side. All of those areas can try to be involved in the fundraising aspect. It doesn't really matter what level you're at, but to be thinking about that or engaged enough that you might be included in making an ask or something like that. So kind of that overall knowledge base if you're already in higher ed, expand your overall horizon from that little area you're in, because higher ed is very silo oriented, so try to break out of that a little bit.

When president three was asked about what types of experiences he would want to see in candidates if he were hiring a university president, he also highlighted the importance of varied experience. He felt strongly that the variation he experienced in his career path was beneficial to his preparation for the role of university president.

I know this might sound a little self-serving, but I think I would look at experiences that were in some way probably similar to mine. I think that varied background is important. I think if they were very young I would want them to have varied experiences...my experiences in business and politics were important.

President five also discussed the importance of varied experiences in his description of what he feels best prepares an individual for the university presidency. His response describes the diverse responsibilities of the university presidency, and how he feels an individual is best prepared to handle that diversity:

I think what best prepares an individual to become a university president is knowing a little bit about a lot. University presidents have a lot of interaction with faculty in the academic piece. There is also knowing federal finances, and how to deal with financial aid and grant writing. Then there is just dealing with the public. One thing I hear from people more than anything is that the president does, or does not get along with the

community. You have got to get along with parents. You have got to get along with people. You've got donors you have to deal with, and politicians you have to deal with. You have to learn to say no, and be okay with that. You deal with the NCAA. Athletics in itself is a complete entity. Being a college president is more like running a variety of enterprises than I realized. And, I think the public and the average person on the street doesn't understand how many different enterprises you have to be able to operate at the same time. So whatever would prepare somebody to be flexible enough to transition quickly from enterprise to enterprise would be a huge benefit.

History with the institution. *"I would not have been hired, nor would I have applied for the job, if I were not an alum."*

Having a history with the institution was another subtheme that emerged from the data within the formative experiences meta-theme. Many of the participants mentioned how influential a previous relationship or affiliation with their respective institutions was for legitimizing their candidacies, for creating their interests in the position, and for providing them with insight into the idiosyncrasies of their specific institutions. President five was very direct in this regard stating,

Something we have not talked about is that I am an alum of this institution. I would not have been hired, nor would I have applied for the job, if I were not an alum. So I think that the passion for the institution, and my family's history with the institution have prepared me to be better president for this institution.

President one spoke to the influence her longtime history with the institution provided not only for her candidacy, but also for the way in which she operates as president. She was influenced directly by the multitude of experiences she had at the institution from being a past student all the way to being the current president.

Well I didn't really have a traditional path to the presidency. For one thing I'm an alum and that doesn't occur that often. I actually started working at the institution as a

classified employee as a clerk in the registry office when I first graduated with my undergraduate degree. I finished my masters then went into teaching, and did the doctorate and continued teaching and then moved to the Vice President, and then eventually to President. So having served in every level of employee from student worker to classified worker, to faculty member to administration to president lets me I think have a unique view point of all of those different levels. So I think that was very beneficial.

President three also had a rich history with his institution. He is an alumnus of the school, he taught in the local community, and he served as an elected official for the region. Moreover, he also had experience working on the leadership team of his university before assuming the presidency there. President three was very clear about the importance his history with the institution played in his preparation and legitimacy of his candidacy.

Now let me mention something else that I think may have helped me. I am a graduate of this institution. People knew me, and I served in the legislature for this area. It's interesting that when I became president there were still a handful of faculty that I had for classes when I came here. I had faculty I was dealing with that I had teaching me whenever I was in class. That was really kind of a neat thing. I'll mention something else that hopefully gave me some credibility. I taught seven years here in the community at the high school level. A lot of the students that I taught were very successful. I taught history and government, and we were involved in a lot of research things each year. I would take people to national conferences, and one year we placed second in the nation. I taught a lot of the faculty's children so I was pretty well known already in this area because of my experiences at the high school. That helped tremendously with the faculty and with the community.

Specific Experiences

A third meta-theme to emerge clearly from the data was specific experiences that participants felt were beneficial to an individual's preparation for the university presidency.

Although each participant listed multiple experiences they felt were beneficial, there were four experience types that appeared across all participants. First, participants discussed the benefits of having previous financial experience. University presidents oversee multi-million dollar, and sometimes billion dollar budgets. Second, and closely related were the benefits associated with fundraising experience. Third, participants spoke to the political nature of their positions, and how previous exposure to politics helped prepare them to navigate complex social organizations. Fourth, participants spoke to the demands of managing complex organizations, including the benefits of senior management experience in their preparation for presidential duties. In particular skills related to people management dominated. The participants highlighted how their various experiences within these four categories of experiences were beneficial to their preparation, or how their lack of experience in these areas negatively affected their abilities as university presidents.

Finances. *“I think right now it is critically important to understand how the money flows, because there is less money and you can't afford for even a little bit of money to get away from you.”*

Financial experience was at the top of each participant's list of beneficial experiences for potential university presidents. The importance of financial experience was influenced not only by the exposure university presidents have to the financial aspects of their respective institutions, but also because of the current environment of declining resources within higher education. Today's presidents are increasingly asked to do more with less.

Many of the presidents spoke about their previous financial experience, and how these experiences were helpful for their preparation for the university president. Participant four discussed his private sector experience:

Well, having been in the private sector for eighteen years, having had to make payroll, and pay all my employees before I got paid. I think that has made me more conservative

financially than most university presidents seem to be, because I realize that there are scarce resources.

Participant four later went on to expand on the importance of his financial experience saying:

Like I stated before, the grasp of finances, numbers, and being able to read financial statements has been helpful. I found as a university president I actually have a pretty good handle on numbers and finances in a way that some academics do not.

Participant one did not have private industry experience, but she discussed the positive impact her previous experience with finances within higher education had on her preparation for the university presidency.

I spent 16 years before I was named president as the vice president for administration, and eventually executive vice president in a two VP System. So the academic VP had the academic side of the house, and I had basically everything else including finance, athletics, the physical plant, I.T. and so on. So I would say those experiences prepared me very well, and finances especially in the climate of declining resources and legislative issues with lower appropriations.

When asked about their preparations for the duties of the university presidency a few of the participants indicated that the financial area was the one for which they were least prepared. President six indicated that she felt least prepared in this area saying,

I will always be least prepared on the financial side. I have a doctorate in German. I can navigate international scenarios fairly easily, but when you put five sheets of numbers in front of me my eyes glaze over. What was good was I met somebody who made it fun and easy to learn. So what it takes is a colleague or partner to help. I would say that the numbers are always going to be my weak point.

When asked in what areas he felt least prepared for the university presidency participant two had a similar response saying,

When I first became president probably the financial area. I knew something about it, but I wasn't a finance major or anything of that business. I don't count it as weakness, but I certainly don't count it as a strength.

Regardless of whether the participants viewed their financial experiences as a strength or weakness, each of the participants highlighted the importance of today's university presidents having financial experience. This concern was attributed to the current state of funding within the higher education community. President five stated,

I think right now it is critically important to understand how the money flows, because there is less money and you can't afford for even a little bit of money to get away from you. Cost-cutting. People who know how to squeeze. Somebody who knows how to run a tight ship. I think that is critical right now for a college president, and that has not always been true.

Fundraising. *"If you can raise enough money you can be president anywhere."*

Fundraising was believed by participants to be closely related to financial experience. All of the participants discussed the importance of fundraising experience for university presidents, again because of today's environment of declining resources. Directly to this point president three stated "I have to be directly involved in fund-raising because of the challenges we see on the state revenue side. And that's [fundraising is] becoming more and more important."

When asked what types of experiences she would look for in a potential candidate if she were responsible for hiring a university president she responded,

...the need to know how to do fundraising. Until you've done that, you're not prepared. (Laughing) You really don't have any idea. It looks a lot easier than it is. I don't particularly enjoy fundraising. Right now we're in the middle of a capital campaign, and we're doing well so it's working but that's not something I particularly enjoy. And it is something that is very important anymore so it's something I know we need to do.

President four had a similar answer when asked what experiences he would look for in a potential candidate. He emphasized the importance of fundraising experience saying,

They are expecting more and more of university presidents to raise money, so if you could have any experience in fundraising to do that. If you can raise enough money you can be president anywhere. (Laughing). So I think fundraising skills are going to become more important as you see less and less public funds for public higher education.

President two discussed the lessons he learned from his previous experience with fundraising:

In fundraising I did not have a lot experience, well actually I did. I had some experience at another institution. It never deterred me, but I would not have called myself, as I took the job, well-schooled in that area. I believe that was acquired, but its boots on the ground and you learn by experience. When I was very young, long before I was president, I was asked to help start a foundation at a university that had no history of giving, outside of somebody dropping some money inside of a bucket every once a while. And while that was considered primal in the way that we did it, I learned a lot.

President three felt that his previous experience with raising funds for his institution, prior to his employment at the institution, was a significant factor during his candidacy.

When I worked in the governor's office I worked closely with this university on things like bond issues which put about \$12 million into the institution. The governor had a very pro higher education agenda, and I was involved with that. I think from that standpoint both the university and the governing board saw that.

Politics. *“That is public speaking, reading the mood of your constituency, listening to constituencies, responding to constituencies, and then knowing how to tell a constituency you can't help them or no.”*

Politics was an additional subtheme to emerge within the specific experiences mega-theme. Like experiences with finances discussed earlier, participants highlighted the implications

associated with their experience or lack of experience with politics in relationship to their preparation for the university presidency. President three indicated that “one of the more important things I did was public service in politics. The university presidency is a very political thing.”

