

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE CAREER PATHWAYS OF MALE AND
FEMALE PRESIDENTS AT 4-YEAR, PRIVATE, LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES IN
THE SOUTHEAST AND THEIR ENACTMENT OF THE JOB

by

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(Under the Direction of Sheila Slaughter)

ABSTRACT

This manuscript explores the career pathways of the presidents of four small, private, liberal arts colleges in the Southeastern United States and how they enact the duties and responsibilities of the job. A male and female president who have traveled a more nontraditional pathway, primarily from outside of higher education, are compared to a male and female president who have spent their careers in the academy before ascending to the office. Specifically explored are the circumstances around which a more nontraditional candidate is chosen for the job and the prior career experiences considered to be their best preparation. Their priorities and strategies in leading the institutions as well as the leadership styles and behaviors they employ are also examined by gender and career path. Finally, the paper explores the areas in which the presidents were most challenged and how they worked to establish legitimacy at their institution.

INDEX WORDS: Leadership, Traditional career paths, Nontraditional career paths,
Gender, College president

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The office of the college presidency has been studied and researched at great length over the years. The position has evolved tremendously from the founding days of the first American universities and has grown increasingly more complex. The 1966 Statement of Colleges and Universities attempted to lay out a broad array of responsibilities largely encapsulated by institutional leadership (AAUP/ACE/AGB, 1966). Even in 1966, the responsibilities were diverse and have become more so during the ensuing years. Some have described the job as almost impossible because of increasing external pressures in addition to such factors as reduction of decision-making authority, competing governance ideology, and the difficulty in judging one's own effectiveness (Birnbaum, 1989). The American College President (ACP, 2012) describes the role of college president in the following way:

They are tasked with providing intellectual leadership, embodying institutional values, and shaping wide-ranging policy. They must succeed as fundraisers and advocates. Presidents work with past, current, and future students while spending time with boards, agencies, and legislators. The job requires intellectual rigor, administrative finesse, and social acumen in equal measure. (p. 1)

A more simplistic description was given by a trustee participant in this study when he opined, "You know, being a college president is a lot like being a priest or a golf pro. I mean, it takes a lot of different skill sets, and there's no such thing as a perfect one."

Who are the people who become college presidents? How do they get to the office? A significant number of institutions are looking beyond the academy for candidates for this important position. While most presidents still travel the more traditional or academic path to the office, 20% of current presidents have come to the job from outside higher education, according to the latest survey report by the American Council on Education (ACE) (ACP, 2012). This same report, the seventh in its series, shows some change in office holders since the first report in 1986, but mostly indicates that the presidency continues to be occupied by white, married men. Women now comprise 26.4% of the presidencies, up from 9.5% when ACE first began conducting the survey in 1986, but, despite the increase, the new percentage is not reflective of the national student gender composition which continues to be majority female, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov). In fact, since 1988, the undergraduate population has been majority female while 60% of graduate and professional programs were occupied by females in the year 2007-08 (King, 2010). The ACP (2012) reports that 18.4% of these female presidents have come to the position from outside higher education although almost half (48.2%) of them have worked outside higher education at some point in their career. Women are most likely to be president at associate-degree granting colleges and least likely to be president at doctorate-granting institutions although this category showed the largest increase since the last study (from 14% to 23%). Women are more likely to be president at public institutions than at private; however, the highest percentage across institutions for women presidents was at private associate colleges (40.7%). Another significant change since the survey began is the aging of the presidency. While the average age grew to 61 from 60 in the 2006 survey,

the percentage of those older than 61 grew from 49% to 58%. This proportional change predicts a big exodus of presidents in the next few years and presents opportunities for further diversification of the office as well as challenges in filling vacancies with fully qualified and highly competent individuals.

The Problem Statement and Research Questions

It is important to adequately describe the problem statement within the context of the particular area of interest to the research, the gaps within existing research, and the significance of the problem. Properly constructed research questions help determine the most important aspects to study (Merriam, 2009).

Problem Statement

Given the increasing complexity of the office, the growing number of presidents coming from outside higher education, the expected high number of baby boomer presidential retirements looming, the long-standing statistic of a majority female student college population and the steady, albeit slow rise in female presidents, it is important to explore the leadership skills and abilities traditional and nontraditional presidents and men and women bring to the office. While the literature is rich with studies about leadership, including female leadership as well as the paths presidents take to ascend to the office, there appears to be a void in focus on those coming from outside the academy—for both female and male presidents. With the latest research (ACP, 2012) indicating 20% of current presidents ascended to the position from outside higher education, it is clear that boards of trustees are increasingly looking to nontraditional candidates to meet the needs of institutions. There does not appear to be; however, a substantial amount of literature focusing on what characteristics and skill sets these

candidates bring to the table, the specific challenges they face once they arrive, or studies highlighting successful nontraditional presidents. Furthermore, additional research is necessary to determine if a nontraditional route is potentially an avenue by which to build diversity in the presidency. Although Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) discounted this avenue for diversification because most non-traditional candidates have been white and male, more exploration is needed. As described by Merriam (2009) and others, I narrowed these generally broad categories of interest—career pathway and gender—to devise a specific research problem statement. Rather than testing a particular theory, this project is an exploratory study of the career pathways of male and female presidents and their enactment of the job. Specifically, my research questions are as follows:

Research Questions

1. What prior career experiences serve as assets or detriments in the office of president?
2. What environmental factors contribute to hiring of presidents from nontraditional backgrounds?
3. What are the differences (if any) in overall strategies and/or priorities used by nontraditional and traditional male and female presidents in leading an institution?
4. How do presidents establish legitimacy?
5. What are the leadership behavior and styles employed by traditional and nontraditional male and female presidents?

By answering these research questions, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature relative to nontraditional presidents and specifically, female nontraditional

presidents. Given the impending number of presidential retirements over the next few years and the big opportunities that will arise, it is important for people, particularly women to have access to this particular area of research and its implications for preparation for the office and practice after ascension.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A literature review serves multiple research purposes. It assists in framing the research problem, designing the research project and helps make the findings more meaningful as they are related to the overall body of earlier work and knowledge. A good literature review helps the researcher make better design decisions and reduces the chances of duplicating earlier work. Both primary and secondary sources of literature will be reviewed in this study (McMillian & Schumacher, 2009). This literature review focuses on the following four broad categories: (1) demographics, education, and career tracks of the individuals who have occupied the office of college president including particular hurdles they have encountered; (2) a brief overview of feminist theory to better understand the lenses through which change can be visualized; (3) leadership and organizational theory—including the skills and abilities believed to be needed for the job of college presidencies as well as how presidents lead; and (4) strategies and developmental actions that have been recommended for further diversification of the office and better preparing presidents from both the nontraditional and academic paths.

Demographics, Education, and Career Tracks of College Presidents

The most important demographic source in this review is The American College President (ACP, 2012), a compilation and analysis of survey data collected every five years since 1986 by the American Council on Education (ACE). It provides the most comprehensive analysis of the occupants of the presidency of colleges and universities.

This publication provides an exhaustive list of facts about presidential office holders in various Carnegie classifications. In this report, the institutions are grouped by highest degree granted and include both public and private colleges. The groupings include: (a) doctorate-granting; (b) master's; (c) bachelor's; (d) associate; and special focus colleges and universities. The special focus institutions are those that offer any or all of the preceding degrees but in a single focus area (at least 50% in one discipline).

The data vary greatly between institution types and are used by researchers for a variety of purposes including in the development of recommended actions to increase diversity. The survey has been mailed every five years since 1986 to all presidents of regionally accredited public and private institutions. The survey questions have been relatively consistent through the years, but in 2011, the survey was conducted exclusively online for the first time and was completed by 1,662 university and college presidents. It is noted that the response rate was slightly lower in 2011 than in previous years but was still above the 50% rate. The authors do not believe this fact or the changes in the Carnegie classification system alter the trends in the report.

The American College President (ACP, 2012), the seventh report in the series, shows some change in office holders since the first report in 1986, but mostly indicates that the presidency continues to be occupied by white, married men. There are a number of interesting changes between the 2006 and 2011 surveys, however. For instance, the percentage of women holding the office increased from 23% to 26%. Among new presidents, almost a third were women. The percentage of minorities holding the office decreased from 14% to 13%. This number dropped to 9% when minority-serving institutions were excluded from consideration (unchanged from 2006).

The 2012 report shows that the presidents were older than in 2006, with average age increasing from 60 to 61. The percentage of those 61 or older increased to 58% from 49% in 2006. The presidents were slightly older in doctorate-granting institutions. Interestingly, though using different methodology, researchers in 1974 concluded that the average age of presidents at that time was 53 and that most presidents entered the office in their mid-forties (Cohen & March, 1974). Presidential tenures were slightly shorter in 2011 than in 2006 and dropped from an average of 8.5 to 7 years (ACP, 2012).

Marital status is significantly different between male and female presidents. Ninety percent of males are married while 72% of females are married. Eighteen percent of the females reported that they had been divorced or never married, while only 4% of males made the same claim (ACP, 2012).

The percentage of presidents having a doctorate degree increased to 76.8% in 2011 from 75% in 2006. Presidents were most likely to have their Ph.D. or Ed.D. in higher education (38%) as compared to the next two highest fields of humanities (14%) or social sciences (12%); however, this varied significantly by institution type (ACP, 2012).

Increasingly, presidents come to the office immediately from the role of chief academic officer—up from 31% in 2006 to 34% in 2011. However, among new presidents, this percentage decreased to 32% from 37% in 2006. Those whose most recent position before coming to the presidency was outside of higher education increased significantly from 13% in 2006 and 15% in 2001 when it first spiked considerably, to 20% in the 2011 survey. Still, less than a majority of the survey respondents indicated an experience outside of academe during their careers. One third

of the presidents in the most recent survey indicated that they had never been a faculty member (ACP, 2012).

Although the presidency remains largely white and male, women have made progress in the twenty-five years since the survey began. Table 1 demonstrates the change by institutional type of the percentage of presidencies held by women since the survey began in 1986 until the most recent survey of 2011 (ACP, 2012).

The percentage of women serving in college presidencies has shown a slow, steady increase since 1986 when they comprised only 9.5 % of the presidential population to 26.4% reported in the 2011 survey. Women are most likely to be presidents at associate colleges where they represent 39% of the total of new presidents. The associate category is dominated by community colleges and it is within this sector that women have made the biggest jump in the number of presidencies. When ACE first began the survey in 1986, women comprised only 6% of the presidencies at community colleges. By 2006, this number had increased to 29% and by 2011; women led 33% of all associate colleges.

Interestingly, by 2011, women claimed the presidency of 22% of all doctorate-granting institutions, up from 14% in 2006, and this was especially true in the public sector of this category. The demographics of this group changed more than any other category during the last five-year period. This shift could continue to increase as the presidents of these institutions are slightly older, more likely to soon retire, and therefore more apt to open up more opportunity for diversification (ACP, 2012).

Table 1

Percentage of Presidencies Held by Women, by Institutional Type: Selected Year, 1986 to 2011

Institutional Type	1986 Percent	1998 Percent	2001 Percent	2006 Percent	2011 Percent
Public and Private					
Doctorate-Granting	3.8	13.2	13.3	13.8	22.3
Master's	10.0	18.7	20.3	21.5	22.8
Bachelor's	16.1	20.4	18.7	23.2	22.9
Associate	7.9	22.4	26.8	28.8	33.0
Special Focus	6.6	14.8	14.8	16.6	20.5
All Institutional Types	9.5	19.3	21.1	23.0	26.4

From *The American College President*, 2012, p. 11

Women are more likely than men to have served as chief academic officer or provost before coming to the presidency and to have earned a doctorate. Again, one of the most significant differences between men and women is marital status and family responsibilities. While the percentages of male presidents and female presidents reporting children were 90% and 72% respectively, ten percent of women presidents recounted changing their careers because of family considerations—to take care of a spouse or for childrearing—compared to only three percent of men (ACP, 2012).

Altering careers for family considerations is one of the reasons that some current women

presidents have found gender not to be a factor in the administration of their duties but a major factor in career development (Holmes, 2004). Mason and Goulden found that men who had children within five years of completing a doctorate are 38% more likely than their female peers to receive tenure (Mason & Goulden, 2004 as cited in Allan, 2011). Again, disruption of the career path due to family considerations affects women at a higher rate than men, thus thinning the female pool for the academic route to the presidency. In addition, the cultural expectations appear to be different for men and women serving as college presidents and might explain why more female than male presidents are single. The patriarchal view of the position is that the president's wife is at home taking care of the household and the unpaid functions of the president's spouse. The expectations of a female president's spouse are not the same as they are expected to have their own career and responsibilities. However, the functions normally covered by the female spouse still exist, thus falling to the female president (Eddy, 2002 as cited in Allan, 2011).

Other literature reveals the difficulties women face in juggling a career and family. In an incredibly candid account of her balancing act of a high profile career in the federal government (on leave from Princeton) with the demanding needs of a young family, Anne-Marie Slaughter gives a sobering view of the issues women face trying to be all things to all people. She states, "I still strongly believe that women can 'have it all' (and that men can too). I believe that we can 'have it all at the same time.' But not today, not with the way America's economy and society are currently structured" (2012, p. 86). She opines that the only women who can "have it all" are those who are fortunate enough to control their own schedules which she could do more easily as an academic than as a

high-ranking State Department official. Her bottom line is that in today's economy, some part of a woman's life will suffer (Slaughter, 2012). Slaughter posits that we need change in social policies to accommodate choices and stop accepting male behavior and choices as the best alternatives. She argues against the myths women have been told about having it all are possible only if (1) if you are committed enough, (2) marry the right person, and (3) sequence it right. She writes that:

The best hope for improving the lot of all women, and for closing what Wolfers and Stevenson call as "new gender gap"—measured by well-being rather than wages—is to close the leadership gap: to elect a woman president and 50 women senators; to ensure that women are equally represented in the ranks of corporate executives and judicial leaders. Only when women wield power in sufficient numbers will we create a society that genuinely works for all women. That will be a society that works for everyone. (p. 89)

Some research (i.e., Madsen, 2007) shows that women do not always have a defined career path in their mind before ascending to the presidency. Utilizing in-depth interviews of ten female presidents, Madsen found that eight had been vice-presidents in the position immediately preceding their presidency, but most indicated that they had not considered becoming a president prior to serving in the vice president role.

King and Gomez (2008) offer hope that the pool of women from which to choose for future presidencies is significant. Their research addressed the expected high rate of presidential turnover in the next decade due to impending presidential retirements and offers encouraging news of expanding diversity because of large pools of women in senior administrative roles (in most, but not all, institutions categories). They found that

women make up 45% of senior administrative roles and 38% of chief academic officers—still the most likely position to lead to the presidency. The latest ACP report (2012), however, reports the number of women in senior administrative positions has increased to 57% with women of color occupying 20% of these roles. Simply stated, sufficient pool numbers exist; however, action is necessary to encourage women to apply for presidential positions and for boards to choose them.

There is still a long way to go before reaching parity for women in the ranks of the college and university presidency. Research from the 1990s showed that, assuming the same conditions between the years 1986-90, women would represent the same percentage of the college presidencies as they represent in the population (half) by the year 2040. This is a troubling and unacceptable finding (Ross, Green, & Henderson, 1990 as cited in Chliwniak, 1997).

One of the most interesting findings of the ACE survey is that 20% of college presidents came to the office from outside higher education. The percentage had first climbed to 15% in the early 2000s but decreased in the 2006 survey. Doctorate-granting institutions, having been least likely to look outside higher education for presidents in the past, indicate more willingness to do so in 2011, with 15% as compared to only 7% in 2006 of presidents hired from this path. Seventeen percent of associate-granting institutions looked outside academe for their presidents, with a hefty 38.4% of the private colleges in this category going this route. The next category most likely to hire nontraditional presidents is bachelor's granting, private colleges at 27% (ACP, 2012).

Robert Birnbaum and Paul Umbach (2001) constructed four paths to the college presidency—two more traditional paths (scholar and steward) and two nontraditional

paths (spanner and stranger). The four paths run the spectrum from a normative academic road to the presidency to those individuals who come to the office from outside higher education. These scholars believe that the academic path or royal road is the most legitimizing. They further contend that the stranger presidents usually get to the office because of an unusual convergence of events rather than a particular commitment to higher education (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001). The career patterns of private four-year college presidencies also show that most governing boards of those institutions choose presidents who follow academic paths, but not exclusively so, with administrative experience from both inside and outside higher education deemed favored routes in a significant number of cases (Keim & Wessel, 1994). A strict hierarchical linear model does not describe the most common path to the presidency. Indeed while the entry point of most presidents is that of faculty and traditional academe, substantial percentages (19%) have reached their position without it (Bragg, Marlier, Moore, & Salimbene, 1983).