On a different note, participant one indicated that she felt her lack of experience in this area was a weakness. When asked in what areas she felt least prepared for her duties as president,

Probably dealing with the legislative and political climate. You know in former roles I had never been very active in that particular side of the institution. There certainly are things that happen politically and legislatively governing boards, coordinating boards, and even into the accrediting bodies and that sort of thing.

President three discussed the negative perception surrounding politics within the Academe, but went on to discuss his feelings about its importance in relation to successful presidents saying,

Honestly; and I know this sounds negative, but individuals that might be presidents who came up with in the university setting might be a little naïve to how politics work. We understand how we think public education ought to work, but sometimes that might not be the realistic way things happen. It's about approaches. I think those experiences from my background have been very helpful. I think you see some other presidents that have a lot of those experiences and backgrounds. I think, and I hope that people can look to those individuals and say that those presidencies have been successful.

President four spoke specifically to a multitude of benefits he felt he learned from his experience as an elected official:

I can definitely say my experience in the state senate is very helpful. That is public speaking, reading the mood of your constituency, listening to constituencies, responding to constituencies, and then knowing how to tell a constituency you can't help them or no. I think that is something that a lot of college presidents struggle with, and that is knowing

how to head something off at the pass by saying that's not going to work here, or no we can't do something that way instead of just letting it fester. I learned a lot of that as a politician and state senator.

When asked what experiences he felt best prepared him to be a university participant five stated,

I would go back to probably being a mayor. Also, I grew up in a political family. My father was on the Supreme Court, and my grandfather was a judge appointed by the governor back in the 50s. So, I grew up in the shadow of the state capital.

Management, emphasizing people management *“The money is important, but it's the people management piece that keeps you up at night, or makes or breaks the progress you're trying to make.”*

All of the study's participants spoke about the importance of people management skills for their duties as a university president. This subtheme was the last to emerge from the specific experiences meta-theme. Presidents are responsible for the operational aspects of their respective institutions. They oversee complex institutions with constituencies that are both very diverse and highly independent. As such, management skills are essential for a university president in accomplishing his or her goals as the organizational head. When speaking to the primary skills one needs to possess as a university president, participant one stated that “I think it's down to management skills: managing people, managing budgets, and managing expectations.” Similarly, president four expressed that as a president “you need to realize that managing people and their expectations is going to be just as big a part of job as anything else.”

The importance of management experience for those looking to one day become a university president was highlighted by multiple presidents. President two suggested that potential new presidents have demonstrable experience in this area. To this point he stated, “I would like for them to have some management skills; whether it is in higher ed or not, but where

they have shown the ability to manage people and complete objectives. When speaking to those working within higher education, president four stated that presidential hopefuls should,

Try to find a place in administration where you have the largest amount of people reporting to you through the chain of command. It's interesting about management.

You've got to have the ability to communicate, be approachable enough, and have a management style where you are seen is a problem solver not just somebody who is out to get people.

President six spoke to the importance of management as she discussed the evolution of her priorities from her first presidency to her second:

The first time my presidency was more about me, and if I was doing the job correctly.

Now my attention is on others around me, and I whether together we are doing the job the way it needs to be done. So the people management piece is probably the most challenging part of the equation. The money is important, but it's the people management piece that keeps you up at night, or makes or breaks the progress you're trying to make.

Soft Skills

Related to the previous meta-theme that emphasized the management of people was the last meta-theme of soft skills. All the study's participants spoke specifically about the need for presidents to have soft skills in order to carry out their duties, and to overcome many of the obstacles they face when leading their respective universities. And, although the presidents did not discuss in detail the nature of the experiences that built their skills sets in these areas, the fact that they all mentioned soft skills as a necessary requirement for today's presidency indicated it should be included as an informative finding. When asked what was the top skill set she needed president one responded "I'm going to say it's the soft skill stuff." Similarly, when asked the same question president four stated "I think you need to learn social and soft skills."

Four subthemes emerged within soft skills. First, participants described the importance of communication in providing institutional vision, and in rallying a president's various

constituencies. Second, participants articulated the importance of a president's integrity in building honest and trusting relationships across his or her constituencies. Third, participants identified the importance of having people skills. People skills included the notion that the participants fully believe that an individual must be likeable, and relatable in order to have a successful presidency. Fourth, participants discussed the fluid nature of their jobs, and how the ability to be flexible was a necessity for success in the position.

Communication. *"I think you have to be able to communicate. You become the cheerleader for the institution, so you have to be able to articulate the vision of the institution, the values of the institution, and the mission of the institution."*

The most common soft skill subtheme was communication. Participants felt that communication was essential for individuals to build credibility, to serve as a unifying voice for their institutions, and to effectively bridge the gap among the extremely diverse constituencies that exist in and around universities.

President two spent a significant portion of his career developing his communication skills. After many years serving as a college president he reflected on the importance of this skill set saying "A dimension that prepared me well for this job was a career long focus on effective communication." Moreover, he went on to expand on the nature of the importance of this skill set:

You know your credibility in these positions really in some ways depends on your ability to relate well to a variety of individuals, and communicate in an honest and clear way all the things they want to hear and don't want to hear.

At the most basic level of explaining his belief in the need for this skill set president two said, "Communication is essential because it provides you with the ability to build honest relationships with others."

Part of relationship building upon which participants expanded was that university presidents must serve as a unifying voice for their respective institutions. Presidents serve as the

leading representative for their institutions, and their ability to communicate directly affects their capacity to weave together significant components of a university's identity. President one encapsulated the importance of communication as a function of a unifying voice saying,

I think you have to be able to communicate. You become the cheerleader for the institution, so you have to be able to articulate the vision of the institution, the values of the institution, and the mission of the institution. So I think communication is extremely important.

The participants further expanded on the importance of communication as a function of the diverse constituents that these individuals represent in their presidential roles. President three stated that "I think a person has to be able to communicate. Not only with his or her staff, but with the faculty and also with the community." President six was a professor of languages, and she felt her background helped her understand diverse groups, "I'm very good at communicating. I understand different cultures and different opinions."

The study's participants reported that their various constituencies (e.g. students, faculty, staff, governing bodies, etc) often had differing expectations for them. Moreover, participants reported that constituencies often had opposing desires that presidents need to be able to navigate. President four felt that communication was an essential skill set for managing these expectations and desires saying,

I think my ability to communicate consistently and clearly with the different constituencies on campus has been very helpful. You've got the faculty senate, staff association, and students. They all have different aspirations and different goals. I think you have to communicate with them, and try to coordinate their desires and yours. Then you somehow make a strategic plan to go the same direction. Politics was very helpful in that regard.

For participants, communication meant more than just giving speeches. President four highlighted the diversity of needed communication skill sets saying that effective communication

for university presidents is “public speaking, reading the mood of your constituency, listening to constituencies, responding to constituencies, and then knowing how to tell a constituency when you can help them or how to say no.”

Integrity. *“I know that I can't be everybody's best friend in this role, but I can certainly communicate with everyone in an honest way.”*

Integrity was another soft skill subtheme that emerged from responses across all participants. Participants viewed integrity as a component necessary for an individual to experience a successful presidency; however, president one also spoke to the transferability of this principle beyond leadership in higher education saying that “I think you’ve got to have commitment, good character, and integrity because those are the kinds of things that make anyone successful in any leadership position.” Participants discussed the importance of integrity specifically for university presidents, citing a need for transparency and honesty; integrity was also believed to be an important compass or guiding point for decision making when leading complex organizations.

President one believed integrity was an important component of legitimizing the university president:

I think integrity is extremely important because it seems like if someone does not have integrity it doesn't take very long for that to be known or to become known, and then there's no trust factor, and you're dealing with so many different constituencies in higher education that you've just got to have integrity to deal with them and be successful.

Participants also communicated the importance of transparency as a function of how their integrity is perceived by various constituencies. President two discussed how the title and position of the presidency potentially alters how he is engaged in various relationships:

There is a dimension of transparency that I think really makes a difference in these roles. My concern always has been that when you put on the mantle of responsibility and authority, [that it may] create necessarily a barrier to effective relationship building. I

know that I can't be everybody's best friend in this role, but I can certainly communicate with everyone in an honest way. Which doesn't mean I share everything with them all the time, but what I do share with them is true.

University presidents lead highly complex organizations. Moreover, they often face difficult decisions in these capacities. Multiple participants discussed the stress related to these two intertwined pressures of presidential leadership. When asked how they navigate such difficult obstacles, many presidents reverted back to their integrity as a guiding point for their actions and decisions. President five summarized how he utilized integrity,

Set a moral compass and stick with it. University presidents make really hard decisions in a lot of different areas. For example, you know we are undergoing some real funding issues in the state right now so we have to know what our compass point is that we will use to make those decisions. We have to know what moral compass point we will use when we deal with personnel issues. You want to be consistent. It really helps if you have a real solid baseline. There is just a lot of decisions that you make as a college president where it is unclear which way you should go. I can make a decision where there's ten ways to do something. How do I pick which is the way we are going to do it? I think at the end of the day you have a moral compass.

Similarly, president six spoke to an important lesson she learned from a mentor that she uses to guide her actions when dealing with complex interactions and decisions:

The guy who was my mentor was all about values. So we would go into meetings and something would happen and he would come out and we would talk through it. He would rarely talk about what specifically happened in that room. He would extrapolate the values that led to the conversation and to the decisions. That's where we should be dealing. That's where we should be operating. That keeps you from freaking out when something terrible happens or something scary happens.

People Skills. *“It’s about what kind of weather you create. You can’t give them perfect sunshine, but you can give them opportunity.”*

People skills was a third soft skills subtheme that emerged from the responses of the participants. Participants felt that presidents need to have superb people skills in order to handle the social aspects of the job, and to navigate the communal nature of higher education institutions. President two described the importance of these skills for university presidents saying that “I think you have to like people in this job. I just think that you do, because it eventually gets down to someone's life and if you have an impact on someone's life.”

President five provided an example to explain the importance of people skills that he found emphasized by various university constituencies during his transition into the presidency. In reflecting on his predecessor’s lack of people skills he said,

People skills. It sounds inconsistent with my last answer, but the perfect college president would have good people skills. You know my predecessor I never met. It has been widely reported to me that he had some really great ideas, but the implementation of those ideas was so poor that all he met was resistance. He couldn't get someone to agree that his ideas were good ideas, because of the manner in which he presented them. He didn't understand people even to the extent where he didn't even think about how people were going to accept his ideas. He didn't care how it was accepted because he knew the answer to the question. I think if you had the greatest idea in the world, but you can't convince people to get on your team or on your bus that you'll never leave the station. I think that is the genesis. If you look at the successful college presidents from this state they're all very personable people. I can provide examples, but people just like them because they're very likable human beings. If you're not likable than you have a lot of trouble encouraging people to play ball with you. I think that's a bed rock quality. You have to be able to get along with people.

Echoing president five’s thoughts, president one said,

It is essential for individuals hoping to be presidents to learn how to deal with a lot of different types of people of all different types of levels. You know treating people right, listening to them; you know not discounting them because of where they were at in the organization.

When discussing people skills, participants mentioned that presidents needed to generally like people, communicate with people, and know how to deal with multiple types of people. However, participants also mentioned that people skills include the ability to treat people right. President two mentioned that, in his view, the most successful presidents are the ones that master this skill.

I think the most successful presidents that I watch are those that really have transmitted to those that they work for that it's not what you say it's about how you treat people. It's about what kind of weather you create. You can't give them perfect sunshine, but you can give them opportunity.

Flexibility. *“We are here to guide through change with others, not to set the marker and let the tsunami come through and sweep it away because we were too afraid not to stick it in the ground.”*

A final subtheme to emerge under the meta-theme of soft skills was an individual's ability to be flexible. All participants mentioned that university presidents must be both willing and able to adapt to change. Presidents must be flexible to acclimate to the fluid nature of leadership within the higher education environment. President two said,

This notion of flexibility and an adaptive nature I think is critical, and I think what kills some presidencies is they become too rigid. You would be good to define what your role is, and what it means in static terms. You shouldn't start setting goals that are too stiff, and that are unyielding to the realities of change that go on around you. We are here to guide through change with others, not to set the marker and let the tsunami come through

and sweep it away because we were too afraid not to stick it in the ground. That adaptability is born of facing issues in the past where no one had a good answer.

President three felt that presidents need to be objective in the critique of their own ideas, and in their methods for accomplishing goals. However, he then added:

Being open to new ideas even if they are not your own. Being able to accept others ideas. Being able to know when you are wrong and change course. I think a lot of presidents are attuned to that now. I think in the old days you would see presidents that were and maybe this is just stereotyping, but they seemed like they were aloof. It was their way or the highway. I think a person has got to be very open minded. I think they have got to be willing to set out a path and follow it, but also realize that that they can be wrong and be able to change course too.

President four addressed flexibility and adaptability though the lens of uncertainty, highlighting the ever changing nature of day-to-day events in the presidency. Never knowing what unforeseen issue he was going encounter when he stepped into his office was viewed as a positive by him but also highlighted the need for a flexible approach.

What's great about the job is no two days are ever the same. You think you know what your day is going to be like, but it never really turns out quite that way. You never know what sort of conduct problem you're going to have, and so that's kind of exciting. There is never really a dull moment.

President six addressed flexibility and adaptability through the lens of self-evaluation and a desire for continuous learning.

Well I think the difference between the vice presidents that I have that are going to be presidents, and the ones who aren't is that the ones who are going to be the presidents if they want to be are self-critical and willing to learn. They don't get defensive when they fail, or if they want to see something done a different way. So it's that lifelong learning stance that we say is important in the Academe. The vice presidents I have who are never

going to make it are the ones who think they are great, the way they do it is just fine, and think I don't know what the hell I am talking about. (Laughing)

To her point, she also shared that her vice presidents:

just gave me the best darn proposal in plenty of time even though the meeting is in five minutes and I've never seen it before. So the people who are just not going to change are not going to make it. Being open to flexibility is really important.

Summary

This chapter started with a brief introduction to the four meta-themes that emerged from various data sources. These meta-themes include: academic culture, formative experiences, specific experiences, and soft skills. These overarching meta-themes provided the framework for the chapter, and served as an outline for greater description and analysis of presidential preparation through the examination of their associated subthemes. The final chapter will include further discussion of the study's findings, as well as outline the conclusion of the study with implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapters discussed the purpose of this study and explored relevant literature surrounding the university presidency. They also outlined the study's methodology and explored the various themes that emerged from data collection and the data analysis process. This chapter discusses the findings associated with the purpose of the study, contextualizes these findings within existing literature on the university presidency, and discusses implications for research, theory, and practice. Additionally, the chapter provides brief discussion on the limitations of the study, and the need for future research that broadens our knowledge about the professional preparation of university presidents.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore the preparatory (pre-presidential) experiences of university presidents and their perceptions about what best prepared them for the demands they experienced in leading today's institutions of higher education. Traditional and nontraditional university presidents at master's colleges and universities in the Midwest served as the study's population

Research Questions

What experiences do university presidents identify as having best prepared them to lead 21st century institutions of higher education?

1. Where and how were these experiences gained?
2. What experiences do current presidents believe will be the best preparation for those who move into the university presidency in the next decade?

Boundaryless Career Perspective

This study started with a review of relevant literature surrounding the university presidency. The review process provided an overall framework for the study's purpose as arguments over the benefits of various pathways to the presidency became clear, but these arguments seemed to undermine meaningful insight into beneficial preparatory experiences for the university presidency. A lack of discourse regarding the nature of experiences, regardless of pathway, that prepare individuals for the university presidency informed the study's design. To allow themes and findings to emerge freely without limitations from a predetermined theory I started the analysis process without a specific theoretical lens in mind.

During data analysis I completed a significant review of literature from multiple, and sometimes seemingly unrelated, fields in hopes of finding existing models, concepts, or systems that might be directly linked to themes that emerged from the study. Unfortunately, a gap in theory seems to exist, and we are without theory that provides a complete understanding of experiences that prepare individuals for the university presidency; thus the themes presented in the previous chapter, chapter four, are the result of open qualitative coding. However, as previously noted in chapter two, one perspective, that of the boundaryless career, aligned well and provided, *a posteriori*, important context for understanding the findings that emerged from my study.

Viewing this study's findings through the lens of Defillippi & Arthur's (1994) boundaryless career perspective provided a new context for analyzing the preparatory journeys of university presidents. It allowed the discussion to shift away from previous efforts of evaluating the preparatory process as a function of the pathway one takes to the presidency to a potentially more fruitful evaluation of the process as a function of meaningful experiences that provide for the accumulation of competencies essential for the successful navigation of presidential duties. Therefore, the boundaryless career perspective changed dialogue from a pathway based approach to a competency based approach of presidential preparation.

The boundaryless career perspective is rooted in change and introduces the “continuous adaptation of the organization – and so of careers – to a rapidly changing environment.” (pg. 308). Therefore, this perspective provided for a competency based perspective for evaluating preparatory experiences, but it also provided the context for understanding why a shift is necessary, namely change. Institutions of higher education are operating in a time of significant change (Duderstadt, 2012; Lowry, 2012, Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Duderstadt, 2007). Therefore, change factors understandably have serious implications for institutions of higher education and their respective leaders (Albach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2011).

Defillippi and Arthur (1994) describe the effects of environmental change factors that are occurring around organizational, occupational, and community contexts that, in turn, are promoting boundaryless career opportunities for professionals. These change factors include among other things “disconfirming traditional belief[s] about the stability of jobs...and inviting people to...adopt a more entrepreneurial approach in their work behavior” (p. 312). The authors argue that competency based accumulation “at the level of the person is better served by boundaryless career principles” (p. 312). Moreover, the authors’ shared perspective is that “competency accumulation through boundaryless careers can make a critical contribution to the unfolding competencies of firms and their host industries” (p. 312).

Therefore, Defillippi and Arthur’s (1994) boundaryless career perspective offered meaningful context for analyzing what emerged from my study by providing a competency based perspective for considering the alignment of contemporary university presidency competencies with individual career competencies. Moreover, the competencies outlined by the boundaryless career perspective are divided into three categories that closely aligned with themes of career competencies discussed at large by my participants; these are outlined in more detail through my individual findings below. These competencies were described by my participants as essential for the university presidency, and were accumulated through various preparatory experiences on their ways to their respective presidencies.