Feminist Theory

In order to understand the challenges and opportunities women face in leadership roles in the academy and in understanding and observing changes they may wish to implement, it is important to have a good understanding of the various lenses through which they may view the world. While the numbers for women have increased in all areas of the academy, issues still exist in terms of hitting the glass ceiling, pay disparities around gender as well as sexual harassment and violence, both threats and reality, at colleges and universities around the country (Allan, 2011). The statistical information included in earlier paragraphs points to slow progress women have made at certain

institutional types; but while women are the majority in graduate programs, men still are the majority in Ph.D. and M.D. programs (King, 2010). A number of scholars have written about the climate that women face on campuses that are built around masculine norms and institutions that favor men and disadvantage women (Martinez Aleman, 2008; Bornstein, 2008; Cooper & Stevens, 2002; Eddy & Cox, 2008; Glazer-Raymor, 2008; Mason, Goulden & Frasch, 2009; Sandler, Silverberg, & Hall, 1996; & Valian 1999 as cited in Allan, 2011).

In her 2011 book, *Women's Status in Higher Education: Background and Significance*, Elizabeth Allan offers a comprehensive review of the literature and various frameworks of feminist theory. While these theories differ, Allan proposes three commonalities among them that include:

1. Sex and gender inequality exists and is central to social relations and the structuring of social institutions;
2. Sex and gender inequality is not “natural” or essential but a product of social relations; and
3. Sex and gender inequality should be eliminated through social change (p. 18).

Liberal feminism is generally recognized as having a focus on redistribution of power as such that women have as much as men and is mostly about fairness, rights, and justice. Mostly, change is attempted within the system with mentoring, opportunities for professional development, and the establishment of women's commissions listed as examples. Radical feminism, on the other hand, proposes that the systems themselves are patriarchal and that working for reform within these systems will never be sufficient and advocates complete overhaul of the systems. Women's studies emanated from this

framework. Marxist, socialist, and materialist feminism revolves around the belief that the capitalistic society, based on class is the major reason women are oppressed and that capitalism's dismantling is the key to women's liberation (Tong, 2009). In studying retrenchment in higher education in the 1980's, Slaughter found external economic forces and gender issues at play. Alarming, she discovered that during lean budget times, high-female disciplines (i.e., humanities, education) were cut at higher rates than those dominated by men (i.e., engineering, sciences), and that expectations of workload balance were skewed in favor of male-dominated disciplines (Slaughter, 1993).

Multicultural, global, and postcolonial feminism focuses on diversity and issues such as race, social class, age, sexual orientation, disabilities, among others that should be considered along with gender and the great variance that exists around the world (Tong, 2009). Ecofeminism associates women's oppression with how humans relate to nonhumans. Women are thought to be tied more closely to nature while men are understood as desiring dominance over nature (Allen, 2005, as cited in Allan, 2011; King, 1989, as cited in Allan, 2011). Psychological feminism promotes the feminine proclivity for caring for and empowering others as strengths rather than weaknesses and a method by which to end oppression of women (Allan, 2011). Allan states that postmodern and poststructural feminism approaches "depart from the conceptualizations of power as a limited-quantity resource to be possessed and instead emphasize power as something produced through language and representation" (p. 29). Third-wave feminism includes change and flexibility but also diversity—something of a hybrid between poststructural and multicultural feminism (Tong, 2009). Understanding these feminist frameworks informed my interviews, analysis and subsequent report of findings.

Leadership and Organizational Theory

The college president faces four ambiguities—those of purpose, power, experience and success. It is hard to know when and how action is justified, what lessons can really be learned from the job, and how and when to determine success. It is also hard for the president to determine how powerful he or she really is. In addition, most actors in the academy delight in complaining simultaneously about a president who is at once both weak and heavy-handed. Given these ambiguities, a discussion of leadership becomes more complex (Cohen & March, 1986).

While contingency and cultural/symbolic theories have been researched, the most commonly studied leadership theories in higher education are trait, power, and influence. These theories are also considered the most conflicting in the field of higher education. While exchange theory has more relevance, it has been mostly ignored in favor of the study of transformational theory. Most leaders are viewed or want to be viewed as transformative for a variety of reasons. However, using the transactional approach (e.g., getting to know the institution and engaging the faculty) is more important than taking action too quickly in an attempt to be viewed as a decisive leader (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989).

Symbolism also plays an important role in various aspects of organizational theory and presidential leadership. Utilizing information derived from interviews with 32 college presidents who participated in a five year leadership project, Tierney (1989) groups thoughts and impressions about leadership into 6 categories of symbols: (a) metaphorical; (b) physical; (c) communicative; (d) structural; (e) personification; and (f) ideational. He concluded that presidents must (1) back up their use of symbols with

actions, (2) use symbols in keeping with the culture of the organization, and (3) make effective use of all symbols. His main conclusion is that the study of symbolism in organizations should shift from hardened definitions that are assumed to be perceived the same by all to the factors that cause individuals and groups to perceive symbols in different ways.

Certainly, recent studies have shown that the way leadership is viewed in higher education has changed over the years. The president is no longer seen as the lone decision-maker or leader and the college pecking order is no longer the place to look for change. There is more of a sense of leadership as a collective process, involving teams and individuals who will collaborate and empower others. Being a strong communicator and relationship builder is seen as just as important as being task oriented. In fact, the literature now shows that effective leaders have both transformational and transactional abilities, being able to focus on goals and objectives as well as relationships on campus. And college presidents as leaders understand they need to learn and to nurture learning, so that they can produce change (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

In thinking about how college presidents lead an institution, perhaps it is advisable to consider how the duties of the job have evolved. Since the founding days of Harvard, the office of the presidency has changed considerably with increasing external pressures, all of which have made the presidency more difficult or almost impossible. The president is expected to be administrator, politician, and entrepreneur and with the proportion of time devoted to these activities, most presidents spend the least amount of time on academics. Although there are many similarities between the role of presidents and other chief executives, the shared governance concept is unique to college campuses.

Some of the factors that make presidencies difficult include reduced decision-making authority, competing governance ideology (business executives on the board versus faculty as well as administrative versus professional), and the difficulty in judging effectiveness (Birnbaum, 1989).

In the 2011 survey of American presidents, those with long tenure indicated the changing importance of particular areas of their work with more time spent on fundraising, financial management, and accountability in the area of student learning. In addition, only 16% of these presidents indicated that internal constituents received the majority of their attention in 2011 versus 59% who made this claim in 2006. Fundraising was primary among the issues taking significantly more time than when the individuals first entered the presidency. Most presidents overall in the survey said they spend most of their time in development, community relations, financial management, and planning (ACP, 2012).

Rita Bornstein, former president of Rollins College, makes the case that the 1990s and early 2000s opened the presidency up to nontraditional candidates with a broader set of skills such as fundraising, governmental affairs, and financial management. The early part of the 1990s brought financial stress and increased scrutiny to higher education and the latter half brought unprecedented growth and philanthropy. The early 2000s brought more financial pressure as institutions struggled to deal with the aftermath of terrorist attacks. It was this time which Bornstein (2003) believes legitimized fundraising as a major factor in presidential success.

Because of these changing dynamics and perhaps for other reasons, some trustees have turned to outside candidates such as corporate executives, politicians, lawyers and

others for presidencies. Notable examples are Lee Todd, a software executive, at The University of Kentucky; former U.S. Senator Bob Kerry at New School University; former U.S. Ambassador Richard F. Celeste at Colorado College; and Lawrence Summers, former U.S. Treasury Secretary at Harvard University (Basinger, 2002).

Understanding the academic culture seems to be the biggest challenge to presidents coming from outside higher education. Their accomplishments in other venues do not automatically portend success in academe. One reason could involve the complexity of higher education organizations and the fact that leadership theories do not apply in the same manner as in organizations that harbor more traditional superior/subordinate type relationships. Certain management and leadership techniques are not easily transferable into the academic environment. Leaders accustomed to the transformative versus transactional leadership style may find themselves a bad fit for the institution (Bensimon et al., 1989). Bornstein (2003) explains that nontraditional presidents need to take the time to understand the academy and writes,

To be accepted, nontraditional presidents must demonstrate management expertise, sensitivity to the culture, and strong academic values. Those who do not feel confident or comfortable in the presidency are, eventually, terminated or exit on their own, returning to what they know best. Still others succeed by delegating academic leadership to a vice president or dean. (p. 27)

Robert Birnbaum (1988) discounts the importance of recruiting candidates from outside higher education as a tool to improve the college and university president search process because of the importance of symbolism. He argues that college and university leaders are judged by their commitment to the core values of their respective institutions

and their understanding of the academic technology is more important than any management skills they might attempt to transfer. However, presidents who follow the more academic route may lack some of the skills needed to deal with external constituents such as board members, legislators, donors, and community leaders (Bornstein, 2003).

Women have begun to overcome the challenges to their own legitimacy as potential presidents. Even in the early nineties women typically started search processes with a legitimacy deficit and were faced with boards of trustees who whispered that their institutions were not ready for a woman as president. This sentiment seems to no longer be the case with some of America's best universities such as Brown, Duke, and Miami being led by female presidents (Bornstein, 2003).

Two high-profile examples in 2012 highlight struggles between university presidents and their boards and internal constituencies as well as different leadership styles. The University of Virginia's board-coerced resignation of its first female president and eventual reversal after an organized faculty, student, and alumni effort, spotlights struggles between a market-oriented board leader (incidentally, a woman) and the management style of the president (deemed not transformational enough). Although other factors were certainly at play, the president's engaging, warm, and participatory style of leadership and steady hand seemed to have earned the support of the faculty, students, and alumni (Vaidhyanathan, 2012). On the other extreme, the president of the University of Illinois was forced out in 2012 by faculty-applied pressure to the board because of an abrasive, autocratic style that aimed to clamp down on faculty autonomy. On his way out, the president admitted his failure to communicate effectively with the

faculty he tried to lead (Hebel, 2012). These two recent cases, highlight differences in leadership styles but also the challenges presidents face in working with multiple and diverse constituencies.

Do men and women actually lead differently? The typical administrative leadership model has been normed male and has become known for logic, objectivity, rationality and aggressiveness and, in some cases, women have been successful in adopting these traits (Blackmore, 1993; Sheppard, 1992; Desjardins, 1989; Burton 1987 as cited in Chliwniak, 1997).

However, does this leadership style make sense when the student population has for a long-time been majority female? Luba Chliwniak believes that if women and men lead the same, then the gender gap constitutes an equity issue and should still be corrected. However, if their approaches to leadership differ, then institutions will not improve to their full potential until the gender gap is closed. She writes, “When cross-referencing postmodern, nonhierarchical leadership theories and models with gender-related research and scholarship, it becomes evident that the gender-related characteristics, described as innate to most women, encompass the very characteristics leadership theories claim to be most effective” (p. 15). Some of these same feminine characteristics are listed among leaders who exercise emotional intelligence competencies and are associated with healthy, productive organizations. These include the categories of (1) self-awareness; (2) self-management; (3) social awareness; and (4) relationship management (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002).

Women are often believed to practice participatory leadership, which has at its basic core, inclusion. This type of leadership makes other people want to feel a part and

has an empowering effect through sharing of information and asking for input. From strictly a management aspect, participatory leadership has many advantages such as getting people to buy-in to a plan or simply to come up with a better plan through the generation of new ideas. However, participatory leaders also understand the disadvantages of this type of leadership. The leader typically gives up some power or control through what is usually a time consuming process, and sometimes asking for this input can be construed as simply not having the answers (Rosener, 1990).

Leadership and power are often associated words, and women and men, in general, have historically held different beliefs about them. Whereas men generally view power with the ability to influence people, women view it as an opportunity to stimulate change (Kelly, 1991). In her overview of research of women's leadership style, Chliwniak reviews Helgesen's comparisons of male and female executives and concluded that women were more helpful, supportive, and sharing of information while men tended to hold information and to care more about winning and accomplishing tasks (Helgesen, 1990 as cited in Chliwniak, 1997). She also reveals, however, that some researchers believe that women tend to lead in a similar fashion to men due to organizational culture and structures that are in place (Acker, 1991; Northcutt, 1991; Nieva & Gutek, 1981 as cited in Chliwniak, 1997). Some empirical studies have shown that, because of socialization of leadership roles, men and women behave more alike than different when they hold similar positions in organization. However, when not selected for being the occupant of the same position, interpersonal versus task orientation can indeed emerge (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

In addition, communication is an important part of leadership. Women tend to be more open and expressive communicators where men are more dominating; however, because of social conditioning women often times adapt to the norms built around a male-dominated society and adopt a more gender-neutral language (Samovar & Porter, 1991).

In 1996, Margaret Jablonski conducted in-depth interviews with seven female college presidents. She found that the women felt they displayed more typical female characteristic leadership style such as listening, a collaborative manner with shared decision-making authority as well as the empowerment of others. However, after conducting 35 other interviews on campus, she found that only two of the seven possessed the leadership styles with which they had self-identified. She concluded that the results could be attributed to a system that would not allow for these approaches or conflicting signals from faculty in which they wanted this type of feminine leadership but also desired a strong leader more identified with masculine traits (Jablonski, 1996). This contradiction creates a quandary with which women leaders are often faced.

The research suggests that the notion of women as caregivers and for those that desire some balance between career and family are perceived as not well suited for leadership. Furthermore, women are sometimes overlooked (consciously or subconsciously) for leadership positions because they are not seen as having the ability to lead men. This fact coupled with many large and small events overtime (missed networking and other career obligations because of family responsibilities) result in a cumulative effect that hurts women. This “snow-woman” effect does not apply to men whose careers seem to be elevated by marriage and family. In addition, increased

scrutiny with very little room for error seems to be another adverse effect of the small numbers of women at the highest levels (Mason, 2009).

Strategies and Developmental Actions

The increasing average age (61) of the president along with the significant increase in the percentage of presidents in that age group (58% in 2011 vs. 49% in 2006) shows that a large number of presidents are on the verge of retirement (ACP, 2012). This baby boom wave of retirements should present a unique opportunity to diversify the presidency if the pipeline is continuously being built with potential diverse candidates. The literature does include recommendations of strategies and developmental actions for more successful presidencies and as well as to help diversify the office.

After describing what appears to be a hopeless situation for college presidents, Birnbaum (1989) offers some strategies to enable presidents to become more effective, suggesting that they embrace the nature and reality of the system as well as the conflicting and autonomous parts to further understand where the president can have an impact on certain problems and opportunities. He suggests that presidents who focus on a limited number of things can be effective, whereas, trying to deal with all issues invites success in none. Birnbaum further deduces that successful presidents understand the symbolic nature of their positions, listen effectively, and encourage open communications. He also names the most common unsuccessful strategy being the rejection of the culture of the institution and the desire to implement strict management controls. It would appear that these strategies would apply to men and women presidents as well as nontraditional and traditional candidates.

Findings in the ACP 2012 publication indicate that institutions are increasingly looking to senior executive experience (mainly chief academic officers for presidential leadership) which could lead to less opportunity for minorities, younger people, and women. Conversely, the complexity of the office may also be leading institutions to look outside higher education for other skills and abilities. As noted in ACP (2012),

While it may appear that women in senior and faculty positions are slowly closing the gender gap, the potential pool from which many women presidents emerge still indicates that more leadership development, mentoring, and networking are needed to increase the representation of women presidents especially for women of color. (p. 14)

In 1997, Luba Chliwniak provided recommendations for closing the gender gap in higher education leadership that are still important today--such as providing training that helps women develop leadership skills versus management skills. She contends that women who have ascended in the hierarchy have a special obligation to help other women; that men need to be more willing to relocate to support their wives' career ladder; and that more needs to be done to eliminate behavior that creates a chilly atmosphere on campus for women. By the numbers, the college presidency is still dominated by men and; therefore, men have more opportunity to network and have more access to sponsorship and promotions. Intentionally or unintentionally, women may be excluded from these opportunities. Mentorship can help overcome these obstacles. By serving as a good role model and mentor, female presidents can help dispel the myth that families must be sacrificed in order to become a college president (Brown, 2005). However, through the lens of the radical feminist frame, mentoring and professional

development programs may suggest a deficiency within women themselves (Allan, 2011). Sheryl Sandberg believes mentoring has been described in a damaging way to young women. She believes they should be told to excel to get a mentor rather than being mentored to excel (Sandberg, 2013).

Developmental actions to increase the diversity of the college president have been recommended by a number of scholars. While Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) assert that more research is needed to understand the hopes and dreams of potential candidates, they recommend that colleges and universities take a number of developmental actions to build a more robust pipeline of diverse aspirants at the entry faculty level and into paths that commonly lead to the presidency. Institutions should be aggressive in assisting candidates in building social networks, providing good mentors, and affording reasonable accommodations for women due to family disruptions that often time stymie careers. Birnbaum and Umbach warn against looking to candidates outside higher education as a way to diversify the pool of applicants since these candidates tend to be overwhelmingly male and white. Increasing the pipeline as a developmental action is supported by the work of King and Gomez (2008) who offered encouraging news by discovering there were large pools of women in senior administrative leadership roles ready to ascend to the presidency as a large number of presidents prepared for retirement during the decade. They also observed that individuals in senior administrative leadership roles are younger than current presidents and more likely to have been promoted internally, thus identifying succession planning as a possible avenue for increasing diversity.

A different point of view is offered by Metcalfe and Slaughter (2008) who argue that “academic capitalism” (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) has

put women at a disadvantage in this shift to the market-based power in the entrepreneurial academy from the more traditional expert-based power. They warn, “If women choose the academic capitalist knowledge/learning regime, they are in effect choosing the neoliberal state and closing down the network of public policies and agencies that made possible women’s entry in the academy” (p. 101). Interestingly, however, Slaughter and Rhodes and academic capitalism may help make the case for consideration of nontraditional candidates for the office of the presidency because of the need for enhanced managerial capacity for “new circuits of knowledge, interstitial organizational emergence, and intermediating networks” (p. 25) Some of these entrepreneurial or corporate skills and experiences may best be found outside the academy.

Graduate degrees are extremely important in filling the pipeline as they are seen as pathways to academic careers. Women now represent approximately 45% of doctoral degrees in the United States and more women than men plan to use these degrees for academic careers. More men plan to use their degrees in business and industry. While still underrepresented in science, engineering, and business, these graduate figures for women have increased substantially in the last thirty years and may provide a broader pool for administrative succession via the academic path to the presidency (Allan, 2011).

Godin and Hartley (2009) studied the careers patterns of independent college presidents and recommend more efforts be made to provide strong orientation on the distinctive aspects of the academy (shared governance, faculty, etc.) to presidents from outside higher education especially to the unique aspects of independent colleges. They further suggest that women and people of color should be encouraged to apply to

programs that offer preparation for the college presidency especially in light of the aging presidency and impending retirements (Godin & Hartley). While the ACP 2012 shows that women are making the most progress in becoming president at community colleges, developmental action is still needed. The career paths of community college presidents track other colleges with the provost being the most frequent precursor to the position of president. These institutions should guard against the tendency to push women into positions such as student services that give a misleading picture of diversity but are less likely to lead to the presidency (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). They write

Community colleges appear to be opening their doors to administrative leadership in new ways, forsaking the search for the “great man” that once characterized presidential recruiting. However, much work remains to be done in generating candidate pools for senior positions, in equipping younger generations of administrators with the skills and experiences that will help them win promotion, and in ensuring equity in promotion into the most senior positions. Boards of trustees and search committees that grasp that the attributes of community college leadership have changed will enter the future of career development and executive hiring less burdened by false or outdated assumptions. (pp. 15-16)

The literature seems to be lacking in the area of nontraditional candidates. With the latest research (ACP, 2012) indicating 20% of current presidents ascended to the position from outside higher education, it is clear that boards of trustees are increasingly looking to nontraditional candidates to meet the needs of institutions for a certain reason at some particular point in time. There does not appear to be, however, a substantial amount of literature focusing on what characteristics and skill sets these candidates bring

to the table, the specific challenges they face once they arrive, or case studies highlighting successful nontraditional presidents. Furthermore, additional research is necessary to determine if a nontraditional route is potentially an avenue by which to build diversity in the presidency. Although Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) discounted this avenue for diversification, more exploration is needed.

Ultimately, the boards of trustees are the hiring officials for college presidents, and they must make the choice that is right for the institution at the time. Perhaps more developmental action should be provided to this group to help them explore the possibilities beyond the traditional, more familiar candidate. It is not simply up to the search firm to diversify the pool of applicants. In discussing ways to address the diversity issue, Lucy Apthorp Leske, a search consultant with the Witt/Kieffer executive search firm explains that using search firms does not necessarily equate with attracting a diverse pool of candidates and that the search committee, itself, must take ownership of attracting a broader pool of applicants in concert with the firm (Stripling, 2012). Boards of trustees are the ultimate decision makers and must be more willing to break away from a cautious approach in hiring and look to those who might not fit the more traditional picture of a college president in order to increase diversity (June, 2007).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

Merriam (2009) writes, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 5). This type of research can be drawn from earlier works of sociology and anthropology as well as medicine, law, education and social work (Merriam). Unlike quantitative analysis, qualitative research involves mostly inductive reasoning but sometimes also includes deductive reasoning. This study is primarily about exploration, and an evolving research design, informed by the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, was used rather than a test of any particular theory (McMillian & Schumacher, 2009). Utilizing Merriam’s components of a qualitative study, a purposeful sample was used; data were collected through interviews and important documents; data were inductively and comparatively analyzed; and, my themes and categories richly described and presented (Merriam).

Sample Selection

Purposeful sampling—the most common form of nonprobability sampling—is based on the notion that the researcher wants to select the best possible sample to allow maximum understanding and discovery (Patton, 2002 as cited in Merriam, 2009) and is the method that was utilized in this study. In selecting the institutions to examine, the following criteria were chosen:

1. Independent (private), not-for-profit, liberal arts college or university
2. Relatively small in size (enrollment of approximately 2000 or less)
3. Located within the Southeastern United States

These criteria were chosen because, in 2011, small, private colleges had the highest percentage of presidents coming from outside higher education (ACP, 2012). In addition, women have traditionally had more success at becoming president at independent smaller colleges and, because the sheer number of private, smaller colleges could present opportunities for women and nontraditional candidates in the near future. The independent sector, particularly at smaller colleges, has been the most welcoming for women presidents, possibly because of less formal and bureaucratic processes (Chliwniak, 1997).

After identifying institutions meeting these criteria, the gender of current presidents and their career paths were further considered. Specifically, two paths—the nontraditional road (majority of experience before the presidency is from outside of higher education or a non-academic path within higher education) or the more traditional career path from the faculty to the presidency were considered (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001). Utilizing these personal criteria, four institutions were selected for the sample. To ensure anonymity, pseudonyms were assigned to each institution. The sample includes one institution currently led by a traditional female (Village Green College) as well as one institution led by a traditional male (Pantheon College). In addition one institution led by a nontraditional female was selected (Foothills College) as well as one institution led by a nontraditional male (Peachtree College). Brief descriptions of the institutions and their leaders follow.

Village Green College

Village Green is a liberal arts college for women located within a large metropolitan area. It was founded in 1889 and is church-affiliated. Enrollment was just over 900 in the fall of 2012. All of the 81 full-time faculty members hold terminal degrees. The current president is the college's eighth president and has served since 2006. She was a Rhodes Scholar and previously served as a center director and associate professor of political science and philosophy at a prestigious research university. She has spent her career at large research universities but earned an undergraduate degree in philosophy from a private, liberal arts Southern college. She earned her doctorate in philosophy from Oxford University in England. She specializes in moral and political philosophy and is a well-published scholar in the field.

Pantheon College

Pantheon College is a comprehensive liberal arts college with a church affiliation, located on a sprawling campus in a predominately-rural area. Enrollment in the fall of 2012 was slightly over 2000 students. The college, founded in 1904 has a heritage and mission of providing meaningful work as part of its educational experience. Ninety-five percent of Pantheon's 183 faculty members have terminal degrees. The current and eighth president followed a traditional academic path to the office, having served as provost, dean of faculty, and interim dean in arts and sciences at institutions in other regions of the country. His discipline is personality psychology, and he is a well-published scholar. He has served as president since 2006.

Foothills College

Foothills College is a liberal arts college that began a transition from two-year to four-year status with board approval in 2007 followed by SACS accreditation in 2008. In 2013, the college conferred bachelor's degrees for the second time in nearly 100 years. The college is church-affiliated and located in a mountain setting. Current enrollment is approximately 1100. Seventy five percent of its 80 full-time professors hold terminal degrees. The current president is the college's 21st and has served since 2007. She traveled a nontraditional path to the presidency, having come directly to the position from outside of higher education. She previously held statewide elective office after serving in the state legislature. Her degrees are in law and journalism and she has been both a practicing attorney and journalist.

Peachtree College

Peachtree College is a liberal arts college located in a large metropolitan area and was founded in 1835. Its enrollment is 1000 and has 53 full-time faculty members, 90% of whom have terminal degrees. The current president, in his seventh year, is the sixth of the college. He traveled a nontraditional road to the presidency, having first been a trial attorney, specializing in civil rights litigation. He also worked in real estate development before becoming vice-president of administration at another private, liberal arts college, which was his last job before becoming president of Peachtree.

Table 2 and 3 provide a snapshot of the four institutions in terms of student characteristics and overall finances.

Table 2

Student Characteristics

Characteristic	Village Green	Pantheon	Peachtree	Foothills
African American	33.60	4.10	17.03	5.60
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0	0.20	0.32	0.58
Asian/ Pacific Islander	3.20	2.20	4.20	0.68
Two or More Races	5.60	0.60	2.37	0
Hispanic	8.20	5.00	10.02	2.90
White	34.10	83.40	36.31	79.40
Unknown	4.30	6.30	24.78	2.51
Non-Resident International	11.00	1.10	4.96	8.32
Female	99.00	67.00	59.00	54.00
Male	1.00	33.00	41.00	46.00
Eligible for Need Based Aid	78.00	84.00	45.50	61.40
Full-Time	98.00	92.80	92.00	96.61
Part-Time	2.00	7.20	8.00	3.39

Note: Information shown in percentage and received from institutional research offices at the institutions and is based on 2012-2013 academic year.

Table 3

Finances

Characteristic	Village Green	Pantheon	Peachtree	Foothills
Endowment	\$251,000,000	\$822,000,000	\$19,649,198	\$104,977,556
Total Annual Cost Per Residential Student	\$45,323	\$40,454	\$42,300	\$31,433
Discount Rate	60%	51.9%	55%	62.90%
Annual Budget	\$44,900,000	\$109,899,000	\$23,000,000	\$26,923,245
Funds Raised during Current President's Tenure	\$65,000,000	NA	\$48,000,000	\$55,000,000

Note: Information received from institutional research offices at the institutions and is based on 2012-2013 academic year.

Data Collection

No data were collected until full approval was received from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB). Written and informed consent from all administrators was received and on file before the research was started. The types of data collected are presented below.

Interviews

The four presidents along with two trustees, two faculty members, and the student government president from each institution were interviewed (see Table 4). The interviews were based on the semi-structured approach. This method involved a quasi-

structured format of flexibly worded questions that served as my interview guide, included in the appendix (Merriam, 2009). The faculty members were chosen because of their leadership positions in faculty organizations such as a senate or assembly (the name and structure varied by institution). The selected trustees were also in leadership positions on the board (chairman, vice-chairman, search committee, or presidential evaluation or compensation committee) and had frequent interaction with the president. Twenty-three interviews were conducted in person and one was conducted by telephone. Most interviews were conducted on campus, with several trustee interviews being conducted at other mutually agreed upon locations. The interview protocol as cited by Patton in Merriam (p. 96) suggests six types of interview questions, and all were utilized in this study. These categories and examples include:

1. Experience and behavior questions. The background of the presidents was examined and their career path choices explored. This exploration was important for all presidents but particularly for the nontraditional presidents as I inquired about the reasons they made the change to higher education. The presidents were interviewed generally about leadership and how they believe their previous experiences prepared them for the college presidency. I inquired about activities on the job—how they structured their day, for example. Their goals, strategies, and priorities were also addressed. Questions were also asked about the challenges they have faced as president and how they dealt with these challenges.

Table 4

Interview Participants

	Traditional President (female)	Traditional President (male)	Nontraditional President (female)	Nontraditional President (male)
	Village Green College	Pantheon College	Foothills College	Peachtree College
President	1	1	1	1
Trustees	2	2	2	2
Faculty	2	2	2	2
Student	1	1	1	1

2. Feeling questions. I attempted to explore how the presidents and other respondents feel about certain items. For example, they were asked how they felt about dealing with less familiar areas (i.e., fundraising for traditional presidents or faculty governance issues for those coming from outside higher education) or if they were more confident in areas in which they had more experience. Likewise, the faculty, trustees and students were probed about their feelings, trying to elicit an adjective response such as anxious, proud, or disappointed, for example.
3. Knowledge questions. In order to obtain true understanding of the differences between presidents, I needed to ascertain participants' true knowledge of various events and situations. For example, in determining presidential

priorities, it was important to know the extent to which the interviewees had actual knowledge of the priorities.

4. Sensory questions. While these questions are similar to experience and behavior questions, I tried to explore in more detail what the participants actually saw or heard. For example, I asked how they may have seen or heard the president interacting with faculty, students, or the trustees.
5. Background/demographic questions. It was necessary to obtain basic demographic data from all interviewees. Questions in this area mostly involved background questions (i.e., number of years on the job at the institution).

In addition to these question types, Merriam (2009) suggests more thought provoking techniques and questions to elicit more information (p. 98). Hypothetical questions such as “Suppose I was visiting your campus for the first time. What type of atmosphere would I find here?” were pursued. Devil’s advocate questions were employed in asking the participant to consider opposing viewpoints. An example of such a statement and question is “Some people would say that only true academics are qualified to be a college president. What would you say to them?” Ideal questions such as “What leadership qualities and abilities do you think are necessary for a college president?” were used to probe opinion and general information. Finally, interpretive questions were used to ensure that my understanding of an answer was correct. Multiple, leading, or yes/no questions were avoided (Merriam). Probing techniques were used (e.g., follow-up questions, periods of silent, hesitation, etc.) to follow up on certain answers from the respondents. These techniques were effective in further extracting

information from interviewees, and all of these techniques were used in the interviews (Merriam).

It is important to maintain a code of ethics as an interviewer. Throughout this research project the participants were respected, I was honest about intentions, followed up on promises that were made to them and was and will be diligent in doing no harm to them in the research or this report. Each participant was sent an introductory email in advance of the interview to set expectations and to make the interview more productive. Prior to the interviews, we signed an agreement of confidentiality (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

All but one interview was digitally recorded. The recordings were transcribed and I took limited notes to be better able to concentrate on conducting an effective interview. Immediately following each interview I wrote my reflections. These notes allowed me to record my experience, while it was fresh on my mind. The notes included descriptions of respondent behavior and allowed me to begin immediate analysis (Merriam, 2009).

Materials and Documents

In addition to interviews, other documents were analyzed. Historical documents gave me a feel and understanding of the background of the particular institution and other reports allowed the cross-checking of data received in the interviews. The following documents were also analyzed:

- Presidential speeches (including inaugural addresses) and other such documents that gave me a sense of presidential direction and priorities. For instance PowerPoint presentations were reviewed when offered.

- Strategic plans
- Annual Reports
- Marketing Materials/College Magazines
- Newspaper articles
- College Websites
- Other miscellaneous materials

Data Analysis

As Merriam (2009) notes, “. . . the much preferred way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection” (p. 171) and that was my plan for this research project. As I conducted and transcribed interviews, I began immediate analysis, making notes in the margins of transcriptions and writing memos to myself about what I observed. I began to develop themes that were discussed with future participants as appropriate, and served as a guide for grouping the data from subsequent interviews and document analysis.

The theories that informed the literature review started the development of the coding process and it continued throughout the interviews and document analysis. Merriam (2009) describes coding as simply “assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of data” (p. 173). My research design called for using open coding or “being open to anything possible” (p. 178) as I went through the interview process and document analysis, followed by analytical coding or the “process of grouping your open coding” (Corbin and Strauss, 2007 as cited by Merriam, 2009, p. 180) or grouping of the open codes. Merriam suggests that categories must be “sensitive to the data, exhaustive,

mutually exclusive, and at the same conceptual level” (p. 186). The number of categories is to be determined based on the research, but my goal was to include a manageable number of five or six themes (Creswell, 2007 as cited in Merriam, 2009) and these were largely built around my research questions. The set of categories is considered complete when most of the data has been assigned to a category and independent investigators would generally agree that the categories are clear based on the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1981 as cited in Merriam, 2009).

Trustworthiness

Of utmost importance to any research project is ensuring its validity and reliability and being ethical in the way the work is conducted. I employed a “member checks or respondent validation” strategy to ensure for validity and credibility (Merriam, 2009, p. 217). Utilizing this method, participants were offered the opportunity to review the interpretations of the data to determine if their interview had been accurately described. Additionally, multiple sources of information were used to cross check validity between interviews and document analysis (Merriam; McMillian & Schumacher, 2009). In addition, I ensured that enough data were collected to arrive at the saturation point (begin to hear points repeated). As Patton suggests, I sought to “look for data that support alternative explanations that test my expectations” (Patton, 2002 as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 219). Finally, an ethical researcher should admit to any possible bias, and I will do so now. One of the college presidents interviewed in this study is a friend. In addition, I came to higher education late in my career from outside the academy and have a 100% public service appointment now. For these reasons, there is a possible bias

in interpreting data more favorably for the nontraditional route to the college presidency. I tried to be conscious of this potential bias as I developed my findings.