General Findings

Through consideration of the various themes that emerged during a data analysis process bereft of the use of any specific theory as a lens, three overarching findings materialized. These findings contextualized and bridged seemingly unrelated themes into a coherent view of the types of experiences that the participants felt best prepared them for their presidencies. More directly, the findings represented experiences that developed essential competencies that helped prepare potential candidates for leading universities in the 21st century. Altogether these findings resembled the know-why, know-how, and know-whom competencies discussed by Defillippi and Arthur (1994) within their boundaryless career perspective.

Finding 1: The importance of know-why competencies. *Preparatory experiences that enculturated individuals to the understood values and perceived purpose of the Academe were critical to their abilities to successfully navigate the academic culture of their respective institutions.*

Much has been written about the influence of culture within organizations, and it has become one of the most significant variables discussed in organizational research (Martin, 1992). Culture has been viewed as a tool that leaders can utilize for improving institutional effectiveness (Schien, 2004), a context for explaining how organizations and their constituents behave (Weick, 2001), and a metaphor for understanding why organizations operate as they do (Morgan, 2006). Within the context of higher education, there are various constituencies who hold very specific cultural expectations for university presidents (Fleming, 2010). For example, one commonly held set of expectations are rooted in historical values tied to the Academe and relate to a valuing of a prescribed code of conduct for the university presidency that encourages congruence between these traditional expectations and presidential behavior (Fleming, Braxton, & Bray 2012, Dubois & Shurlock, 2006).

DeBoy (2015) highlights a call to action for stakeholders to stand up to new organizational leaders that might force change that runs counter to accepted cultural norms within

the Academe. Hilton and Jacobson (2012) and Morin and Kramer (2010) document serious implications for institutional leaders who underappreciate the culture of their respective institutions and whose failure to appreciate organizational culture undermined their ability to lead. The overall importance of organizational culture is therefore closely tied to a leader's ability to, at least initially demonstrate respect and alignment with organizational motivations, beliefs, values, and identity.

Know-Why Competencies

Defillippi and Arthur (1994) explain that know-why competencies “answer the question ‘Why?’ as it relates to career motivation, personal meaning and identification. Accordingly, people's beliefs, values, and identities are the target for the persistent, frequently tacit, messages to employees that stem from a firm's culture” (pg. 308). Multiple participants within my research spoke to the importance of understanding the question “why are we here?” within the context of higher education institutions. One participant stated “I think you really should have spent time in the classroom as a professor so you truly know why you are there.” Another felt that “if you don't embrace the goals I don't think you can be really successful.” Therefore, the participants reiterated the importance of having know-why competencies. Presidents must provide some assurances of the alignment of their individual beliefs, values, and personal identities to those of their respective institutions, as well as the Academe.

The most obvious example of experience that communicated the values and perceived purpose of the Academe, and demonstrated know-why competencies, was working in education, specifically higher education. These experiences included but were not limited to professional employment as a staff member at a college or university, professional employment as a faculty member at a college or university, active participation in the production of scholarly research, experience teaching within the classroom, participation in shared governance practices, and the completion of a doctoral degree. Participants believed that exposure to the Academe's values and perceived purpose helped provide them with essential know-why competencies. These

accumulated competencies also provided benefits to the study's participants in three specific areas: credibility of academic excellence, credibility of being an insider, and a demonstrable appreciation for the role of faculty and what they do.

Credibility of academic excellence

One of the more compelling components of finding 1 was the academic credibility that emerged for those with previous professional experience in higher education. Particularly individuals with previous practice in academic research indicated that their experiences prepared them in indirect ways for their duties as a university president. Academic research experience was viewed as evidence that the participant was familiar with the goals and outcomes of the Academe. This finding underscores the perceived importance of the university president's role in academic leadership (Singell & Tang, 2013). Whether an individual is a nationally recognized scholar or simply passionate about education, those who serve as university presidents are expected understand and respect the values of the Academe (Fleming, 2010; Ekman, 2010, Bolman, 1965).

Presidents have long been viewed as the symbols of institutions (McLaughlin 2004). They are evaluated by many on their academic accomplishments or their commitment to the promotion of academic values. This is important because the prestige of their institutions is often gauged by the quality of education associated with their organizations (Bornstein, 2003; Singell & Tang, 2013; Burton, 2003). In his description of essential qualifications for the university presidency, Foster (1913) found that the first obligation of a university president was that he or she must be a leader within the academic community with continued academic contributions to knowledge from a specific field of study. Therefore, preparatory experiences that demonstrate the academic qualification of a potential university president provide evidence to the academic constituencies that he or she is a candidate with appropriate know-why competencies for leading an institution of higher education.

The study's traditional participants supported the value of demonstrable know-why competencies by explaining how their academic experience provided them opportunities to prove

their commitment to the pursuit of knowledge associated with academic contribution. The study's nontraditional participants highlighted the negative implications of their lack of academic training. These participants had minimal professional higher education experience or had little experience participating in scholarly activities; they indicated that their lack of involvement in these areas led to perceived academic credibility concerns among their constituents. However, this lack of academic production was softened when nontraditionals demonstrated their commitment to education through the attainment of an advanced degree.

While both the traditional and nontraditional participant groups agreed that the production of scholarly work itself does little to prepare an individual for the actual duties of the presidency, participants' perceptions of their academic training and experiences align with previous findings that nontraditional university presidents are seen as more successful if they have experience in higher education and report having a doctoral degree (Selingo, 2003; Basinger, 2002a). In keeping with the idea that the scholarly work itself is not what positively contributes, few university presidents admit to continuing scholarly activities during their presidencies (McFarlin, Crittenden, & Ebbers 1999). However, there are serious implications for individuals who do not have doctoral degrees or demonstrable experience within the Academe. These individuals face issues of credibility concerns from internal constituencies.

Credibility of being an insider

Over and beyond the academic credibility that comes with competency accumulation in higher education, many of the study's participants spoke about their strengths in understanding academic culture and the implications associated with being an "insider." The nature of these experiences provided a context for university presidents to understand and appreciate the concerns and challenges of internal constituencies. These experiences also provided an appreciation of the history and values associated with the Academe. Altogether participants felt that the pathways associated with more traditional experiences provided them with insider credibility.

Participants with more traditional experiences reported that they were viewed by internal constituencies as being “one of them.” Their previous experiences in higher education provided them with opportunities to learn to speak the emic language associated with academic culture. It helped develop a sense of collaboration needed for shared governance. It also provided individuals with opportunities to develop or appreciate the faculty mentality. Outside of the specific experience of engaging academic constituents, participants reported that traditional experiences provided them the opportunity to understand what goes on at a college or university, what happens on campus, and how the environment operates.

The study’s participants discussed how previous higher education experience could come in many forms like being a student, staff member, or faculty member, and beyond. However, they also spoke to the meaningfulness of building relationships with the specific institutions they wanted to lead. Many of the participants mentioned the influence of a previous relationship or affiliation with their respective institutions as avenues for legitimizing their candidacies, for generating their interests in the position, and for providing them with insight into the idiosyncrasies of their specific institutions’ day-to-day life. Previous experience with specific institutions provided not only legitimacy for their candidacies, but also informed the way in which the study’s participants operated as presidents. Participants reported that they were influenced directly by the multitude of experiences they had with their specific institutions prior to assuming their roles as presidents. These experiences provided for the development of meaningful know-why competencies for their respective institutions.

Appreciation for faculty and what they do

An additional component that participants discussed at length was the importance of demonstrating genuine appreciation for faculty and what they do in the classroom. For many of the participants this appreciation came from a participants’ previous experiences in education and provided for the further development of their know-why competencies. Although the importance of numerous constituencies was discussed by the participants, special emphasis was placed on the

importance of the faculty. As discussed by one of the study's participants "[p]residents do not always enjoy the goodwill, and in some cases, the respect of faculty." This constituency is an extremely important group for presidents to understand and from whom to garner support. Participants indicated that it was vital for their success to have an understanding of what faculty do in both research and within the classroom. Moreover, the participants indicated that integrating this group into the university decision making process was important for institutional buy in and support.

Similarly, Fleming (2010) found that normative patterns of behavior exist for university presidents and that faculty, among other constituent groups, evaluate presidents based on these norms. Birnbaum (1992) found that the success or failure of a president is directly related to the communication and interaction he or she has with faculty. Participants in Birnbaum's study viewed presidencies as failed when there was a breakdown in shared governance exemplified by instances where faculty rights were violated or individual action by the president was seen as unsuccessful. By contrast exemplary presidencies revolved around faculty interaction and influence. Besimon's (1991), Fleming's (2010), and Birnbaum's (1992) findings about the role of faculty and the presidency all represent the overall process of socialization that occurs within the traditional pathway discussed by Cohen and March (1974).

Some of the participants who had higher education experience discussed memorable instances where previous presidents gave the impression of partnering with university faculty members instead of leading them. These favorable encounters provided a forum for the faculty voice to be heard and for open dialogue to occur on university-wide matters. In some instances, previous presidents also assumed the role of followers in which they listened and acted upon the desires of the faculty. This presidential gesture of advocating for faculty interests helped to establish a critical component of their images among this influential constituency. It is essential for this constituency to feel assured in the alignment of organizational competencies and career

competencies of their university presidents. For them, demonstrable know-why competencies provide evidence of this alignment.