From the aspect of external transferability, I used rich, thick description of the settings, the participants of the study and, most importantly, the findings. This description is important to enable the reader to understand the context and its applicability to their own situation or study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 227). Quotes from documents and interviews as evidence of the descriptions and findings were utilized.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION TO RESULTS

The Backdrop – The Economy and Purpose

The four southeastern institutions that were studied have much in common. All are small, private liberal arts colleges ranging in size from approximately 900-2,000 student enrollment. All four presidents have similar tenure—from six to seven years at the time of the interviews. Three of the four institutions have church affiliations although they are not religious colleges. There are significant institutional differences as well. One is a women's college and another recently transitioned from a two-year to four-year institution. Two are located near large metropolitan areas while two are more rural in setting. Nevertheless, two major themes served as backdrops and loomed large throughout all discussions at each institution. One is the economy. It is significant to note that all four presidents began their tenure (and for each of them, it was their first presidency) just as the economy began to sink to Great Recession era lows. Consequently, there was much discussion about enrollments and fundraising, among other issues related to finance. While most of the four institutions under study herein seemed to have weathered the recession rather well, the economy definitely altered plans in some cases and influenced decisions throughout. Secondly, all four institutions were, if not struggling with, certainly exploring their place and purpose in the universe of higher education. Both explicitly and implicitly, these questions were pondered: "What makes us distinctive in today's world? What separates us from others in the liberal arts

institution solar system? What is our niche?” While each organization was proud, and rightly so, of its rich heritage, all seemed to be trying to build on that foundation to make their institution more relevant for today. As one trustee said, “You’ve got to produce, you’ve got to be innovative and distinct, and that’s what he (the president) works on is distinctiveness. What makes this dang place different?” The quest to be able to justify the cost and value of a private, liberal arts education in today’s fast-paced, professional/vocational world was always present during the discussions. In addition, of course, the two themes—economy and purpose—were and are inextricably linked. My findings will compare male/female and traditional/nontraditional and will answer the original research questions, while, keeping in mind these two overarching themes—the economy and the purpose and value of a liberal arts education in today’s world.

“A Good Fit”

One major focus of this research is how college presidents get to the job. In addition, what is it about their prior career experiences that make them right for the job, especially when considering those of a more nontraditional path? We know there is a process—most often involving a search committee and firm. However, what makes for a good fit for them and an institution? “A good fit” was something I heard throughout the interviews, but oftentimes this term is hard to quantify. A good fit might mean one thing at one point in time and something else altogether at another. The Pantheon president spoke of the opportunity he had to come there for his first presidency, “. . . it wasn’t the role as much as it was probably the opportunity and the fit with a particular institution. So, there’d be presidencies at a lot of places that I probably wouldn’t like and wouldn’t want to do.” The president of Foothills College described the moment in time for her

presidency this way, “If they had been looking for just a caretaker president—no doubt in my mind—I would have gone on to practice law.” The president of Peachtree College was blunter, saying, “There were plenty of places where I’d be a complete disaster.” Therefore, timing is everything or so it seems.

Only a True Academic Need Apply?

Since up until recent times, a nontraditional path was unusual, and because the power of the academy rests so strongly in faculty expertise, I was surprised to find that out of 24 interviews only two participants indicated they believed only a true academic is qualified to lead a college or university. Most were disinclined to deal in absolutes and stressed the situation should dictate the right presidential fit. Most, however, seemed to believe that nontraditional presidents are a better fit at larger, more comprehensive universities where the president is more removed from the day-to-day academic operations and is in a more corporate environment. Others held the opposite view—that presidents at smaller colleges need a much broader skill set, thus becoming a better fit for nontraditional presidents. Most often, though, the conversation came down to money. A Foothills faculty member commented, “A president these days—for better or worse, whether we like it or not—the modern president of any college or university is a money person and a public relations person, and that is just the way it is.” Fundraising, along with other responsibilities, was often cited as a skill not easily gained from experience solely within the academy. Said the Foothills president,

Knowing how to raise money is not a skill set in the wheelhouse of many, if any, faculty that I know on this campus and probably not on most campuses. And if

you cannot raise money today, I guarantee you will not be effective as a college president because the economy has changed too dramatically.

The Relationships

As is true in life in general, most things come down to relationships—how they're formed and nurtured. The success of a college presidency seems to be no different. In fact, I found the presidents' relationships with students, trustees, and faculty members fascinating, and pondered how this structure for higher education has worked so well for such a long time in this country.

While originally not planned, I was glad to have interviewed the student government presidents. One of the most interesting observations of all is that in three out of four cases, the student seemed to be most in harmony with the college president and was best able of all participants to articulate the president's vision. It could be that these students are just exceptionally bright and engaged young people, but I am more inclined to believe that it speaks volumes about the importance of the president/student relationship at smaller liberal arts colleges.

I was struck by the special attention that all four presidents paid to the student body—personal attention, not from afar. This was true for the males and females as well as the traditional and nontraditional presidents. I truly believe that the competitive environment in which these colleges find themselves helps precipitate this president/student relationship. The student at Village Green believes it is a generational change, noting that alumnae have told her such a relationship had not existed before, even though the previous president had been deemed highly successful. In reference to her current president the student said, "I mean, alumnae turn around and say, 'Oh my God,

you love her like that?’ And we do, there’s just this fierce loyalty to her, to her ideas, and really anything she does.” Indeed, respondents from all four campuses indicated their current president’s close relationship with students had not existed with former presidents. The relationship certainly seems to be one of the things that helps make smaller colleges appealing. All presidents discussed the effort they put into this. The president of Village Green said, “I’ve heard it described as a vocation of presence. . . like just showing up makes a difference.” The notion of being “present” or “just showing up” presented itself throughout the study and the presidents’ good relationships with students was strongly confirmed by all but one respondent.

The women spoke of having student groups to the president’s home for dinner and one of the men talked about playing basketball with them. All talked about going to all the activities they could take in—from athletic events to theatre to other presentations. In speaking of his president’s visits to the dining hall, the Pantheon student commented, “. . . he’ll just go there, sit down at a table with students and talk with them, see how everything’s going. I think that is a beautiful leadership trait.” The president of Foothills discussed serving as a reference for professional school for one of her students and the pride she took in personally vouching for the student’s abilities, something, she added, that a large university president could not do. A Peachtree College trustee discussed the campus atmosphere created by the new president, indicating that the largely commuter college was a quiet place before the president’s arrival. He discussed impromptu pizza parties instigated by the president and the personal relationships the students have formed with him, adding,

And so many students will even tell you today about their friends that go here or there and wouldn't have the foggiest idea, if they bumped into the university president, who it was. But every kid here knows him and he can call most of them by name, you know.

So, I must admit to being impressed at the work the presidents put into student relationships. One faculty member at Pantheon even joked that they sometimes felt neglected because of this attention and the "cult of the student." "I was like what about the rest of us?" he added. Perhaps the student relationship is simply the easiest one to develop and nurture for the president because the students are younger and more impressionable. But since this close president/student relationship seemed to be new with these four presidents, I am more inclined to believe that it is now one of the chief selling points of these smaller institutions. In this day of extreme competition among higher education institutions, developing a real relationship with the president certainly could be a point of separation among peer institutions. And, certainly, it is an extremely rare occurrence at larger institutions.

"I think most college presidents probably have their most complicated relationship with the faculty. . . it certainly would be for me," said the Village Green President as she described the "vocation of being present" as more difficult with the faculty. Moreover, certainly, my interviews confirmed that the president/faculty relationship is, indeed, a complicated one. One Pantheon faculty member nicely summed up this conflict by saying,

I think you (the president) have to really be in tune to good process and to walking this line between being open and consultative but also a strong leader.

Because I think everybody, really, at the end of the day does want a strong leader. Certainly, the presidents coming from outside of academia had to work harder at establishing legitimacy with the faculty. As one Peachtree faculty member put it, “But, you know, I would relate it to when Carly Fiorina became CEO of HP (Hewlett Packard). I mean, she wasn’t an engineer, and she had a hard time relating with engineers.” However, the complicated relationship with faculty did not rest solely with the nontraditional presidents. The academic presidents encountered many of the same challenges which will be explained in the next chapter.

While I was not surprised to find a difference of opinion, I was astonished by the degree to which the faculty and trustees differ in their view of their college presidents. While faculty opinions ran the gamut from hostile to positive, the trustees I interviewed were universally supportive of their presidents although some were willing to point out some weaknesses, along with their many attributes. “It’s a love fest,” said a Foothills College trustee when describing the president’s relationship with the board. All presidents discussed the importance of board relationships and how much time they spent, not only cultivating these relationships, but also helping the board evolve into the most productive board it could be through training, more active committee work, and simply by adding diversity to the board composition. All seemed to have very close relationships, indeed friendships, with the trustees. In addition, because of these relationships, they feel free to have open and honest discussion. The individual

presidents' relationships and interactions with trustees, students, faculty, and others are further explored in the next chapter.

The Environment

To answer my specific research questions, a narrative for each institution will be utilized in the following chapter. First, I tried to get some sense of what was happening at the various institutions at the time they began searching for a new president. At both Village Green and Pantheon—the institutions with academic presidents—it was very much an environment of taking the institution to the next level. Village Green had enjoyed a very successful, long-term president who had stabilized the institution financially, grown enrollment, and done extensive building. Likewise, Pantheon was on somewhat of an “upward trajectory,” according to the current president. The institutions with nontraditional presidents revealed an entirely different set of circumstances. Peachtree College appeared rather stagnant and searching for new energy and direction. While the financial situation was deemed tenuous by some board members, the true dire predicament was unknown until the current president assumed office. Therefore, saving the institution from financial calamity became his priority. Foothills College was poised for the most change, transitioning from a two-year institution to four-year status, offering baccalaureate degrees, for the first time in one hundred years. In addition, Foothills had gone through two bad presidential experiences—one involving a scandal and the other through what was described as a bad fit. So, within this environmental context, I examined which parts of their career path best prepared the presidents for the office (both from their view and others), how they dealt with the areas in which they felt least prepared, and ultimately worked to establish legitimacy. The nontraditional presidents in

this study had both been practicing attorneys at one point in their career, but the similarities, in almost every aspect, ended there.

Priorities and Strategies

In examining presidential priorities and strategies, I noticed some significant similarities. Understandably, enrollment and fundraising were priorities (or obsessions) for all. Effort to enroll more international students was a common theme at the four institutions and three had been successful to different degrees. There were two reasons given for the recruitment of international students. Certainly, the creation of a culturally rich educational experience is one goal, but finances played a strong role in this effort as international students typically pay full tuition. Given the recession that hit soon after they took office, finances took front and center stage. All four underwent strategic planning, although there was a difference of opinion among the actors as to the sincerity and inclusiveness of the effort. The financial crisis did preempt all other priorities at Peachtree and Village Green. The crisis was so severe at Peachtree that the institution was under threat of losing accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS); therefore, that president was focused solely on balancing the budget and saving accreditation. Later years allowed him to focus on further priorities. While the potential loss of accreditation was not an issue at Village Green, substantial budget cutting (\$3 million) was required, including layoffs. According to the president “. . . you know that you learn things about yourself, about leadership and all sorts of things in tough times.” In the next chapter, strategies and priorities used by the presidents in leading the institutions are discussed. Their involvement with all major constituencies in planning, decision making, and visioning are also examined.

Are You a Feminist?

I asked all four presidents if they considered themselves to be feminists and all other participants if they considered their president to be a feminist. The men seemed surprised to be asked and went on to explain their support for women on campus. The female presidents both responded quickly and resolutely in the affirmative. The responses of other women participants varied by institution and by age with younger faculty and students being less inclined to acknowledge their president as a feminist. All the participants at the traditional female institution felt the president was a feminist but this was not the case at the nontraditional female institution. One female trustee believes her male president to also be a feminist. Both women felt mentorship is important in helping women progress and to succeed in leadership positions including the college presidency.

It's All about Leadership

As the president of Peachtree College put it,

My view of leadership is you can lead from a billion different places. I think you can be a vocal leader. I think you can be a quiet leader. I think you can be a leader that builds consensus. I think you can be a leader that's, in the right circumstances, mostly top-down.

Certainly in this study, the broad spectrum of leadership styles and behaviors was found.

Are men really from Mars and women from Venus when considering how they enact the role of the college presidency? I would not necessarily conclude such from this study, but significant differences in the styles of the presidents in this study were found. Both female presidents definitely stressed their ability to build relationships, to connect

with people, and to communicate. Communication includes formal public speaking, informal one-on-one communication, written communications, and listening skills. Familiar descriptions began to emerge—optimistic, humble, consultative, collaborative, consensus builder, leads by example but also self-assured and tough. At top of their list of the way they lead is to be inclusive and transparent. Indeed, for both female presidents, all respondents commented on their president's likability. Yet these qualities were not limited to the female presidents. Said a Pantheon trustee of his president,

His strength is he can make you feel at home if you're a United States senator or you work on transmissions on the farm equipment. He can make you feel like you're the most important person in the room, and that's a really, really admirable trait.

Therefore, the men and women presidents are not easily categorized, but there were differences. Their leadership approaches are described in the narratives to follow. In addition, their career paths certainly seemed to influence priorities and how they went about the business of the job. This will be explained further in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS BY INSTITUTION

Village Green College – Proud to be Painfully Inclusive

The Environment

The lovely grounds of this southern women's college sit within a large metropolitan area. When the search committee for a new president was formed, the institution had enjoyed a ten-year period of a wildly popular and, by any measure, highly successful president. She had rebuilt enrollment that had fallen by almost one-half prior to her arrival, raised funds, and implemented a large building program. Therefore, the search committee and campus were anxious to find a new president who could take the institution to a new level—building on the success of the departing president. There was, predictably, some angst over losing this stable and successful leader and moving into a new era. According to everyone I interviewed, the president in this study was everyone's choice. As one trustee said, "Everybody said, 'Hire her.' So, it was kind of a no-brainer, you know."

Most Helpful Career Experiences

The new president of Village Green, a well published scholar, had experience in building a center within a highly respected research university environment. She found that experience to be the best preparation for the presidency and described her former role as being similar to a small college presidency in that it involved public speaking, fundraising, board, student and faculty relationships and simply building and running an organization. She also felt that her liberal arts education and her work around feminist

issues and advocacy built on her experience and contributed to the fit at the women's college. While some agreed with her, others also pointed to her sterling academic credentials that they felt best prepared her for the job and offered legitimacy. She had been a Rhodes Scholar and worked at prestigious institutions before arriving at Village Green. One of her trustees said that she has the "intellectual heft" to lead the faculty at an institution like Village Green and that she is "an enthusiastic intellectual." The trustee added, "And I think it had to do with the energy and optimism and the fact that she didn't know she couldn't do it. She could make it fabulous." Several respondents indicated that such academic credentials are more important at a small private, liberal arts college where the president is truly the academic leader of the faculty and not removed even farther from academics, as is the case at a larger, more comprehensive university. The Village Green president felt that strategic visioning, fundraising, and relationship building were presidential responsibilities that played to her strengths.

Challenges/Establishing Legitimacy

The Village Green President talked about the challenge of not knowing what she didn't know in assuming the office of president and the leadership challenge of knowing when to get into the details on certain things without micromanaging. She felt this area had been a particular area of growth for her. She said,

. . . a leadership challenge is that you really need to be at least a dilettante about everything in order to be able to ask the right questions, but you also don't want to micromanage people, and you simply don't have the bandwidth to do everything. . . ultimately what you want is to be in a position where you have

people who are strong enough around you that you don't need to get into the weeds at all, you know, or very little.

Both trustees agreed that this had been an area of growth for the president—having changed from wanting to do everything herself to more delegation and empowerment.

The president lists enrollment, investments, and facilities management as areas that challenged her the most. To build her capacity in these areas she feels that she has hired good people, creating higher level positions for strategic attention. One example is the creation of a vice president for enrollment position to allow for more strategic thinking in this critical area. She also sought the advice of an organizational management specialist to help her shore up the areas in which she felt she needed to improve as an executive. While her experience in running a center within a larger university was important in preparing her for the job, it became clear to me that her background as an activist and her commitment to social justice helped put a stamp on her priorities as president—such as environmental sustainability and her commitment to diversity.

Strategies/Priorities

To set direction, the new president put a strategic planning process in place. The process took a year, involved very large committees and was very inclusive, including staff that she feels are often times overlooked. She asked for lots of input, saying, “We used to joke that any carbon-based life form indicator was going to be sat down and handed a SWOT. . .” Her priorities have been enrollment growth, including international recruitment, taking student experiences beyond the classroom (study abroad, mentored research, and internships), environmental sustainability, and development. She indicated several times the impact the recession has had on her ability to achieve all goals although

she notes having raised \$65 million towards a \$100 million goal and having enrolled three of the largest classes ever at Village Green. Weathering the financial crisis has demanded that she place a priority on innovation and partnerships. Examples she cited were the formation of a unique relationship with a local company to provide a fitness center on campus that she, otherwise, would not have been able to build and an MOU signed with another local institution to provide Chinese language opportunities for Village Green students.

The president made other organizational changes to support her priorities and these areas of emphasis were understood and communicated from all respondents. Unique in this study was her commitment to environmental sustainability with the creation of an office director who reports directly to the president. She also puts an emphasis on diversity with a new associate dean and special assistant for diversity reporting directly to the president. Village Green is a majority minority campus already but she stressed the broad range and complexity of diversity issues at a women's college. She launched a dinner seminar series to discuss hot topics that have included everything from religious diversity to gender identity and expression. She has put in place programs to support the intentional recruitment of Latinas, Jewish students and others minorities. Her diversity efforts extended to her board of trustees and included a board training session in which a transgender alumna was invited to speak to the group. After the presentation, she quotes one board member as saying,

I went home, got into bed fully dressed, took the covers up to right under my eyes, and I slept for about two hours before I came back for dinner. So, I skipped my afternoon committee meeting, because this is not what I signed up for.

“But he said it in a loving way, you know,” she added. The student government president marveled at how her president could integrate such difficult topics into an institution like Village Green without turning people off. She recalled the president’s most recent convocation speech that included the line “the beautiful rainbow of diversity, including gender expression and gender identity.” The student added, “. . . to mention that, I think, was strategic, obviously, to try and get it on the table, and you know, in a public way but, you know, wasn’t in your face.” Finally, the president’s cabinet is majority female.

Both one trustee and the faculty members indicated that the college, under this president’s leadership seems to be constantly looking for that one big thing that sets it apart—again, that “distinctiveness” question I discussed in the introduction. Indicating that the economy has limited her ability to implement some things in the strategic plan, the faculty member commented,

The last few years, we’ve been talking about the kind of magic bullet that increases revenue or increases students and things like that. And every year it seems like it’s a slightly different thing to get all worked up about and then it just vanishes.

He commented that the first strategic plan really had the stamp of the president’s personality on it—including things that she cared passionately about. “And I don’t think she has the luxury of bringing non-financial big ideas anymore. We’re looking at things to raise money and/or put students in the classroom,” he added. The student leader also understood the financial challenges the college faces while also trying to find a distinctive place in the world, adding,

Another priority is paying the bills, and I think that, like all colleges, we have kind of struggled in recent years in trying to figure out how do we shore up our residential liberal arts college experience for women in the Southeast and how do we pay for that, especially with the very generous discount rate that Village Green offers.

Leadership Style/Behaviors

In describing how this president leads, I came away with primarily three descriptors—she is inclusive, optimistic, and a communicator. The president shared that a male faculty member once told her that she was “painfully” inclusive, and she responded, “I will take that as a compliment. I will put that on my tombstone.” She uses many committees to set direction and priorities. However she also recognizes that her efforts to be inclusive may sometimes come across almost as being indecisive. Other times, and she is not sure when it kicks in, she just decides and says, “We’ve got to do this folks.” Some faculty members would like more direction and to see things brought to a conclusion more often, but also enjoy and appreciate the inclusiveness. One example given was the big idea to push for more international students (possibly half the student enrollment). According to the faculty members interviewed, the faculty was asked to rework the general education requirements quickly for this initiative and they did so; the board talked about it for two days at a retreat, and it was never heard from again. One trustee mentioned that the Village Green president was collaborative and consultative but is also willing to make the hard decisions now as she’s grown in the job. Another faculty member feels that the president is visionary, excited about the future, but may give the appearance of being somewhat slow to react to problems.

From all accounts, this president is very skilled in the art of communication—both in public formal speeches and in one-on-one communications. She stressed the great lengths to which she communicated with the campus during times of great change and uncertainty. For instance, the president was faced with the grim task of cutting \$3 million from her budget, including the need for layoffs. During this period she held monthly faculty convocations to update campus on plans. She meets formally with faculty once a month through faculty meetings but also in smaller, more informal groups during breakfast and brown-bag-lunch meetings, which have had varying degrees of success. Certainly, the financial crisis has been challenging, as faculty have wanted to be paid more. One of the Village Green trustees indicated how excited the faculty were to welcome this president—from the fact that they wanted her to be a full professor in Women’s Studies to one veteran faculty member, normally suspicious of administration, commenting that her first convocation address was the best he’d ever heard. However, she also wondered aloud if a majority of them might now think she had probably done what she could do with lack of momentum starting to show.

The faculty wants the president to lead as stated by a Village Green faculty member, but they also want someone who values their input. “She’s very energetic, enthusiastic, and egalitarian. I like her very much. I am happy she’s our leader. She errs on the side of being inclusive for better or for worse,” said the faculty member. Although the faculty gets frustrated with the seemingly constant generation of new ideas that seem to fizzle, he commented that they would still follow her. “I mean, if she came to me today and said, ‘Okay, now we’re going to dig for oil’ . . . I would still do it at the end of the day.” Another faculty member commented that some faculty feel she talks more than

she listens, and sometimes her optimism limits her ability to take in bad news or to confront conflict. Overall, the sense is they trust her intentions and have confidence in her. A Village Green trustee had this to say about her president,

She is gifted in her interpersonal skills. When she talks to you, she's talking to you, and she's listening to you. She's not looking over your shoulder or planning the next thing that she's going to say. She really has a way of pulling people to her and that's male, female—from the janitor to the CEO. She really listens to her constituents whether it's the students, faculty, or the board.

The other trustee noted,

She is a very good public speaker—with good intellectual content. It isn't just that she's a good speaker and can keep the room engaged. It's that she's got something to say, and I think there are many presidents where that's not true.

One Village Green trustee indicated that her president sometimes can be autocratic with the board—when she makes up her mind, can push an issue. However, because they have such a good relationship, they push right back which makes for a healthy situation. Some of this push-pull with the board sometimes occurs because the president is very protective of faculty, which this trustee believes is related to the fact she is from the academy herself.

The Village Green president utilizes guiding principles for making decisions (as in the process of cutting the budget and implementing layoffs) but is mostly a “follow my gut kind of decision-maker.” She puts a premium on being inclusive in making decisions. One of her trustees indicated this has been a growth area for her—that she was

unwilling before to get a group to make a decision unless there was consensus because she wanted so badly for everyone to be heard. The trustee added,

And I think it's taken her some time to figure out how to sort of say, 'I hear what you're saying, you know, you've convinced me to 40 percent, but I'm convinced it's 60 that this is the right way. And it isn't that I'm ignoring you, it's that this is the decision I've made.' I think that's been a real growth place for her.

The other Village Green trustee added that she believes the president obtains data and weighs it deliberately before making a decision. The student sees her president as being deliberative because she knows she will own the decision and will stand by it no matter what. "Gently, compassionately," responded a Village Green trustee responded when asked how her president implemented change. When faced with a budget that required layoffs, the president met with each affected individual to explain what was happening.

During the interviews, a couple of different ways this president was willing to give up power for the greater good and to assume substantial risk in one particular case were noted. First, she was willing to give up chairing the faculty meeting (the president, as chair is still a common practice at many liberal arts colleges). This act was requested and appreciated by faculty. She has also, not only allowed significant interaction, but, in fact, has created situations for interaction between her faculty and the board of trustees. The president and other respondents spoke of a board retreat in which a dozen faculty members were invited to join the members for dinner and part of the board meeting in order to facilitate better understanding of each other. She acknowledged some risk in this effort but felt it paid big dividends. One faculty member commented on the much greater exposure the faculty has with the board than prior to this president's arrival.

Village Green trustee said of her president, “There’s no conceit in her, but she’s very self-assured.” She’s very passionate about the job as one trustee put it,

It’s a calling almost and you don’t leave at 5:00 p.m. so, it really takes a passion I think in order for a president to be successful in all the different areas they need to be successful; they better be passionate about this because it’s too demanding otherwise.

The student commented that her humility is one of the things that wins people over and that she is not afraid to show her vulnerability at some points.

A trustee spoke of the total love and devotion students have for their president because she goes out of her way to help them. She added, “They gave her a class ring, which is, you know, a very big deal.” The student commented,

She’s the only woman that didn’t graduate from Village Green to have a Village Green ring. That was voted on by the student body. So, I think that’s a testament to how well she’s kind of been able to mirror what we see ourselves as being in this world.

The student commented,

She has modeled leadership and, you know, in the easiest of situations and the hardest of situations and budget complications. And when the tough questions roll down, I think that to see her stand up as president and, you know, really handle those things in an honorable manner, which is something we place a premium on here, has been just eye-opening to the possibilities of responsible and ethical leadership.

The student talked about the president's accessibility and openness for students through office hours but also informal discussion, commenting,

. . . to just talk to her about, you know, important things like world happenings but also insignificant things like clothes and shoes and trying to find a yellow dress for commencement just the other day in our strategic planning meeting.

Summary

Clearly, this president's background and reputation as a faculty member and her sterling academic credentials gave her early legitimacy with the faculty, trustees, and students alike. Her likability and ability to communicate at various levels with all constituencies and with strong, intellectual depth and passion are clearly strengths for her. She believes very strongly in being inclusive—possibly to an extreme. Although she seems to be finding balance in this area, there appears to be a need for more focus in making decisions and drawing things to a conclusion, a criticism often associated with a participatory leadership style. As the literature notes, perhaps her gender and faculty background influence this inclusive style. A participatory style, often associated with female leaders also is built around communication, and this president believes strongly in communicating formally and informally, and she makes the time to do so, especially in times of crisis. She also seems very transparent, and unafraid of sharing power and building relationships as symbolized by the board/faculty interactions she has encouraged and facilitated.

Finally, she has sought opportunities to grow and learn as a leader as noted by herself and others. She has been successful in fundraising; although the true financial picture is hard to ascertain. Village Green has a healthy endowment, larger budget than

two other institutions in this study, and a high discount rate—perhaps all important factors in running a women’s college in today’s world. The campus is still willing to follow where this president is leading and she enjoys broad-based support and high popularity; however, the constant search and associated energy expended for the “big idea” to catapult Village Green forward appears to be draining some enthusiasm from the time of her arrival. My assessment is that she has been an excellent fit for this institution and continues to evolve and grow as a college president.

Pantheon College – The Micro-Observer

The Environment

When you approach the outskirts of the Pantheon campus, you are immediately struck by its beauty—acre after acre of pastureland and forests. During the evening hours, you are just as likely to encounter a well-behaved deer (of the 4-legged variety) as one of the 2,000 students who call this campus home. The rural setting gives some hint of the institution’s proud heritage of meaningful work for students as they achieve their academic goals. When the board of trustees began a search for their new leader, Pantheon had enjoyed a long history of stable presidencies and was enjoying a slow but steady growth in enrollment and reputation. The departing president had helped improve the relationship between the faculty and the office as compared to the earlier president who had not believed in tenure, thereby creating a hostile relationship on campus. Therefore, there was some angst that this progress could be short-lived with another type president who might not be as supportive of faculty. Nevertheless, the college was looking for a president to take the college to the next level.

Most Helpful Career Experiences

The new president of Pantheon had most recently been a provost at a northeastern college. Both he and several other respondents offered that this was both a blessing and a curse in preparation for the job. He explained, “If you live at this table. . . at the cabinet table long enough, you kind of know what the job is, and then you experience it, and you know it in a different way.” While previously serving as a provost allowed him a thorough understanding of the academy, curriculum, faculty, and students, both he and others indicated he struggled with giving up the provost responsibilities while assuming the broader presidential role. His former provost position gave him good preparation for areas in which he believes he excels—strategic planning or visioning, analysis and implementation. However, the president also felt that all of his experiences had built upon each other to prepare him for the job, including working at higher education institutions where much had been accomplished and other experiences that were negative. One institution had been particularly helpful in helping him learn how to manage resistance to change. The president does not consider himself a charismatic leader—not one that mesmerizes audiences—but he feels he has creativity around analysis which he considers to be his “sweet spot.”

The president’s provost background and attention to detail came through when he recounted investigative work he did prior to his interview for the job. He made a stealth visit to campus, actually enrolling his 11th grade daughter at Pantheon, observing first-hand the problems the institution was encountering with the admissions process. He talked about the experience in his interview with the search committee and explained the problem was fixable and how he could repair it. He thinks this example describes part of

the visioning and analysis he sees as his strengths and believes this exercise helped the search committee see his fit at the institution.

Challenges/Establishing Legitimacy

While well versed in academe, the Pantheon president had no fundraising experience when assuming the presidential role. He came to understand to be successful in the fundraising arena, he need only expand skills he already possessed—building relationships and trust. He says that he’s tried to build capacity by learning from people who are “world class connectors.” As mentioned earlier, one of his challenges had been the willingness to give up some control and previous responsibilities as provost. Most respondents feel that he has grown since he’s been at Pantheon, delegating more academic responsibility to the provost.

Strategies/Priorities

The Pantheon president bases his priorities on what he calls a “mission-down” or “vision-down” process combined with a “bottom up” or “people up” approach. He explained that, to him, this means determining what is at the core mission of the institution, then discovering what people can be passionate about, and finally, finding the middle ground where the two come together. He calls this both a strategy and “a science and art.” He too initiated a strategic planning process that he calls “iterative, open, and inclusive,” generating over 300 ideas that were then culled down to manageable list of items by the provost. The process involved faculty, staff, students, board members, and alumni groups. Enrollment management has been a clear priority for him and he has added a vice president in this area to give emphasis. Again, using the mission-down and people-up approach, he revamped the work program (a historical mission of the

institution). About the time the economy began to falter, the college had rebuilt this historical effort to allow any student the opportunity for a meaningful work experience along with a great academic experience. Pantheon was founded as an institution for poor rural children to get an education through a mandatory work program in lieu of tuition. Today's program is a voluntary program that yields about 95% of students having worked on campus by the time they graduate. Pantheon has grown enrollment by 400 students during the last four years—a time in which many small colleges have been struggling. According to a Pantheon trustee, the president has made a priority of enhancing the vision and mission of the institution, honoring its proud heritage but in terms of relevancy for today's world. Like the president put it, "So, it's being sensitive to the old story, the identity, but then how you can take that and use it to kind of leapfrog forward." A trustee added,

I think the vision of what this place is has changed to the outside world dramatically while he's been here. So, I think that's been a real priority to tell the story in its historic context but also this is what we do now.

All respondents discussed the president's ability to help bring forward the institution's heritage into relevance for today's world. And certainly his marketing materials emphasized this.

Both trustees, former corporate executives, mentioned being surprised by this academic president's business expertise and the fact that he could speak the language of business and finance. A faculty member agreed, saying that he thought the president's financial acumen was his best skill, adding that most faculty probably do not realize how rare it is to have received raises during the past few years, which they have. This

president also worked with the board and faculty assembly chair to make significant salary adjustments two years ago for faculty. Given the financial climate, it is rare to hear of faculty raises and salary adjustments. In this case, the president and financial officer determine what percentage raise is to be given, and the responsibility for determining the raise is delegated to the departments.

One member of the Pantheon faculty along with the president and one trustee emphasized that the president is an “ideas” person—he likes to mention ideas and to get discussion going about the various concepts. The faculty member added,

. . . when people hear a president say things, they take everything as a mandate. I think it’s very hard for some faculty to think of the president as someone with whom to dialogue and that is his way of doing things—to dialogue through things.

The Pantheon president also emphasizes diversity but in broader ways than race and ethnicity. He spoke of the work program as being a great equalizer between the more affluent and socially disadvantaged students. Pantheon has traditionally not been a racially diverse institution and is not to this day; however, the new priority and focus of the president is to become the school of choice for Hispanic students. The school is now 70% female, so recruiting more male students is another priority for the college. One of his trustees added that the president has been insistent upon building a more diverse board and that he has done so with the addition of more women and minorities. His cabinet is evenly split between men and women.

Leadership Style/Behaviors

In describing his own leadership style, the Pantheon president says that he oversees implementation through what he calls “micro-observation” which he adds

should not be confused with micro-management, although he understands some do view his style in that way. Indeed, one of his trustees called him a “bit of a control freak.”

The president describes micro-observation like this, “I mean, you look at everything and you look at, you know, are the stairwells clean, you look at are the trees limbed up, you look at everything.” The other major leadership quality that a president has to have, in his view, is to be “relationally good with multiple constituencies.” He too feels that he has figured out, over time, those things that can be delegated.