Finding 1 Implications

The responses of participants showed that an absence of the academic enculturation that occurs through traditional experiences may limit an outsider's ability to understand the goals and outcomes of the Academe, and it may undermine the accumulation of essential know-why competencies. Without those capabilities, it may be hard for a president to be successful in his or her duties. Participants reported that individuals with limited know-why competencies tend to face skepticism when they come into a presidency. They have a period during which they must prove themselves. Therefore, participants without traditional experience should look for opportunities to expand their knowledge of academic culture prior to assuming the presidency. Once in the role of president, they must embrace the institutional culture. They must find experiences that expose them to shared governance structures, and they should avoid decisions or a decision-making process that runs counter to academic culture. Those who do not adhere to norms will likely face substantive opposition and backlash.

Finding 2: The importance of know-how competencies. *Experiences that helped individuals develop knowledge and expertise for specific job functions or duties were important preparation for the presidency.*

Previous research concerning the university presidency has attempted to more thoroughly understand the importance of several skill sets to the position (American Council on Education 2000, 2002, 2007, 2012). Multiple authors (McNair, Duree, & Ebbers, 2011; Freeman & Kochan, 2013; Feinberg, 2012) have conducted interviews and looked at survey responses from university presidents to hear directly from this constituency about the skill sets they feel are necessary for the successful navigation of presidential roles and responsibilities. Plinske and Packard (2010) as well as Hamos, Hefferman, Neuman, and Storbeck (2014) documented the various qualifications and competencies that trustees and governing bodies look for in presidential candidates.

Similarly, Greenwood and Ross (1996) provide insight from executive search firms to the competency preferences of university presidential selection committees. However, external and internal changes within higher education seem to be directly affecting the duties and responsibilities of university presidents (Bok, 2014; Christensen & Eyring, 2011; DeBoy, 2015). These changes may make it even more important that individuals gain through their preparatory experiences specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for the contemporary university presidency.

Know-How Competencies

Defillippi and Arthur (1994) explain that know-how competencies “reflect career relevant skills and job-related knowledge” (pg. 308). For participants in my study, there were multiple experiences that supported the development of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for the university presidency. The most obvious example of these preparatory experiences was working directly in financial, administrative, or managerial capacities. These experiences included but were not limited to professional employment in senior level management positions within higher education, serving as organizational executives in private industry, and owning and operating one’s own business. Regardless of whether they took a traditional or nontraditional path to their positions as presidents, every participant discussed how previous experiences helped develop knowledge and experiences for specific presidential job functions; these prior experiences were beneficial preparation for their current duties. Finding 2 can be further detailed into three areas that participants believed provided for the meaningful development of specific know-how competencies: financial experience, management experience, and direct working experience with university presidents.

Financial experience

With financial burdens increasingly mounting at institutions of higher education this environmental change factor is one of the most significant problems modern university leaders must address (Shirvani, 2009; Astin, 2004; Waugh 2003). This study’s participants agreed that university presidents must navigate the changing financial landscape in their roles as institutional

leaders. All the participants spoke to the importance of having financial knowledge for successfully navigating the roles and responsibilities of the position. Both nontraditional and traditional participants felt that finances are becoming more scarce, and highlighted that previous financial experience is important for dealing with this new reality. These experiences supported the development of know-how competencies for navigating the financial complexities of running their respective institutions.

Historically, public universities like those led by the study's participants received a significant portion of their revenue from state allocations. However, over the last few decades public institutions have experienced a drastic drop in this form of support (Mortenson, 2012; Jones, 2011; Jones 2010). State governments are increasing the number of programs they are funding at a time when their revenues are decreasing. The result is that entities like higher education are asked to do more with less. Therefore, resource acquisition is a fundamental role through which university presidents address the growing financial pressures confronting institutions of higher education (Feinburg, 2012; Barden, 2010; Denton & Moore, 2009; Dowdall, 2001a).

Further complicating the issues associated with financial pressures are rising costs of utilities, payroll expenses for an expanding workforce, construction for new buildings and building research programs, technology infrastructure updates and licensing, and a whole host of other cost increases. New resources are necessary for institutions to build new facilities to attract the top students and staff (Masterson, 2010). The acquisition of resources is also closely tied to the prestige of an institution. University presidents are, therefore, expected to engage in activities that assist the attainment of these components. Moreover, presidents are expected to devote time to expanding an institution's access to federal funding and advanced research dollars.

Fundraising is one of the primary responsibilities of university presidents (Nelson, 2009). It was mentioned that in the American Council on Education 2007 report on the university presidency, university presidents classified fundraising as the activity that occupied the largest

share of their time. However, they also reported that this activity was the duty that they felt least prepared to perform. These two findings remained representative of participant responses in the Council's 2012 report. Moreover, each of my participants underscored the value placed on fundraising, and each indicated their uneasiness with this primary responsibility. The importance of fundraising experience is well documented, but it also has multiple other benefits for university presidents. Individuals with significant fundraising involvement within higher education have unique experiences with campus wide initiatives that build their relationships with key constituents and expose them to the internal leadership structure of how institutions operate (Masterson, 2010).

Participants reported that previous experience with finances, including fundraising, helped them to better understand how money flows both to and within their universities. Each of the study's participants highlighted the demands associated with the financial oversight of their respective institutions. For many of the participants the helpful preparatory experiences they described included opportunities where they were responsible for sizable budgets. They also included previous experience interfacing with financial documents and exposure to accounting responsibilities. Some participants spoke about beneficial experiences in which they were included or exposed to improving operational efficiencies associated with programs or organizations.

In general, the study's traditional participants felt less prepared for the financial demands of the presidency than did their nontraditional counterparts. Moreover, the nontraditional participants tended to be more comfortable with handling fundraising expectations. The study's participants felt that even small amounts of fundraising experience were helpful preparation in this important area of presidential responsibility. Presidents of both traditional and nontraditional pathways felt that fundraising would continue to be extremely important for future university presidents. Bringing new resources to their institutions is a fundamental role and expectation of university presidents (Feinburg, 2012; Barden, 2010). Whether they are experienced fundraisers

or not, candidates must understand that this function is a necessary part of their duties as university or college presidents (Masterson, 2010). The financial woes confronting colleges and universities across the nation are the primary causes in the growing demand for university presidents to bring resources to their respective institutions. With declining state and federal support, university presidents find themselves educating and engaging legislators and the public about the funding and resource issues confronting higher education. Each of the participants discussed the importance of experience in this realm of educational outreach.

Management experience

Over and beyond the accumulation of financial experience, the participants expounded on the importance of previous experience in organizational administration and management for the development of additional know-how competencies. It is well known that today's colleges and universities operate as complex organizations. University presidents face a myriad of obstacles in managing the modern university with all its interconnected functions and constituencies (Flawn, 1990). Presidents are not expected to simply lead institutions by providing vision but, in this age of accountability (McPherson 2009), they are also expected to actively participate in the management of their institutions. This means that they must oversee the operational use of organizational resources in the most effective and efficient manner (Wartell, 2016). All the study's participants discussed the importance of management experience in their preparational journeys. The nature of these experiences provided participants with opportunities to develop skill sets for organizational oversight in human resources, finances, long-range planning, and a host of other tools for managing complex organizations. These tools seemed to be collected over a series of experiences, and were sharpened by steady increases to the participants' responsibilities along their pathways to the university presidency.

Duderstadt (2007) claims that "the management responsibilities of university presidents are considerable, comparable to those of the CEO of a large, multinational corporation" (p. 3).

The participants all noted the challenges they faced managing the disparate components of their

respective institutions. Therefore, professional variation across experiences provided an avenue for the participants to develop know-how competencies for managing complex organizations. One participant stated “what best prepares an individual to become a university president is knowing a little bit about a lot.” The participants discussed the value associated with being accountable for different aspects of an organization, and highlighted the preparational benefits associated with the management of those items. The value created by professional variation, and the limitation associated with organizational career specialization directly relates to the propositions of Defillippi & Arthur’s (1994) boundaryless career perspective namely that “competency accumulation through boundaryless careers can make a critical contribution to the unfolding competencies of firms and their host industries” (p. 312).

University presidents are increasingly expected to manage institutional operations (Denton & Moore, 2009). Operations have a broad impact on the learning environment and institutional planning process, and are a significant issue to be dealt with by college and university leaders. The operation of university campuses, the oversight of university programs, and the management of university personnel are highly complex tasks. The study’s traditional participants tended to feel that professional variation within academic institutions and across different academic institutions, provided them with a healthy context of what the presidency would be like. To them these experiences provided a holistic view of their institutions and associated constituencies. The study’s nontraditional participants tended to speak to the strength of their experiences in terms of running diverse organizations. These experiences provided them with a variation of managerial responsibilities, and with final accountability for the performance of their organizations regardless of industry.

Working alongside presidents

The complexity of university leadership is well documented in existing literature. University presidents are viewed as the symbols of institutional vision, mission, and culture (Michael, Schwartz, & Balraj, 2001; Fisher & Koch, 1996; Trow, 1985). The participants of my

study confirmed the intimidating expectations associated with each of these items in their roles as university presidents. McLaughlin (2004) provides a broad analysis of the roles and expectations placed on university presidents, and categorizes them into leadership, management, and governance. Juggling the many idiosyncrasies of the presidency is a difficult task (Kerr, 2001), and my study's participants discussed the complexity of leading their respective institutions. From the participants' perspectives, perhaps nothing better prepares them than having direct access to those serving as university presidents or participating in programs specifically designed provide exposure to the duties and expectations associated with the presidency (Gardner, 2016).