A Pantheon trustee felt that sometimes the president might be hesitant to deal with a hard decision because it is hard for him to be seen as the bad guy or to show “tough love” as the trustee put it. The trustee added, “. . . we’ll get in a discussion about something and I’ll say, ‘I’m not going to waste time by saying how I feel. Tell me how I feel.’” The trustee described the president as a “gentle leader.” Another trustee described him as a servant leader, a good listener, and very businesslike in his approach. A faculty member stated that he, personally, believes his president is a “humble listener,” tries to listen across the board to the broad constituencies and does a good job of discerning what is real and what is pettiness. However, both faculty members indicated that some of their colleagues think the president needs to listen more. Both described a faculty “retreat” which many feel turned out to be the president talking “at” the faculty for two hours. Later, a much more effective faculty retreat was held. As one trustee described the president, “He’s not afraid to learn.” According to one respondent, there is a belief that the president sometimes makes faculty feel somewhat marginalized. During listening sessions with faculty during the last year, some faculty felt the president just sat and argued with them which the faculty member pointed out, “is not the point of listening.”

The president explained that faculty members often think you have not listened to them if you do not make a decision in agreement with their point of view. “You can’t simply rubber stamp things as a means to trust,” he added.

When asked how he implements change, the Pantheon president responded, “Gentle pressure, relentlessly applied.” He expounded that you try to get people to see the vision and the reason something makes sense in a certain context. He tends to use the rhythm of the academic year to make changes and feels that it must be an iterative process. “If you make three or four steps forward, significant steps across the institution, after five years, you’ve made 20 steps. You’ve gotten buildings built, you’ve gotten things done.” He discussed the need to communicate through processes with formal leaders, complemented by determining who the “opinion” leaders are (who may or may not be the formal leaders), being astute enough to know the difference, and knowing when to communicate with both.

When making decisions, a faculty member said of the president, “I think that he’s always going to try to fit it into a bigger matrix about what’s best for the institution from a mission standpoint.” The student agreed, stating that, when making decisions, the president always comes back to the mission of the institution and that he will not compromise his core beliefs. He added, “He’s a very principled leader.” Another trustee commented that he makes decisions slowly and deliberately and receives input from multiple sources, but added, “Ultimately, he calls it his own and is accountable for it and makes his decision and moves on.”

Throughout the interviews, two topics continued to come up that shed some light on the Pantheon president’s decision making and leadership style. He and the board

decided to add a football program and a nursing program in the same year without buy-in from campus. Even the students, according to the student government president, were not supportive of the addition of football. The addition of a new academic program without the approval or even input of faculty was seen as particularly egregious. However, the president saw football as helping the college meet some strategic objectives—the recruitment of more men to campus, movement to a new NCAA conference and division with more suitable peer institutions in his opinion, and the improvement of the residential experience on campus (“the addition of 5 more great weekends”). The addition of the nursing program presented itself because of the availability of nursing program faculty from another institution—a situation that he thought had to remain confidential. Again, having analyzed the situation thoroughly, he and the board instituted these changes without any kind of faculty involvement. One faculty member commented that most people feel the nursing program complements Pantheon’s mission, but do not agree with how it came about, saying,

. . . you know, if you’re going to bring an entire academic program to campus without consulting the faculty, who’ve technically got to have some say-so in it . . . that was insulting. He lost a lot on that I think.

The faculty member went on to say that the president learned from the situation and has changed—is willing to adapt and to listen more. He has become more inclusive and is truly reaching out to all constituencies, including the current strategic planning effort that focuses on the next 20 years. Faculty feel much more involved now they say.

All respondents commented on the president’s ability to forge compromise and find common ground. An example cited involved a lesbian, gay, bisexual and

transgender (LGBT) group that had been striving to become a recognized organization on campus—an issue that had come up for years and was a lightning rod on campus. The trustee felt that the president showed masterful skills in resolving the issue and by ultimately recognizing the student group.

By all accounts, the Pantheon president has a great relationship with students, attending as many student events as possible. One of the faculty members described him as a “very, very present president.” Whenever he is on campus, he tries to eat in the dining hall and talk to students, even dressing more casually on non-meeting days to create a more approachable persona. The president discussed creating a pleasant environment on campus and the students’ part as well as his in creating the culture that would serve them well after college,

I tell students on their first day on campus that when they see me on campus they should say ‘hi’ and they should expect me to say ‘hi’ and they should call me on it if I don’t, and then I might call them on it if they don’t. It’s not about me, it’s about creating a tone on campus—an atmosphere.

The president of Pantheon spoke of building trust with faculty in this manner, “. . . the art of it is to continue to build trust while at the same time making difficult and sometimes controversial decisions.” He said,

Adding football, adding a nursing program—not popular things on campus. I think for the long run, they’re going to do us great good, and I think people can already begin to see how some of that’s happening. But they, you know, if it had been a popular vote, we wouldn’t have done either.

One Pantheon faculty member nicely summed up the complicated faculty/president relationship saying,

I think you (the president) have to really be in tune to good process and to walking this line between being open and consultative but also a strong leader.

Because I think everybody, really, at the end of the day does want a strong leader.

The president seems to have great respect among the board members, and one of them talked about the president's priority of reshaping the board to be more active and engaged, adding, "He's also been very, very insistent on getting as much diversity as possible, which we've done." Said a Pantheon trustee of his president,

His strength is he can make you feel at home if you're a United States senator or you work on transmissions on the farm equipment. He can make you feel like you're the most important person in the room, and that's a really, really admirable trait.

Summary

The Pantheon's president's career path has served as both an asset and a detriment in his role as president. Having served as provost has clearly benefitted him in understanding much about how a college works; however, it has held him back in some respects as he struggled to give up those duties most comfortable to him. Surprisingly, he made some important decisions—including starting a new academic program—without consulting faculty. One might not have expected such an action from an academic president who has experience in and appreciation for the professional power of the faculty. However, the extenuating circumstances and need for confidentiality trumped the sanctity of shared governance, at least in this case. This example presents a good

example of the quandary in which a president finds him or herself and one which is different from other executive arrangements—being able to act on time-sensitive, confidential matters when, technically, the faculty has traditionally held considerable power over academic programming.

Although they felt the new president lost some ground from the preceding incident, the faculty participants were generally positive about the president and appreciate his continued support for tenure. They shared that many colleagues believe he should take the time to listen more and talk less. They are generally supportive, however, of his leadership and understand that Pantheon is doing well (especially financially) under his direction and vision. The fact that they have received pay increases during an economic downturn is appreciated by many faculty and staff members. Pantheon has a very healthy endowment and budget, increasing enrollment, and a lower discount rate (although still generous) than the other institutions in this study. Apparently, he is willing to learn from his experiences and is becoming more consultative through strategic planning. This president appears to have been a good fit for this institution at this point in time.

Peachtree College – The Impatient Leader

The Environment

Peachtree College, a scenic campus of Gothic architecture, is located in a large Southeastern metropolitan area. From my interviews, I got the impression that, while everyone knew there were some financial concerns, no one understood the true financial danger lurking just beneath the surface. While the depth of the problem was unknown at the time, Peachtree College was experiencing serious financial problems, selling land and

dipping into the endowment to make ends meet when they began a search for a new president in 2006. According to the current president and trustees, the financial situation was completely unknown to the faculty who continued to get raises during the downward spiral under the departing president. In addition, a Peachtree trustee indicated that there were substantial admissions problems and the college had little to no campus life at the time. So, the college was looking for new energy and direction, business acumen, and, of course, someone who could raise money. And while financial salvation turned out to be priority number one, the college was not necessarily looking for a financial workout expert; however, that is exactly what they ended up needing.

Most Helpful Career Experiences

The Peachtree College president credits his education as the best preparation for the presidency. He says his legal education helped him think a different way while the rigor of his undergraduate education at a strong, private liberal arts institution well prepared him for his current environment. In addition, he completed a doctorate in higher education management, which helped him begin to think about the possibility of becoming a college president. Others see his administrative experience in buildings and, particularly finance, at another institution as the best preparation for his current position. He admitted that one of the things that intrigued him about the presidency is that he likes to be “in charge” and “to build things.” A Peachtree trustee added that the board found the president to be young, energetic, decisive, and full of charisma—all things they believe were needed at the institution. One trustee believes his president’s business acumen was important but credits his legal background for giving him the “tenaciousness” to handle the difficult situation he found at the institution.

Challenges/Establishing Legitimacy

Having never worked directly with academics, faculty relationships have been the most challenging for this president. A trustee explained,

. . . somebody that comes in without the academic credentials to be president has got to find a way to get along with the faculty. I saw, up close and personal, the stress that it puts on an institution when the president doesn't come from the academic world, you know, and is already suspect even before he or she starts to make tough decisions. I saw how miserable a faculty can make life for a president.

Acknowledging the rough relationship between faculty and the president, the student said, "I think his concerns are money and solvency, and their concerns are academia."

Interestingly, from both his standpoint and theirs, the president has not taken the time to try to understand the faculty's perspective nor devoted any significant amount of time to listening to them in order to build his capacity in the academic arena. He describes himself as a very impatient person and would never subscribe to any type of listening tour because he sees this sort of thing as a farce. He says there simply was not time to listen, given the dire emergencies he found when he entered the office. The president indicated that a source of frustration has been his inability to get faculty to follow his vision of change although he believes most of them knew something needed to change at the college. The faculty members agree that he seems to never have gotten comfortable with academic life but has finally found a provost with whom he is comfortable to handle these responsibilities. And from several accounts, the provost position has been fluid, only recently being filled by a permanent, reliable person. So, at

times, the president has been more involved than usual in academics because of the instability in the provost position.

Others see fundraising as originally one of the most challenging areas for him and believe he has grown in this area simply by the experience of doing it and by hiring a good development officer. He has raised approximately \$48 million during his tenure.

Strategies/Priorities

If the Peachtree president came in with a set of priorities, he quickly became refocused on one—saving the college from financial collapse. “The year I came, they spent 22% out of the endowment just to pay the bills,” he explained. At the same time, the new president faced a SACS ten-year accreditation process that was severely threatened by the dire financial environment. “. . . the first four years, until we got through the SACS accreditation, which went on for three years, was a, you know, a nightmare in a lot of ways,” said the Peachtree president. Although he knew he would face financial challenges, he had no idea how bad the problems were. The board did not know the extent of the problems and, certainly, the faculty was unaware. One of his first steps was to cut \$2 million from a \$20 million budget. To do this he temporarily stopped pension contributions and asked everyone to take a pay cut, all in the middle of a semester. Given the fact that the faculty had continued to get pay increases under the former president, this was particularly difficult. Said the Peachtree president,

You know, I had a fairly clear idea of what we needed to do and how we needed to do it and got, you know, a ton of criticism from people. I mean, I had a very good Board who, you know, believed in what I was doing, supported what I was doing, a really good team. But, it was just. . . it was painful.

As part of surviving the financial crisis and to build the quality of campus life, the Peachtree College president established a priority of becoming a strong residential college, civically involved in its large urban center. Part of fulfilling this goal involved the development of a residential requirement, which has now been extended to third year students, making for a more active weekend home. Commuters can still attend Peachtree but must be living at home with family if they do so.

In recent years, fundraising has become a bigger priority and the accomplishment of a signature building—a new student center has been realized. One trustee spoke of the symbolism of a new student center.

So he just decided he was going to make it his business to raise enough money to build, without debt, a brand new student center, which will open next fall. So, it will be a showpiece and in a way just something physical to hold out to alums, to prospective students, to the community to show the university's alive and well and has got something new and shiny and exciting. . .

Again, the presidential priorities appear to have some further impact on his relationships with faculty. As the student put it, the faculty seems to think the academic needs are not being met “whereas they’re trying to be met in the athletic sector or the housing sector, or like, the campus life center.”

The president developed a strategic plan; however, he indicated that students and the faculty were not involved in developing it. A Peachtree trustee spoke of the board's intense involvement in developing the strategic plan and that it evolved to be mostly about the business side of the institution rather than academics because the faculty would

never engage on the subject. One of the faculty members thinks the strategic plan is not strategic at all but more tactical in nature, adding, “So, we just kind of run in circles.”

When asked about how he sets priorities and direction the president responded, “So, my cabinet would say I just make a list of 100 things, and I tell them to do, like, those 100 things.” They often ask him what they might take off the list as he adds new things to which he replies, “Well, nothing on my list. . . I mean, you may have something.” Most of those ideas involve a vision of an urban liberal arts campus that helps students be involved in many things like work and study abroad. The Peachtree President was proud of his institution’s diversity—especially how the atmosphere had changed for women during his tenure. He spoke of a group of women faculty who approached him during his interview process and described the old culture of a presidential kitchen cabinet of only white men. He said, “And one of them retired the other day and just said some really nice things about how much the place had changed in that regard.” He acknowledged the student population was already diverse when he arrived but was more so now, with an exploding international population. He explained, “So, you know, it’s one of the most diverse, economically and racially, liberal arts colleges I know—anywhere.” On his president’s commitment to diversity, a trustee said, “So, in terms of was there some strategic statement or policy of we’re going to do this in the administration” I would say, no, but has he diversified it? Yeah, he has.” The President’s cabinet is evenly split between men and women.

Leadership Style/Behavior

When asked to describe his president’s leadership style, a Peachtree trustee indicated that he could be hard on people, saying, “If you need a lot of warm and fuzzy,

that's not him, but if you like to accomplish things and feel good about what you're doing, then he's a terrific guy to work for. His energy is amazing." One faculty member described his style as autocratic. "I mean, that's kind of his approach—"I don't care. I'm the president, and this is what I say we're going to do." One faculty member did credit the current president for allowing faculty representatives to board committees but also indicated they are never asked for opinions or advice.

I mean we're better off now. At least we are invited to the table, although, literally, when I served on the committee, I was not invited to the table. I had to sit in the chair against the wall, which I thought spoke volumes. But, I mean, we're better off having reps to the board anyway.

The Peachtree president listed his authenticity as the leadership attribute of which he is most proud. "I never bend the truth the teeniest little bit," he explained.

Some people don't like what I say or don't like how I say it, but, you know, I never put myself in a position where someone could come back and say, 'You said this, it turned out not to be so. . .

He believes this approach proved successful with local foundations as he, at first, explained the institution's financial situation to them and promised he would not approach them for money until his fiscal house was in order. A trustee agreed the president's forthrightness is an important virtue as well as his toughness.

He's a quick read, he's tough, his skin is tough as leather and even when he knew he was going to do things that were going to drive the faculty nuts, he was willing to do them. And he was absolutely honest with us as trustees about things that he found that weren't right or were representing trouble spots.

A faculty member agreed. “If the policy requires input, he takes input, but he’s very clear to say that the final decision is with him. So, there are leaders who kind of fake their way through that, but he’s very blunt.”

Throughout the course of the interviews, I heard the president described, by himself and others, as being very “impatient.” Another trustee explained that the president reacts quickly and that he may possibly be better served by thinking through things a little more.

. . . he’s a good writer and a quick thinker and sometimes, by George, he just says it or writes it down and sends it. But that’s all part of who he is and the way he thinks and the way he goes about things.

A faculty member believes the pivotal point of this presidency was when he came to the faculty and asked for a pay cut, mid-year. When they inquired if he would be taking one as well, the president refused to tell them, stating his pay was a decision of the board that did not need to be shared with them. In his interview, the president divulged that he had, indeed, taken the largest percentage pay cut of all.

A trustee points to his boldness, decisiveness, good humor and the fact that he is comfortable with being who he is. When asked how the president implements change, the same trustee responded, “Like a bull. Although he’s tried to learn. He’s tried to be more thoughtful about how he does things.”

One faculty member summed up what he believes to be the faculty’s problem with the current president,

We have a president that doesn’t understand what we do and also doesn’t value it.

This is a fact. I mean, we know that. . . he demonstrates that repeatedly. He’s

wanted to get rid of our core curriculum because he doesn't understand it, and when he can't get rid of it, he has tried to soften it up—make it easier. He'll often say there've been times when he has told the Board that the reason they can't get more students is because of our core curriculum. It all comes down to that—trying to make it easier to get students.

When asked to describe the president's leadership style, the faculty member replied, "divide and conquer." Another faculty member offered a slightly different version. Speaking of the high hopes everyone had upon his hiring, the faculty member said,

I'm willing to recognize the fact that there might not be a strong market for traditional liberal arts institutions nowadays. But, I look at it and say, we either have an administration that is unable to grow the university or we're offering something that doesn't have a market.

The president believes his strength is having a vision for success and being able to stick to it no matter what. By hiring very good people, he feels he has been able to do that. The president believes he makes decisions "quickly and, by and large, on sort of an informed gut." Others believe he's very data driven in making decisions. Both he and others described a small group of people around the president who help him get that data and come to a decision. One trustee put it this way,

He doesn't take very long. He trusts his own facts. He might ask advice from some people—me or others—but, at the end of the day, he is an individual, confident, quick, sometimes seat-of-the-pants decision maker. He doesn't have the patience for studies and committees, and he has absolutely zero patience for that.