Preparatory exposure to experiences that develop know-how competencies associated with working directly with and around a university president reportedly came in many forms. Individuals were direct reports for a university president. This included but was certainly not limited to serving as a member of the president's cabinet, as a division head, or as a special assistant in some capacity. Exposure to the duties of the presidency also developed through some sort of formalized development program like the American Council on Education's ACE Fellows Program, Harvard's Seminar for New Presidents, and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' New Presidents Academy. However, the variety of these programs and their focus is not standardized and some seemed to be more suitable than others depending on individual and institutional fit. Experiences also took the form of informal mentorships at the discretion of presidents who were looking to support and develop individuals they felt had the potential to become university presidents in the future.

Integrating the complex components of presidential leadership is difficult, and the study's participants indicated that working directly with and around university presidents was one category of experiences that they felt best developed essential know-how competencies for the position. Experience working directly with and around university presidents helped contextualize the role, as well as duties and expectations of the position; many participants felt there was no better preparatory experience for the position than gaining first hand exposure to a president's

daily routines, tasks, and responsibilities. Hearing directly from university presidents about the nature of their roles and responsibilities provided an unprecedented view of the office (Nelson, 2014)

Those working alongside a university president in a formal capacity were provided the opportunity to experience or glimpse the “real work” associated with the presidency. In this sense, working with university presidents provided a type of on-the-job training for those who aspired to the position. This form of practical job training can be structured and is considered to be one of the top mediums for competency development (Jacobs, 2003). Individuals with experiential opportunities with presidents saw how presidents interacted with various constituencies and navigated the different realms of power that surround the position. Many of the participants felt that these structured preparatory experiences provided them with a unique “entrée” into the issues to which others outside of the president’s inner circle would rarely be exposed. To this point, structured on the job training considers unique occupational, environmental and organizational characteristics (Choi, Lee, & Jacobs, 2015). The nature of these experiences allowed individuals the opportunity to learn by engaging in presidential activities first hand. They provided opportunities to observe how presidents behaved, and see the effects associated with such behavior in given situations. These experiences also provided individuals unique access to information seldom seen beyond the presidency. Individuals that worked with or alongside university presidents were exposed to the innerworkings of the position. They were provided exposure to the various operational components and responsibilities of leading complex institutions. Moreover, they were provided opportunities to observe how presidents experience and respond to their successes and failures. Finally, experience working alongside a university president exposed individuals to the multifaceted decision making process confronting presidential leadership.

Individuals working alongside university presidents in mentee capacities can be provided unique sets of experiences that expand their responsibilities and develop their know-how

competencies. The influence of mentorship on the preparatory experiences of university presidents is well documented (Boerner, 2016; Freeman & Gasman, 2014; Tunheim & Goldschmidt, 2013). These experiences tend to be consultative in nature, provide encouragement for career development, and they provide individuals with an opportunity to “think” like a president. Additionally, mentorship opportunities may facilitate the development of individuals from populations underrepresented in the university presidency (Mishra, 2007; Bates, 2007). My study’s traditional and nontraditional participants felt mentorship experiences were extremely beneficial to their preparation. Moreover, both traditional and nontraditional participants said that formal transition periods where mentorship opportunities could occur would be beneficial experiences for those assuming their new roles as university presidents. Creating mentoring opportunities provides a proactive medium for identifying and preparing potential candidates; they also provide a way to incentivize the development of individuals that presidents feel would be effective successors.

Finding 2 Implications

Participant responses and literature indicate that individuals coming to the university presidency would be well served to have experiences that help them develop skill sets for dealing with the momentous financial challenges confronting higher education. Moreover, experiences where individuals can develop their abilities to effectively administer and manage complex organizations is an essential element of presidential preparation. Specifically, pathways that provide professional variation is imperative to the preparation for oversight and accountability of the disparate components found at institutions of higher education. Additionally, individuals pursuing the presidency should look for opportunities to work directly with those who are already serving as university presidents. These experiences provide individuals with insight to the “real work” of the position, and a unique perspective to the challenges of leading institutions of higher education in the 21st century. Moreover, experiences that helped individuals develop knowledge

and expertise for specific job functions or duties provided for the development of essential know-how capacities for the university presidency.

Finding 3: The Importance of know-who competencies. *Experiences that fostered opportunities for individuals to develop interpersonal skill sets and to learn to navigate social networks were essential preparation for the university presidency.*

The importance of leveraging networks and developing interpersonal skill sets has long been recognized within scholarship on leadership and organizational effectiveness. The ability for individuals to utilize these tools is a recognized form of emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, & Sitarenios, 2001). Emotional intelligence can improve one's self awareness and social awareness. Moreover, it can help managers improve team dynamics (Mersino, 2013).

Additionally, the development of interpersonal skill sets and networks can serve a:

number of functions, such as building support, negotiating with others in an agency's external environment, contributing to the management of multiorganizational efforts, exploiting opportunities, protecting the core organization from challenges or threats, and sometimes helping move a set of organizations toward an objective. (O'Toole, 2015, p. 362).

However, it is important for today's university presidents to engage in external networking activities because of a climate that appears to be increasingly hostile toward colleges and universities (Rabovsky & Rutherford, 2016).

There is an ever-growing number of groups with which university presidents must communicate (Bok, 2014). And, there are serious obstacles leaders face when leading complex organizations with large internal and external constituencies. One of the most difficult obstacles to navigate are the various perceptions that can exist among these constituencies about organizational purpose. Often the ideals of the different constituencies are in direct conflict with one another (Boschken, 1994; Siegel, 2011). Lowry (2012) referenced this juggling act as "managing polarities." Moreover, university presidents who do not adhere to prescribed modes of

conduct (Fleming, 2012), force action without efforts to balance stakeholder interest, or fail to establish constituent buy-in face legitimate concerns about the loss of their jobs (Hilton and Jacobson, 2012). Therefore, experiences that expose individuals on their preparational journeys to opportunities for engaging various constituent groups and managing various interests is beneficial to their development of know-who competencies.

Know-Who Competencies

Defillippi and Arthur (1994) explain that “know-who competencies reflect career relevant networks, and refer to how people contribute to inter-firm communication” (pg. 309). Therefore, know-who competencies represent the personnel and professional networks that an individual can leverage for career development purposes, as well as to advance the goals and outcomes of their organizations. For my participants, there were a multitude of experiences that provided them developmental opportunities for expanding their networks and improving their interpersonal skill sets. These opportunities included senior level management positions; political experience; participation in social, industry, and civic organizations; leadership development programs; and representing institutions at community events and conferences. My participants felt previous experiences that helped advance their interpersonal skill sets were beneficial preparation for their duties as university presidents and helped in the development of essential know-who competencies. This primary theme can be further divided into two specific areas of navigating the social complexities associated with presidential responsibility: communication and people skills.

Communication

A significant factor of change in the higher education environment is the general acknowledgement that institutions are agents for the communities in which they reside. Simon (2009) states that universities are continuously evaluated on their ability to adjust to the growing demand for their presence in matters of local, national, and international concern. And, university leaders are expected to serve as institutional representative to the greater public (Barden, 2010). As symbols of their universities (Michael, Schwartz, & Balraj, 2001), presidents are expected to

participate in numerous events and various speaking engagements. Therefore, communication is essential to carrying out recognized presidential duties. Many of the participants spoke to experiences engaging in external affairs that helped prepare them for these responsibilities. Some participants pointed at their previous experiences in politics as being particularly fruitful in this regard. Participants from traditional pathways spoke to previous opportunities representing their institutions at community events, serving as subject matter experts on panels, and presenting at major conferences as helpful preparation for their development of know-who competencies.

University presidents are also expected to be visionary leaders for their respective institutions (Denton & Moore, 2009; Fisher & Koch, 1996). Communication is an essential component of the visioning process. In this regard university presidents are expected to provide institutional direction for their universities. One of the study's participants summed up this notion, "I think you have to be able to communicate. You become the cheerleader for the institution, so you have to be able to articulate the vision of the institution, the values of the institution, and the mission of the institution." Presidents are not necessarily expected to create the vision, but rather are expected to identify this vision. This multifaceted process includes discussions on institutional vision with key groups. The vision of the institution can then be distinguished into a more clearly defined end. The president is responsible for the clarification and dissemination of this vision to the broader university community. The proclamation of institutional purpose lies at the center of the university president's duty in the visioning process for his or her institution (Kerr, 2001).

Additionally, to deal with the shared governance structures associated with leadership within higher education (Legon, Lombardi, & Rhoades, 2013), university presidents must be master communicators. Experiences that provide them with opportunities to learn communication techniques for addressing the various interests of different stakeholders are beneficial. The study's participants articulated that these opportunities came in many forms, but generally had one common component: the management and leadership of competing interests. Participants

reported that they were provided opportunities to address the concerns of multiple constituencies, and bridge together these groups for a common purpose. Know-who competencies provide presidents with the communication skills necessary for navigating competing interests (Siegel, 2011). Nontraditional participants spoke to their experiences serving as political figures or as executive officers in business as supporting the growth of their professional and personal networks, as well as for developing their communication skills for interacting with these groups; traditional participants tended to discuss, as primary development opportunities, prior experiences serving as vice presidents, serving on campus wide committees, and serving in deanships.