The Peachtree College president focused a great deal on what he, personally, has done to enhance the image of the college by getting out in the larger community and being involved in everything from the guns on campus issue to chairing various boards, mostly in the area of K-12 education. He wondered aloud how to transfer this credibility from him as a person to the institution itself. In fact, he lists his accomplishments in this order: (a) keeping the college alive financially; (b) getting through accreditation process; (c) civic branding; and (d) fundraising—building a new campus center, for example. One trustee agreed, saying about his president, “one of our worries is that it’s been a one-man show. It’s been (the president), not other university people—and when he leaves, how to maintain the momentum he’s built in the community.” A faculty member said of the Peachtree president, “He has a very large ego. He truthfully doesn’t see the relevance of humility.”

Like the other presidents in this research, the Peachtree president seems to have a strong relationship with the students. The student government president recalls meeting him the second day she arrived on campus and being surprised that he already seemed to know about her—having met her father the day before on move-in day. She feels that, either directly or indirectly he seeks her input and listens to what she has to say. The president spends a great deal of time going to athletic events, throwing pizza parties in the dorm, and simply asking students how they are doing and what is going on. He plays basketball with them and sometimes travels abroad with them. One of the trustees commented that the president knows most of the students’ names and that they all know him.

Of all the presidents, the Peachtree College president seemed to have the most strained relationship with faculty, both from his perspective and theirs. He points to a place roughly about five years into his presidency, after the SACS crisis passed that he really gave up on these relationships. He described the situation, “If we got past the SACS thing, I was like, I’ve had it. I mean, it just got. . . I just don’t want do this anymore.” One of his friends advised him to determine where he could draw energy and focus there. So, he decided to continue to focus on the small group of people around him and his board. A Peachtree trustee agreed that faculty relations have been the most challenging for the president adding, “He’s an agent of change, and the faculty is not.” The other trustee expounded on the president’s relationships with faculty,

I think that’s been his Achilles heel, the whole faculty relationship thing. He had never been in a position where he had to deal with the faculty. And, he wouldn’t give an inch. He probably wasn’t accommodating enough in the early years. He thought he could just barge ahead, and he probably didn’t love on that group enough.

One faculty member observed the different relationship the president has with the board as compared to faculty when given the opportunity to attend a board dinner and meeting. “He’s clearly much more comfortable talking with them. There’s a lot of laughing and joking and applauding that, to a large extent, doesn’t happen the same with the faculty.”

Summary

The Peachtree College president’s career path well prepared him in some respects for the challenges that awaited him at this institution. His higher education administrative vice president career clearly enabled him to analyze the financial disaster

looming and to formulate a quick response. The tenaciousness and combativeness of a civil rights legal career allowed him to keep moving forward, despite mounting criticism. His efforts literally saved the college from financial ruin and loss of accreditation although the financial picture is still not particularly strong with a small endowment and budget for its size along with a high discount rate. However, he has simply made no effort to involve faculty in decisions or in charting direction for the college, including in strategic planning. Granted, by conducting six interviews in total, I was unable to discern who gave up on the other first—the faculty or the president. Nevertheless, he admits not feeling the need to communicate with them now. Although the trustees are very supportive of this president and his actions, they too admit he probably should have made a more concerted effort to work with the faculty. Although the president prides himself on being completely honest, he would not tell the faculty that he had taken a pay cut when he had, in fact, taken the largest percentage cut of all. I wonder what a difference this would have made in how they perceived him and his leadership had he shared this fact with them.

This president admitted getting his energy from his board, a small group of people around him and the students. While he may have been the right fit for a particular crisis situation, I wonder if he is the right fit for the long-term, given the current low support of faculty. Furthermore, I saw no evidence that he perceived that he had done anything wrong or even thought he might have done anything different if given the chance. Complicating this president's relationship with the faculty has been the turnover in the provost position. A nontraditional president needs a consistent, strong academic partner to help establish legitimacy

As documented in the literature, nontraditional presidents should take the time to get to know the academic culture of the institution rather than rushing to be a transformational president based on quick decisions. This president would argue there was no time to do listening because the crisis had to be averted. But then again, he stated that he does not have the patience for such activities in general.

Foothills College – Transformation by Political Art

The Environment

The mountain setting of Foothills College, peaceful and serene, belies the massive change the institution has undergone during the previous five years. The religiously affiliated institution had been a junior college for the past one hundred years until the time the Board of Trustees decided in 2007 that two-year, private, liberal arts colleges were relics and began the conversation to move to four-year status. It was at this time they commenced a search for the president to lead this monumental change. Coupled with this transformational goal was the recent experience of two consecutive failed presidencies—one involving a scandal and the other what appeared to simply be a bad fit. There also existed a significant rift between alumni factions, one having splintered into a second foundation during one of the failed presidencies. These experiences created an atmosphere of concern and anxiety, yet there was also anticipation of what was possible for this small, but historic institution.

Most Helpful Career Experiences

Given this climate at Foothills, in which transformation was expected, what was it about this president that made her the right fit for the job? By all the accounts, the president's political experiences, name recognition, and connections were seen as

ultimately what the college needed at the time. But not everyone had been encouraging at the start. A trustee courted her candidacy persistently, but the search firm was not entirely supportive. The president explained,

The search firm was fairly dismissive of me. They said, ‘You’re very nontraditional. I just don’t know if you’ll be a good fit for them. I don’t know that the faculty will like you, and I’m pretty sure the trustees are not going to override the faculty. But if you want to apply, you can apply.’

Despite this lukewarm encouragement from the search firm, she did apply and was selected. One of the faculty members remembers being hopeful during the interview process. He said, “I remember meeting her and being very impressed and kind of excited about the prospect that we might have somebody who has good name recognition and that would also be someone who’s well connected.” Interestingly, he also recalled being excited about the prospect of having a female president, but mostly he recalled, “. . . we needed leadership. We needed good leadership, and we had not had it for a while.”

From the president’s perspective, her career experiences as a politician and as a lawyer have been the most helpful in the job as president. And clearly, throughout the interviews, I heard what I will describe as the art of great political skill at work. From the attention she gives to making individual connections with people—all people—to knowing how to “count the votes” with the board, she understands politics. She explained that the political experience helped build her people skills, and her legal practice helped her understand there is a civil way to deal with controversy and to resolve problems. Those skills she said, “Gave me the right focus and perspective and experience in dealing with people and various controversies to manage a lot of issues that

I found here.” She also believes the experience she gained from implementing huge change in state government and being able to communicate to varied and large constituencies, while implementing the change, played to her strengths. Leading these statewide change efforts in government also developed her team-building skills in order to get the job done. Most importantly, she believes her political fundraising experiences best prepared her for the job. After being locked in a room making cold calls to strangers asking for \$1000 political donations for her campaign with the check to be collected that very day, she says asking for donations for a college is easy.

And everything I hated about political fundraising is actually what’s good about charitable fundraising because it is relationship-based. It’s all about spending time with donors. It is all about matching up a donor’s interests with a college’s need, and almost nothing about that is immediate.

Her experiences serving on boards at other private colleges also prepared her, although clearly, understanding the academic side of the presidential equation proved to be the most challenging for her.

All respondents commented on her personal trait of simply being likeable. One trustee credited her likeability factor with part of her success. “You know you meet her, and you like her. The likability factor’s a big plus for her.”

Challenges/Establishing Legitimacy

The Foothills president certainly understood that the most challenging aspect of the job would be the academic side with which she had little experience. Indeed, while the faculty was generally supportive of her candidacy during the search process—believing she was the candidate who could push the transition agenda—the academic

void worried them. One faculty member stated, “We felt the formula was great...that was the one part of the formula we worried about.” Both trustees agreed that the faculty relationships have probably been the most challenging for the president, indicating her nonacademic path probably concerned some at first. “But it didn’t take them long, in my opinion, to get over that when they saw how effective she was. And they like what’s she’s done for them, and they like what she’s done for the college” one trustee said.

From her own assessment and others, this president was very intentional about learning about the academic side of the house, seeking advice from her provost, dean, and other presidents. She also threw herself into work with SACS accreditation committees early on to learn about the process and the challenges her institution would be undertaking. She said,

The accreditation stuff has been good for my learning curve as a non-academic because everybody’s got to meet these standards—they’re very academically driven and the quality of the program is driven from an academic and financial health of an institution standpoint. So, I forced myself into that process to learn. She has also encouraged other key institutional leaders to serve on SACS committees from which she says they have all learned. “And, to this day, SACS has never turned us down on anything we’ve submitted because I think we have a very deep working knowledge of the process,” she added.

To help establish legitimacy with the faculty, she has worked hard at building trust with them. She made a conscious decision to stay close to campus for the first year to establish relationships. Right away she met with the faculty and told them she did not plan to interfere with the academic side of the house and that she would need and depend

on their technical expertise. In addition to regular group meetings, she made other opportunities to meet with faculty in one-on-one and smaller group sessions such as afternoon walks with any faculty member who wanted to talk with her about anything on their minds. She also makes appointments to meet faculty in their office on a rotating basis, to provide a comfortable, nonthreatening environment for them to discuss what's on their mind. Nevertheless, she does understand that faculty members sometimes continue to grumble when dissatisfied with priorities such as new dorms, dining facilities, and fitness centers when they think other academic investments are necessary.

Another challenging aspect for her has been the financing of a rapid college expansion such as the one envisioned by the president and her board. She did turn to financial experts on her board and also hired more experienced financial staff who understood the complex work of bond financing in order to grow the college at a fast pace. Given the challenging economic times confronting the very outset of the college's transition, most respondents seemed to be impressed at the success of her fundraising prowess, while acknowledging the balancing act between the president and the board. One faculty member explained, "They're (the trustees) probably on the conservative end of things, and she's more on the progressive end of things. And so, it's good to have the pragmatics and the visionaries to work things out, and I think that's what's going on." Last year, she was able to give across the board pay raises for the first time since transformation began. Coupled with these pay raises, she implemented equity salary adjustments to bring longer serving faculty salaries in line with more recent hires.

Strategies/Priorities

The priorities of this president were clearly defined when her board of trustees voted, shortly after her arrival to officially move the college from two-year to four-year status. Everything she did from that point on revolved around accomplishing this goal.

Because of the bruised feelings and divisiveness caused by the previous president, the new Foothills president described her first priority of rebuilding trust on campus. She discussed moving into the president's house and having a discussion the next morning with the staff member who came to collect her trash and had been doing this very job for twenty years. Soon, the word was out that the new president wanted to know all about the trash collector. Her reputation as being down-to-earth with the ability to make connections to people was established early on. One relatively new faculty member recalls meeting the president for the first time and being "shocked" that the president knew all about her. "She does a good job of creating a feeling of. . . family is probably too strong, but of a group membership where we all have a part of building the identity of the college." The president thinks the time she spent going to the office of faculty members and staff, getting to know them and their families, served her well as she set about implementing change. Likewise, there were concerns that, coming out of politics, she was using this job as a stop-gap until another election opportunity. She offered,

But the fact that I was making the time to know them as people and care about them. . . to do things that were about people and not about me as president or the trappings of the presidency, that really did help to heal a lot of the internal campus politics.

The president put a very detailed strategic planning process in place upon her arrival and solicited everyone's input. She created the President's Leadership Council, composed of her vice-presidents. But to implement the real change needed she created a larger group—the Planning Assessment Council which included the vice-presidents but also faculty and staff. It is this group, which met every week during the first year of transition, that she describes as the planning arm of the institution. A faculty member brought to her attention a book entitled *Transforming College* (the case study of Elon University) which the president says opened their eyes to hundreds of details that helped steer their transformation. The book was purchased for all faculty and board members and was a central focus throughout the process. She also helped educate herself and her team by visiting a number of aspirational colleges around the country.

Another priority was bridging the divide between the warring alumni factions which she was able to accomplish about a year and a half into her presidency. Many times during the interviews she was described as a “healer.”

Fund raising has clearly been a priority and, at the time of the interviews, she had raised \$55 million in the previous three and a half years—even during the big recession. This included a \$22 million gift. “Nobody else can bring in those huge gifts for a college any more effectively than a president and most big donors want the president to be directly involved,” she said.

Growing enrollment from 600 to 1200 is a priority of Foothills College and, along with that goal; a massive building program has been a priority from an expanded dining hall, to fitness center and gymnasium, to new dormitories. This year, a 17th bachelor's degree program will be added with 16 minors in place. She now is more focused on

adding quality versus quantity and, sounding a familiar theme in this research, determining those majors that help make Foothills College “distinctive.”

This president has also placed a premium on diversity. As she puts it, “I don’t believe that you can provide a top-quality liberal arts education unless you have diversity among your faculty and staff and in your student body and there was virtually no diversity when I got here.” Minority students composed less than two percent of the mountainous, rural college community when she arrived as president. In five and a half years, she has increased the non-white percentage to eighteen. Because the region’s population is almost exclusively white, she used her connections to reach beyond the immediate area. “Fortunately, from an elected official’s background, I had a lot of contacts in a lot of minority communities,” she said. She hired a consultant to help recruit top African American students from different parts of the state. A faculty member reflected on her initiative for the transfer of a number of Hispanic students from a local Catholic college which closed during the recession. Her student body is also diverse in other respects—including students from 26 states and 27 countries. According to one of the trustees, she has also diversified the board, adding women, African-Americans, and one Hispanic board member. “And we’ve gotten young on the Board,” he added. We were bunch of old white guys.” Interestingly, however, her cabinet is not particularly diverse. Of eight vice-presidents, two are female, which is one more than when she arrived as president.

Leadership Style/Behavior

In identifying her strengths from prior careers, there were certain aspects about the way this president likes to lead that became clear. First, she enjoys and likes to implement change. She said,

I thought—and I still think—change is exciting. . . not just necessarily for the sake of change, but through my political career, I’ve always felt like whatever I’m given stewardship of, I have this obligation to try to make it better.

And most of her decisions and her manner of implementing change seem to come back to this notion of how to make things better—from her former career of being held accountable to voters for doing just that. She said,

I always felt such a deep sense of responsibility to prove myself to the voters to be worthy of reelection. I feel very similarly now that, if I don’t have a long list of accomplishments that are not certainly just mine, but that I have been involved in helping this campus accomplish and achieve over the year, then why should this Board of Trustees keep me in the job?

All of the changes here have required people to “get out of their comfort zones,” she says. “Well, they know from the start my least favorite saying is, ‘We’ve always done it that way, you know.’” “Well you, you might have done it that way forever, but you won’t know whether that’s the best way unless we really look at it in a larger context,” she added.

She talked of the challenges of moving from a two-year to four-year institution and that it is “about like growing a college from scratch.” “That’s been the fun part of it,” she says, “to encourage people to put their dreams on the table and to think about

what can make us a distinctive four-year college. . .” One faculty member commented that he believes it was her nontraditional path that enabled her to implement change so swiftly. An academic president might have been more inclined to build degree programs slowly in his view. “Well, if we would have done that, then we’d still be slowly climbing the ladder up and, you know, we knew that we needed to grow big—quickly,” he added. She is also a risk taker according to one of her trustees. One faculty member described her leadership style as “efficient, effective, progressive—even aggressive a bit, more so than some of our past presidents.” He added, “She’s also very hands-on, but not to the extent of extreme micro-management.” Another faculty member said she’s strong and willing to make the tough decisions. “I mean if she wants something to happen, it’s happening and she has the juice to make it happen.” The same faculty member mentioned how she looks up to the president and wants to “emulate the strength I see in her.” On the other hand, she understands that a few faculty members might find her

...bossy and, you know, the typical things that you get when women are powerful and strong. . . that we’re not supposed to act that way, or, if it was a man, it wouldn’t be such a big deal. She doesn’t let that affect her which is also one of the things I like about her.

One trustee described her as a consensus builder but also very demanding. “She has a high energy level, a work ethic that most people in a college environment don’t always have,” he added. Interestingly, when asked to describe her leadership style, one trustee responded, “Strong. I wouldn’t want to cross her. She’s got a velvet glove. You know you’ve been hammered, but you’re not bleeding.” He credits her tough statewide political campaigns for this quality.

But she can also be a “mother-hen” to students according to a faculty member who described an incident in which a student was hit by a car at a dangerous spot right at the entrance of campus. She describes this scene,

And I look out the window, and I see the president *running* down the hill and the chief of police is right behind. She’s ahead of him. She’s *running* down the hill to see what’s happened and to deal with the student.

The president also puts a premium on communication, openness, and building trust. The president began a campus-wide meeting each semester to update everyone on the transition from two-year to four-year status, to discuss how decisions are made, and what will come next in terms of implementation. Also, she says, “I guess my state government background has caused me to be very transparent. There’s nothing really, except for obvious personnel matters and things like that, which I really am not willing to talk about to this group.” Both faculty members confirmed that she makes a real effort to keep everyone informed of changes.