One of the primary competencies required by university presidents that was discussed at length by the study's participants was the ability to communicate effectively. They noted that much of the success of a university president rests on his or her ability to communicate clearly, and to a broad audience. Therefore, experiences that developed participants' abilities to communicate were considered very important for their preparation for the university presidency, and for the development of know-who competencies. These competencies help university presidents improve communication across their respective institutions, as well as extend communication out from their institutions.

People skills

The success or failure of an individual's presidency may rest on his or her ability to relate to people. For example, Naumann (1990) found through interviews with thirty-two presidents from across the nation that most of their self-reported errors related to falling short on relationship expectations held by various constituencies. Therefore, one of the primary roles and expectations of university presidents is that of balancing relationships. Multiple authors agree that this is an essential component of university leadership (Feinburg, 2012; Denton & Moore, 2009; Gumport, 2003). This component of presidential leadership extends beyond communication with these constituencies to also engaging them in one on one relationships. The participants spoke to the necessity of experiences that enhanced their abilities to successfully build relationships, both

internal and external to their institutions. Therefore, having people skills is an essential component of presidential leadership. The participants spoke to the human element of the university presidency. One participant stated “I think you have to like people in this job. I just think that you do, because it eventually gets down to someone's life and if you have an impact on someone's life.”

The exact experiences that built relationship skills were not specifically identified by the study's participants, but one overarching theme was that critical preparatory experiences provided opportunities for the participants to demonstrate their honesty and integrity with the same constituencies they served as university presidents. The participants reported success in their positions meant having the trust and buy in of their constituencies. Therefore, individuals were overwhelmingly judged by how well they kept their word in previous interactions with various constituencies prior to their presidencies. Their ability to transfer trustworthiness from previous experiences provided them with the latitude necessary for decision making and action as university presidents. This aligns with the dynamic relationship that often exists, for example, between a university president and his or her governing board. As boards often have little time to be fully informed on institutional matters (Dowdall, 2001) they provide greater latitude to those with whom they have trust, and can be overly concerned with micromanaging those they with whom they have relational difficulties (Barden 2010). Therefore, the ability to relate well, and build trust, with individuals can provide much needed support and freedom, and documents the importance of know-who competencies to the university presidency.

Having a large network of contacts is essential to the relationships that modern university presidents must leverage as the leaders of their respective institutions (Chema, 2012). This is another example of why having people skills is important for higher education leaders. Presidents are well served by the connections their networks provide. These connections can provide a university president with access to potential resources, expertise, partnerships, and numerous other benefits (Rabovsky & Rutherford, 2016). However, a president's utilization of such

connections can be argued to facilitate what some call the commercialization of higher education (Bok, 2003). Those objecting to the commercialization process argue that an increasing alignment of university and industry interests conflicts with the traditional academic values of academic integrity and separation in the pursuit of knowledge. Regardless, the study's participants discussed the importance of previous experiences that provided them opportunities to expand their networks.

Finding 3 Implications

Both participants in this study and the literature suggest that individuals coming to the university presidency benefit greatly from experiences that help them develop their communication skills and build networks. Moreover, their ability to build relationships is essential for them to navigate the challenges confronting higher education. Presidents need to provide the vision for moving their institutions forward, and they must also garner the support of different groups with competing interests to actualize this vision. Individuals aspiring to the presidency should recognize the importance of honesty and integrity in their actions. These are necessary for building the good will and trust they will need to gain stakeholder support. Additionally, those looking to become university presidents in the future should look to experiences where they can refine their social and interpersonal skill sets along their preparational journeys. These experiences provide for the effective accumulation of know-who competencies needed for the university presidency in the 21st century.

Implications of the Study

Discourse surrounding the issue of which pathway is the best or most appropriate preparation for the contemporary university presidency – traditional or nontraditional – becomes much less useful when thinking about the presidency from a boundaryless career perspective, a perspective that could also be aptly described as competency based. Specifically, viewing the findings from my research through the lens of Defillippi & Arthur's (1994) boundaryless career perspective provides a new context for analyzing the preparatory journeys of university

presidents. It allows the discussion to shift away from previous efforts of evaluating the preparatory process as a function of the pathway one takes to the presidency to a potentially more fruitful evaluation of the process as a function of meaningful experiences that provide for the accumulation of competencies essential for the successful navigation of presidential duties. Therefore, the boundaryless career perspective changes dialogue from a pathway based approach to a competency based approach of presidential preparation. The following paragraphs further consider the implications of my findings for research on the university presidency, provide insight to additional, potential bodies of theory that may offer explanations for changing pathways to the presidency, and offer actions for practice to those in higher education.

Research

This study provides direct confirmation of many of the previous findings and conclusions of general literature surrounding the university presidency. However, this study is unique in that it provides first-hand perspectives of current university presidents and documents their perceptions on what they feel best prepared them for leading institutions of higher education in the 21st century. As such, it highlights the shortsightedness of previous research that merely documents pathways, lists presidential expectations, or analyzes leadership theory by providing specific experiences that university presidents felt helped prepare individuals for navigating these pathways, managing these expectations, and leading their institutions.

Specifically, the intent of the study was to explore the nature of experiences that current university presidents describe as having best prepared them for their roles in leading institutions of higher education in the 21st century. This is a relatively unexplored phenomenon, and this study, can serve as a starting point for future qualitative or quantitative research in the area.

Future research. There are numerous gaps in current research on the university presidency that need to be filled. Additional research should be conducted with university presidents at master's colleges and universities in the Midwest to further refine our knowledge of what best prepares these individuals for their presidential duties. Moreover, future research needs

to explore the preparatory experiences of presidents at other institutional types beyond master's colleges and universities in the Midwest. It is important to document if presidents serving at other institutional types and in other geographic locations hold similar or different opinions on the types of experiences they feel best prepared them for their roles as university presidents

There is a need for future studies to expand on the nature of beneficial experiences found in specific areas from this study's findings. More detailed analysis should be pursued to further our understanding of the primary opportunities that may expand know-why, know-how, and know-who competencies for those aspiring to the university presidency. These efforts could expand our knowledge about specific experiences that provide individuals the opportunity to develop their understanding of, and appreciation for, traditional values of the Academe; advance their financial skill sets; improve their fundraising abilities; cultivate their management abilities; and increase their exposure to other university presidents prior to assuming their own presidency. Further research is necessary for increasing our understanding of each of these key competencies of presidential responsibility.

It may be helpful for future research to provide more in-depth analysis and understandings of presidential training programs like the American Council on Education's ACE Fellows Program, Harvard's Seminar for New Presidents, and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities' New Presidents Academy that were discussed by many of the study's participants. These formalized development programs provide individuals with experiential learning opportunities for enhancing competencies relevant for leadership at institutions of higher education. Directed research identifying the various programs that exist and reviewing the benefits associated with each may enhance the preparatory development process for presidential new hires, as well as for those looking to become university presidents in the future.

Finally, because theory related to preparation of university presidents is deficient, it is imperative for investigators to further explore the shifting pathways individuals are taking to the university presidency. As the competencies morph and expand, research is needed that informs

those seeking leadership positions, guides preparatory experiences for the development of such individuals, and helps inform those charged with adequately identifying quality candidates and evaluating current leaders. Additionally, because some respondents suggested formal transition periods between outgoing and incoming university presidents there is a need to further explore successful and unsuccessful transition programs or practices that might be found in other industries, organizations, or institutions to see how they could be implemented for the university presidency.

Theory

My research highlights a gap in theory related to the preparatory pathways to the university presidency. Perhaps because the traditional pathway has been the norm, theory has yet to catch up to the broadening ways that an individual finds his or her way to the president's office. Moreover, the nature of experiences that best prepare one for the position are not well understood and theory development is needed. Perhaps the lack of understanding is due to the complexity of the position and the uncertainty associated with presidential duties versus expectations.

Defillippi & Arthur's (1994) boundaryless career perspective provides context for better understanding what emerged from my research, but it needs to be further extended and detailed in terms of its application to the university presidency. Theory in the fields of human resources and other career development fields might provide early guides for leadership preparation within higher education.

The application of Defillippi & Arthur's (1994) boundaryless career perspective to the preparational journeys of university presidents not only shifts dialogue from a path based approach to a competency based approach, it does seem to demonstrate the robustness of this perspective in demonstrating the importance of professional experiences that develop know-why, know-how, and know-who competencies. This study supports the proposition of boundaryless career perspective that boundaryless careers – those that provide for professional variation and

mobility – facilitate a more rapid accumulation of skills and competencies important to the university presidency than do bounded careers – those that provide little professional variation or mobility.

The application of Defillippi & Arthur's (1994) boundaryless career perspective for analyzing the preparational journeys of those aspiring to the university presidency should be expanded beyond the confines of this study. It is important to know if adopting competency based perspectives would expand our knowledge of the professional preparation of university presidents in colleges and universities of different classifications, and found in different geographic regions.

Although my dissertation study did not employ a specific theoretical lens outside of the usefulness of the boundary career perspective in its design or analysis, it did utilize symbolic interactionism as its theoretical perspective. This perspective falls within the broader interpretivist framework and is primarily concerned with the interpretations of experiences, perspectives of reality, and ascriptions of meaning that individuals make as social beings. In particular, symbolic interactionism focuses on experiences, activities, symbols as well as other components of social life that influence or create meaning within and among groups or individuals.

Crotty (1998) states that “interpretation is essential to an understanding of experience and the experience includes the interpretation” (p. 106). As the paradigm for this study, I worked from the assumptions behind symbolic interactionism--namely that individuals, including me, socially interact with the world around them and that, in conjunction with this interaction, individuals interpret and ascribe meaning to the world (Blumer, 1969). In relation to this theoretical perspective and its alignment to the overall design of the study, an interpretivist stance was essential to understand and explore the descriptions provided by university presidents of the experiences they felt best prepared them for their roles. Understanding these experiences provided a deeper context through which to analyze and document how participants described the various aspects of their preparatory experiences. As such, the use of symbolic interactionism was

well matched to this research on the university presidency and provided for a rich exploration of such experiences.

Practice

The study provided a forum for a series of implications for practice to emerge that may improve preparatory pathways to the university presidency. Practitioners responsible for developing preparatory degree programs for individuals aspiring to the university presidency should look at expanding curriculum that is helpful in the development of skill sets, knowledge areas, and professional competencies described in the study. Similarly, these factors would be helpful in refining existing preparatory programs for individuals aspiring to the presidency. These might include industry organizations or formal training programs like the ACE Fellows Program discussed by the study's participants.

The findings of this study can also provide insight to individuals aspiring to the presidency by identifying specific skill sets, experiences, and competencies for which they should demonstrate mastery during the hiring process. The themes and findings from the study's data provide a framework for practitioners to better understand experiences that may improve their development for the university presidency. These individuals can review identified experiences that provide support for enhancing know-why, know-how, know-who competencies related to the position. These individuals can also review the findings for help in guiding their decisions for participating in professional development opportunities that will improve their understanding and appreciation of the traditional values of the Academe, advance their financial skill sets, improve their fundraising abilities, cultivate their management abilities, and increase their exposure to other university presidents. Moreover, current university presidents can review these findings for their own development purposes, or to inform the nature of their relationships with those individuals to whom they might serve as mentors.

This study provides helpful information to those groups responsible for identifying and selecting university presidents, specifically by reviewing the findings of this study to help inform

their actions in assessing potential candidates. Additionally, the findings of this study highlight the development of essential groups of competencies that may provide a framework for the evaluation of applicants.

This study may also prove helpful to students in higher education programs as they attempt to understand the shifts of contemporary higher education as reflected in the university presidency. Today's colleges and universities find themselves in a time of unprecedented change. They operate in a world of instantaneous communication, and in an environment where they are no longer the gate keepers to information. Those responsible for higher education curriculum should integrate literature that facilitates debate among students on the importance and sustainability of the traditional academic models of colleges and universities. Therefore, the data and findings associated with this study can help inform and instruct higher education students to current obstacles they will face in their careers, perhaps even to their own positions as university presidents.

Limitations of the Study

This dissertation is bound by the size and scope of the study. As such, the interviewer, the interviewees, the locations included in the study, and all other components of the research design function as boundaries for the study's transferability. For example, this research took place with sitting presidents at the university campuses of six master's granting institutions in the Midwest during the fall of 2015. Therefore, my research neither examined university presidents for institutions with differing Carnegie Classification types nor did it examine university presidents during any other period. One specific limitation might be that individuals serving as university presidents at master's granting institutions are more likely to have previous relationships with their institutions than those serving as university presidents at research universities. Like all qualitative research, the findings and conclusions of this study are not meant to be generalizable. However, readers may consider the descriptions of contexts and participants to determine if one of more findings are transferrable to other populations or contexts.

It is recognized that the study's participants are in sensitive positions and, although precautions were taken to assure participants of anonymity, it is possible that the participants had reservations about genuinely expressing the full extent of their thoughts or opinions during the interview process.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter provided a review of the study's purpose. It reintroduced the primary questions that guided the research. The chapter provided a brief discussion of the findings that flowed from the responses of university presidents as they reflected on the experiences that they felt best prepared them for their duties of leading institutions of higher education in the 21st century. Additionally, Defillippi & Arthur's (1994) boundaryless career perspective was utilized to consider these experiences and provided a context for organizing the benefits of these experiences into the essential areas of know-why, know-how, and know-who competencies. Analysis of these competencies and the study's findings helped to provide an outline for the study's implications for theory, research, and practice. Finally, the chapter highlighted the limitations associated with the study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Solicitation for Research Participation

Dear President _____,

My name is Bob Ault and I am a doctoral student in Higher Education at Oklahoma State University. I am writing to ask you to be a part of a qualitative research study on the university presidency. This study is being conducted toward the completion of a doctoral degree (Ed.D) in Higher Education.

I want to include you in this research study because of your experience as a university president. You have intimate knowledge on the current state of the university presidency, and I would greatly appreciate your insights and observations. Participation in this study will include:

- A one hour interview to be conducted at your university, or by real time online communication (Skype).
- If needed, follow-up via email and/or by phone for accuracy and/or clarification purposes.

If you desire, a written account of your interview will be given to you to ensure the record accurately reflects your comments during the interview. Additionally, if you identify statements within the written record that you would like removed, they will be removed and will not be used in the dissertation.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you.

Please contact me at (918) 260-7997 or Bobbie.Ault@okstate.edu regarding questions about this research. I will follow up with you regarding your decision about participation. Thank you for your consideration.



Sincerely,
Bob J. Ault, MBA

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Insight from the top: Experiences that best prepare presidents to lead institutions of higher education in the 21st century.

Investigators:

Bobbie J. Ault

Kerri S. Kearney, Ed.D. (Dissertation Faculty Member)

- 1. Purpose of the Study:** This study will explore the preparatory (pre-presidential) experiences of university presidents and their perceptions about what best prepared them for the demands they experience in leading today's institutions of higher education. .
- 2. Interview Procedures:** This consent form must be signed at the start of the interview. With your approval, and to assure the accuracy of the data, the interview will be recorded. Data will be transcribed, and made available at your discretion. The interview protocol will be emailed to you prior to the scheduled interview. You will have the right to review transcribed data for accuracy and clarity. If you request that excerpts be removed from the study, it will not be included in the study.
- 3. Risks of Participation:** There are no known risks in participating in this research.
- 4. Benefits:** The results of the research are expected to benefit the academic community. There are no direct benefits to respondents.
- 5. Duration/Time:** The interview will last 60 minutes. Follow-up questions (if needed) will be asked via email or phone.
- 6. Statement of Confidentiality:** Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. If you agree to participate, your identity will be kept strictly confidential. The study results are expected to be published, however, the confidentiality of all data collected will be protected through the use of numerical identifiers and pseudonyms rather than names for both individuals and institutions. The records of this study will be kept private. Data will be stored within the private offices of the principal researcher for a minimum of 3 years and a maximum of 10 years. The principal investigator and his advisor will be the only individuals to have access to interview transcriptions and recordings. However, it is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you.
- 7. Compensation:** There will be no payments or any monetary compensation for participation in this research study.

8. **Contacts:** You may contact either of the researchers at the following addresses, phone numbers and email addresses, should you desire to discuss your participation in the research study and/or request information about the results of the study:

Kerri S. Kearney, Ed.D.
315 Willard hall
Stillwater, Oklahoma USA 74078
405-513-2043
Kerri.Kearney@okstate.edu

Bobbie J. Ault
1317 Brayhill Rd
Edmond, Oklahoma USA 73003
918-260-7997
Bobbie.Ault@okstate.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a researcher volunteer, you may contact:

Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair
219 Cordell North
Stillwater, OK USA 72078
405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu

9. **Participant Rights:** Your participation is voluntary and you can discontinue the research activity at any time without any negative reactions or penalty.

Signatures:

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant

Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol for Presidents

- 1) To what extent have your experiences before your presidency prepared you for your current position?
- 2) What experiences would you say have best prepared you for your presidency?
 - a. Where were these experiences obtained?
 - b. How were these experiences obtained?
- 3) In your opinion, what are the types of experiences that best prepare an individual for the university presidency?
- 4) In terms of preparation for your duties as a university president, in what arenas did you feel least prepared when you became a university president?
 - a. In what ways did your pathway to your position affect your preparation?
- 5) What would you describe as the most pressing issues or concerns for higher education?
 - a. How have your previous experiences helped you to address these issues or concerns?
- 6) When it comes to your presidency, how does the path you have taken to this position affect your view of your role?
- 7) If someone came to you with aspirations of being a university president someday, what advice would you give them?
- 8) If you were hiring a university president, what experiences would you for them to have?
 - a. How might they get these?
- 9) What skills sets or qualities would you describe as the most essential for the university presidency?

APPENDIX C

Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, March 02, 2015
IRB Application No ED1512
Proposal Title: Insight from the Top: Experiences that Best Prepare Presidents to Lead Institutions of Higher Education in the 21st Century
Reviewed and Exempt
Processed as:

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 3/1/2018

Principal Investigator(s):

Bob J. Ault	Kerri Shutz Kearney
1317 Brayhill Rd	315 Willard
Edmond, OK 73003	Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any *modifications* to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Bobbie Jay Ault

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: INSIGHTS FROM THE TOP: EXPERIENCES THAT BEST PREPARE PRESIDENTS TO LEAD INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

Major Field: Higher Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in Education Leadership & Policy Studies: Higher Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2017.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Business Administration at The University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 2008.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in General Business at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in 2005.

Experience:

General Manager 2014 – Present
Gateway Services Group, Edmond, OK

Executive Director 2011 – 2014
Edmond Public Schools Foundation, Edmond, OK

Special Assistant, Executive Vice President for Admin & Finance 2007 – 2011
University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK

Professional Memberships:

Spears School of Business Alumni Society (Director) 2014 – Present