This communication effort went farther than group meetings. One faculty member commented on her “open door policy” and she was very accessible when needed. Despite this conscious effort to connect, it has not all been smooth sailing with the faculty. One faculty member explained, “We had some faculty members who absolutely detested the idea that we were going to progress to a four year-institution, and they made it known they were not on board.” Eventually, he explained, many took early retirements and there was feeling from some that there was a sense of, “Now listen, you know, this is the train. The train is leaving the station. You are either going to be on it,

or you're not going to be on it." While not coming directly from the president, some felt there was heavy handedness going on.

Like the other presidents in the study, she puts a premium on her relationships with students—hosting student government groups at the president's house and attending all functions on campus from athletic events to music recitals. "We're small enough that I can recognize students. I'm obsessive about speaking to them and making them put down the cell phone from their head to speak to me." The student government president discussed how the president takes action on things they bring to her attention at these dinner meetings. She gave an example of the president putting down a gravel walkway at construction to reduce the mud the students walk through after they brought it to her attention.

Likewise, her open communication style extends to her board relationships. She says,

I spend a lot of time communicating with them, visiting with them, emailing them, keeping them up-to-date on all of our changes and planning so that they could develop a good feeling that they didn't have to be up here checking on me and looking over my shoulder.

She continues to learn about where the appropriate line is terms of decisions that need to be made—by her or her board. One board member says her relationship with the board is a "love fest" because they know where the college was and where she has taken them.

One trustee credited her success to her amazing people skills—which he believes were born from a lifetime of political experiences. He explained, "How do you get along with people" How do you get diverse opinions and diverse outlooks and everything else

and bring them together? She's an expert at that." In speaking of her connectivity, one faculty member marveled at how she is able to get buy-in from a broad constituency, including influential people, "So, she knows who to find, and she knows how to get what she needs from those individuals, and part of that skill set probably came from the political world."

This president also believes in empowering her team, delegating more responsibility to her deans and vice presidents, including giving them their own budgets to manage which had never been done before. The budget process had been held secret and centrally controlled before her arrival.

When asked how she makes decisions, her first reaction was to go back to her gut instinct but she quickly followed up that she makes very few decisions without asking for input from her President's Leadership Council, simply to get the most information possible. All of the respondents confirmed that she is a deliberate decision maker who seeks information from multiple sources but is not shy about ultimately making the call. A faculty member said, "She's able to make the tough decisions but still be pleasant." A trustee went a step further, stating,

Look, the woman's got ice water in her veins if she needs to. I think she cares about people. I know she does. But if she has to make a decision that's the best for everybody, she'll make that decision.

When one of the Foothills trustees was extolling the virtues of his female president, he finally blurted out "She comes across as one of the guys, you know, and *thinks like a man!*" When asked to elaborate, he explained that she runs a "business meeting approach to things and doesn't make emotional decisions." While the trustee

sincerely wanted to express his admiration for his president, this statement shows the stereotype that female leaders still face when it is anticipated they will be more emotional rather than rational decision makers as leaders until they prove otherwise.

Finally, from her political and legal background, one faculty member described her ability to make her case, “She has a persuasiveness about her that when people listen to her, even people who are skeptical of things, will often, you know, acknowledge that she’s put forth a good argument.”

Summary

Unlike at Peachtree, the Foothills Board of Trustees knew what type of change they wanted to undertake and understood they needed a change agent to make it happen. So, the new president knew the plan coming in. By all accounts, the Foothills president’s political skills, name recognition, and network have been most helpful taking the college from two-year to four-year status. Certainly her political fundraising prowess proved helpful in raising \$55 million dollars for her small campus and her political campaigns have made her tough and strong in the view of several participants.

While not universal, it appears that she has and continues to enjoy the support of most of the faculty members. Having implemented a major change in state government and having communicated this change to all citizens of the state, she set about implementing the same type of communication plan at Foothills. Although she was implementing transformational change, she did not ignore the scholars’ advice of taking time to learn about the people and the culture of the institution. She did this in several ways—by visiting one-on-one with faculty and staff in their offices, by having large meetings to communicate plans to everyone on campus as well as alumni and board

members and by raising her own level of academic expertise through SACS and aspirational campus visits. She also involved faculty and staff in planning for the change. Finally, she also utilizes a strong provost to build academic legitimacy.

But change happened, and it happened quickly. The enrollment has almost hit the 1200 target a year earlier than planned. A more academic president might have been less inclined to move this rapidly—establishing 17 new degree programs within a four year period. A healthy endowment and supportive board allowed the president to grow the college rapidly, utilizing a combination of financing, enrollment growth, and fundraising.

Her career experiences coupled with traits most often associated with female leaders like inclusiveness, transparency, openness and healing have allowed this president to hit the aggressive targets set by her board. All has not been perfect as some faculty members have opted to take early retirement and others might see her style as too aggressive. Nevertheless, this president seems to have been an excellent fit for this institution at this point in time.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I believe it is important to remember that, although all four presidents were seasoned professionals, this was their first college presidency. I think all presidents would say they encountered situations, both expected and unexpected, which helped them grow as leaders. The financial crisis took its toll—especially on two institutions; but, at the same time, all four presidents were able to be successful in fundraising, even given the challenging economic conditions. One wonders how much more they could have achieved under more favorable conditions.

The Environment – Finding the Right Fit

Time and place seem to have everything to do with why a president is chosen for a job; but certainly this study showed that a broad range of experiences can and should be considered. The more traditional academics followed successful presidents and were expected to take their institutions to the next level while the nontraditional presidents were expected to implement change and, in one case, transformative change—rapidly. It is important for the institution to find “the right fit” which was discussed throughout the interviews. At Peachtree, clearly the president had alienated the faculty, but the situation was desperate, so having a president, who makes decisions, is not overly consultative, and fixes the finances may mean nontraditional presidents can be a good fit at a certain point in time. While the board continues to be highly supportive, it is questionable if this president is the right fit over the long-term, post-financial crisis as the faculty continues

to be crucial to the overall success of the institution. Certainly, a more academic president might not have been as inclined to implement the rapid expansion that the Foothills president undertook. She had a history of implementing change quickly, but competently and was clearly a good fit, especially when combined with other leadership qualities.

Given the increasing complexity of the office, the enormous range of skills required, and the increasing competition among colleges—especially the types included in this study—I believe the scenarios through which a nontraditional president could be chosen will continue to increase. However, given the foreign culture to those from outside the academy, this study includes important observations—even best practices for success.

Establishing Legitimacy

No matter the skill set and experiences of any president, they will arrive without a complete arsenal with which to attack the job. It was interesting to note if and how these presidents recognized their challenges and how they worked to build capacity. Clearly the nontraditional presidents would be challenged by the lack of academic experience and one would expect a complex faculty relationship in those cases; however, I found the same thing to be true with the academic presidents. It appears that the presidents best able to bridge this divide were those who took the time to listen to the faculty and engage them—the female presidents in this study. However, as Cohen and March (1986) pointed out, this is part of the ambiguity of power in the college presidency—faculty want a strong leader but also do not want to be told what to do. It appears this relationship needs to be continuously worked while recognizing the ambiguity can never be truly resolved.

Perhaps this complicated relationship is one of the reasons the presidents in this study spent so much time on student relationships. Student relationships are no doubt easier as they are generally younger, more impressionable and there for the short-term. The faculty members, in most cases, are there longer and many times have outlasted several players and generally feel they have more invested in the institution than the president who usually moves on.

Priorities and Strategies

While all presidents developed clearly defined priorities, they were all focused like a laser on doing what had to be done to attract students. All were searching for that “something” that symbolized modernity and relevance—whether this was in a new and shiny student center or dorm or that signature student program that would give them an edge in today’s competitive environment. And by the presidents’ admission and/or others, this caused concern from faculty who always feel academic investments should come more quickly. It truly seemed to be a “chicken and an egg” (which comes first—more students or faculty?) or “build it and they will come” scenario. Investing more in attractions to lure students does not always work, and the college may have the potential to be left with more debt in addition to more alienated faculty lacking proper laboratories or more students than can be managed successfully. Furthermore, there is a possibility that the institution could change so much that traditional constituencies and donors could become alienated. Yet, today’s student expects certain amenities even at the smallest of institutions and basics such as dormitories are simply a necessity when the goal is to grow enrollment.

While increasing enrollment was a priority, one could see where the president's background or career path played into the development of the priorities—from the emphasis on diversity or the environment to a more civically engaged institution. The nontraditional candidates clearly utilized their broad skill sets from politics, the law, and business to implement their schools' priorities. In the case of Peachtree, this was a different priority than he envisioned, but nevertheless, his prior career of serving as vice president for administration helped equip him to handle the financial crisis he encountered. The more traditional presidents used their academic credentials and experience to take on the challenges of their institution, although one acknowledging that his prior experience as provost was both a blessing and a curse.

Leadership Styles

Certainly, in this study I found different leadership styles which are not easily categorized. Just like the literature on female leadership, I found this study to show a mixture of styles. Overall, I found the female presidents to be mostly participatory leaders who worked hard at engaging their constituencies, communicating, and empowering their teams. They actively talked about making opportunities to learn and areas in which they had grown. Both talked of being inclusive, transparent and seemed to work hard at making connections with people. However, again, the ambiguity of the office shows up here as some faculty would like stronger leadership in drawing things to conclusion for one of the female presidents while also appreciating her inclusiveness. For the nontraditional female president, she was also described as tough and strong in addition to some of the adjectives that are sometimes assigned to women leaders. One trustee even opined that “she thinks like a man” which he described as meaning she was

business-like and unemotional in making decisions. Sadly, women leaders are sometimes still stereotyped as emotional unless and until they prove otherwise.

The male presidents showed different leadership styles. The traditional male president also appeared to show a participatory management style and was categorized, for the most part, as a good communicator and gentle leader while the nontraditional president was described as autocratic, tough, and impatient. While having brought the college out of severe financial conditions, he had, by far the most strained relationship with the faculty.

Through the Feminist Lens

From my interviews, I deduced that the two female presidents were probably liberal feminists but from entirely different experiences. Both had become successful by largely working within a masculine normalized society. Both were quick to self-identify as feminists but only the academic female president was identified by others at her institution as being a feminist. All of the male participants struggled with my question while the women's responses varied by age (the older they were, the more they were likely to identify the president as a feminist). Both seemed to believe that mentorship was important, but the nontraditional female talked about the struggles of finding female role models in her prior career choices—the practice of law in a rural area and politics. She was the first woman in many of her career achievements. I believe that their career paths greatly influenced the manner in which they view the world and how they want to effect change. Perhaps the academic female matured professionally in the more protected world of academe with more freedom of expression while the nontraditional female was in the rough and tumble world of the law and politics and certainly had to function within

a more masculine world. Both, however, felt the obligation to mentor young women, diversify their board, faculty and student population and bring out divergent views. Interestingly, the nontraditional female's cabinet was only one female stronger than when she arrived—a statistic surpassed by both of the male presidents in this study

Implications for Practice

The most effective styles in this study were indeed a combination of transformational and transactional leadership. As Kazar surmised in 2006, these presidents were goal-oriented and driven, but at the same time, believed in communication, empowerment, and collective leadership and took the time to build relationships. They also created an environment of learning for themselves and others. In working with faculty, it is especially important to take the time to listen to them—presidents should begin there because symbolism is important. However, this practice must be sustained and sincere and different forums should be utilized to listen—both formally and informally. Listening is an important part of communication which is many times overlooked by leaders. This is an important recommendation for any president—but particularly for those outside the academy who come into the academy with a legitimacy deficit.

In addition, creating the climate to learn is important. Presidents should work hard at finding the areas in which they need to add depth and expertise and areas in which their entire campus needs to grow and to establish mechanisms by which this happens.

With faculty and students, the “vocation of presence” is extremely important. Successful presidents find the ways to “just show up” with faculty and with students. It is noticed and makes a real difference in developing and nurturing these relationships.

The same is true for board members; however, the very nature of the president/board relationship makes the “vocation of presence” a necessity.

Search committees should be more open to considering nontraditional candidates for presidencies. In order for this to occur, more success stories need to be shared with search firms and trustee organizations. The nontraditional female president in this study exhibited most qualities of the new kind of leader who is both transformational and transactional and her case and others like hers should be shared with those considering a presidential search.

Future Research

As mentioned in Chapter 4, there was a huge discrepancy between the board and faculty views of their presidents. I was not surprised there was a discrepancy but the stark difference startled me. In the eyes of the trustees, the president could do very little wrong. In the course of the interviews, it became clear to me that it is difficult for trustees to get a true picture of what is taking place at the college. One college appeared on the verge of financial collapse, yet the trustees were unaware of the problem. Another trustee mentioned that the longer a president is there, more information generally begins to be delivered with a spin because the president becomes the owner of information and the problem if there is one. I believe this is an area that needs further examination. Without micromanaging, how do boards of trustees become more knowledgeable about the true state of affairs within an institution? After all, they are fiducially responsible.

As I have noted several times in this paper, the presidents in this study worked very hard at student relationships. In each case, it was noted that these efforts and relationships had not existed before the current president. As mentioned earlier in this

section, it could be that these relationships are just simply easier—the students are young, impressionable, and are there for the short-term. By just being present, it is easy for the president and student to feel good about each other. Whereas the faculty are there for the long-haul and not so easily replaced especially as an institution strives to build its academic reputation. But why the renewed concentration on students now and not in the past as surely the faculty/president relationship has always been complicated? As I heard the struggles about how to make these small, private, liberal arts colleges distinctive and worth the large price tag among many such institutions, not to mention the many publics, I propose that it has more to do with competition. Further research on the president/student relationship as an increasing competitive advantage in private, liberal arts colleges is needed.

Additionally, while this was an exploratory study, I believe future research should aim to determine if a nontraditional route to the presidency is a method by which to diversify the office of the college presidency. In this study a nontraditional female president was recruited because of the skill set, connections, and name recognition she could bring to the office along with her ability to implement change. By all accounts, she is achieving the ambitious goals the board set out. Her nontraditional skill set combined with leadership traits most often identified with women made for a powerful combination and good fit for this institution. If search committees were more open to this possibility, could this approach lead to more diversification and opportunities for women?

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Guide 1
For College Presidents

1. I've read your biographical information but can you tell me about your background including your education and career prior to being appointed president?
2. What made you want to be a college president (for those outside higher education, why the change to higher education)?
3. Is the job what you expected it would be?
4. Tell me about a typical day at work? What are you likely to do first thing in the morning, for example?
5. What leadership qualities are needed to be a college president?
6. How would you describe your own personal leadership style?
7. What presidential responsibilities play to your strengths in your opinion?
8. What parts of your prior career best prepared you for the job?
9. What are the job responsibilities that have challenged you the most and how have you strengthened your capacity in those areas?
10. Can you tell me about the environment here at the time you were selected president?
11. Why do you think you were selected?
12. What have been your priorities as president?
13. How do you set strategic direction and priorities?
14. What organizational changes have you made in your time as president?
15. How do you make decisions?

16. How have you implemented change?
17. There are those who would say only a true academic is qualified to be president.
What would you say to them?
18. Have you developed particular diversity initiatives here to support women and minority faculty, staff, and students? If so, please describe them.
19. Would you say you are a feminist?
20. Please tell me about any particular support systems in place (formal or informal) that have helped you become a college president?
21. Do you think mentoring is important in becoming a president?
22. How do you judge your own success and effectiveness as president?
23. How would you like others (particularly your board) to judge your effectiveness?

Interview Guide 2

For Trustees, Faculty, Students

1. Please tell me a little about yourself—your position here, how long you’ve been here, background, etc.
2. How long have you known your college president and in what capacities do you interface with her/him?
3. What leadership qualities are needed to be a college president?
4. What presidential responsibilities play to your president’s strengths in your opinion?
5. What parts of his/her prior career best prepared her/him for the job in your opinion?
6. What are the job responsibilities that have challenged her/him the most and how has she/he strengthened capacity in those areas?
7. How does he/she interact with the board, faculty, and students?
8. If you know, can you tell me about the environment here at the time she/he was selected to be president?
9. Why do you think he/she was selected?
10. How would you describe her/his leadership style and qualities?
11. How do you think he/she sets strategic direction and priorities?
12. What have been her/his priorities?
13. What organizational changes have been made in her/his tenure as president?
14. How do you think she/he makes decisions?

15. How has he/she implemented change?
16. There are those who would say that only a true academic is qualified to be president. What would you say to them?
17. Have you seen any efforts to establish diversity initiatives here during this president's tenure to support women and minority faculty, staff, and students? If so, please describe them.
18. Would you describe your president as a feminist?
19. How do you judge presidential success?
20. What would say overall about her/his presidency?