DISSERTATION

CAREER PATHWAYS AND EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

Submitted by

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY RENEE ANN KUHARSKI ENTITLED CAREER PATHWAYS AND EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

CAREER PATHWAYS AND EXPERIENCES OF
WOMEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

This study inquired into the experiences selected women community college presidents had on the pathway to their presidency. The study focused on women so that future women leaders might gain a better understanding of how others achieve senior-level positions at community colleges. This research employed a phenomenological approach to build on participants' first-person accounts of life experiences related to their career pathways. In-depth interviews with 14 women purposefully chosen as individuals who became community college presidents formed the basis for the data collected. The women reflected diversity in regard to how long they had served as presidents, whether the current presidency was their first, their experience in higher education administration, and the educational levels they had achieved.

This study revealed that the career pathway to the presidency may be changing, at least for women. Additionally, three core themes emerged from the women's experiences that had an impact on their career pathway: their perspective and philosophies, career barriers and challenges, and the impact of influential individuals. This research adds to the body of knowledge about how women achieve a community college presidency.

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Dedicated with love to my dad and mom ~ I miss you and know you are with me.

December 8, 1978

December 23, 2004

"You gain strength,

courage and confidence by

each experience in which you

stop to look fear in the face"

~Eleanor Roosevelt~

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Chapter 1

Many senior community college leaders and presidents will retire over the next decade. As a result more and more opportunities will exist for women to step into those positions. To add to the available research and so enable a better understanding of the experiences and contributions of women in community college leadership, I propose to study and report the life experiences of women who now serve as presidents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study is to inquire into and offer a basis for understanding the lived experiences women community college presidents have had on their pathway to their presidencies. Through the stories of these women's experiences, future women leaders might gain a better understanding of how others have achieved senior-level positions at community colleges.

Research Problem

In reviewing the literature for this study, I found that much of it directly addressed the career pathways for women by reporting studies that utilized a quantitative methodology. This literature surveyed women presidents about their leadership styles, leadership behaviors, and career pathways, and their perspectives regarding their presidencies. There was little qualitative research that explained how women achieved their community college presidencies. Additionally, I found no phenomenological research that reported on attempts to understand the essence of their experiences. No

study has considered the following questions: What career choices did these women make along their journeys into presidential positions? What experiences did the women have along the way? How can women prepare to lead at a senior level? Can a career path be planned to prepare women for senior-level positions within a community college?

Research Questions

The research questions I developed are designed to explore the experiences women community college presidents have had in attaining their presidencies. These questions provide a possible avenue to understanding the leadership qualities, values, beliefs, and perceptions women community college presidents have brought to their positions. The questions also provide a perspective on the challenges and barriers, and rewards participants encountered in achieving their presidencies. In this study I used the word *what* in the framing of research questions to ask about their experiences to engage them and to hear from them the depth of their experiences.

I propose the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences women have had on their career pathways to the community college presidency?
2. What are the leadership qualities female leaders see themselves bringing to the presidency?
3. What are the values, beliefs, and perceptions female community college presidents bring to their role?
4. What are the barriers, challenges, and rewards of being a female community college president?

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study, the term *community college* will be used to refer to all of those public two-year institutions that award no higher than a two-year degree. Ratcliff (1994) defines community colleges as "those institutions that provide general and liberal education, career and vocational education, and adult and continuing education" (p. 4).

Need for and Significance of the Study

For many higher-education professionals, a presidency represents the pinnacle of leadership. It is certainly a position of power and influence. The career path to the presidency has traditionally been through the academic ranks of faculty, department chair, or dean (Eddy, 2002). More recently, community colleges have begun to see a shift in the pathway to the presidency, from positions in the traditional teaching faculty to that of Chief Academic Officer. Community Colleges are beginning to reflect a greater diversity of administrative backgrounds leading to senior-level administrative positions (Eddy, 2002).

As more women move into senior-level administrative positions, it will be advantageous to understand how careers develop, and what career pathways and leadership skills lend themselves to one's becoming a community college president. Having information about the experiences of others offers women aspiring to senior-level administrative positions potentially valuable insights to consider when they are creating their own pathways or making career decisions.

To understand what has been studied by other researchers, I reviewed literature related to the topics surrounding leadership, leadership styles, and career pathways of women in community colleges and in four-year college presidencies.

Hunter's (2000) dissertation used a qualitative, single-case-study methodology to focus on the leadership styles and leadership-style preference of a president and of vice presidents and deans within a single community college. The purpose of this study was to determine which styles these administrators used, and in the process provide those administrators the opportunity to reflect on or examine their leadership styles to improve their adaptability. The study concluded by saying that the administrators saw their leadership styles as predominantly participatory and flexible, in that they had the ability to moderately vary their leadership style.

Stout-Stewart (2005) conducted a quantitative study on the leadership patterns and behaviors of female chief executive officers (CEOs) in the community colleges. The purpose of the study was to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the leadership patterns and behaviors of these CEOs and factors such as race and ethnicity, educational level, institutional size or enrollment, and college location (rural, urban, suburban, and inner city). This study used a survey instrument and an additional questionnaire to gather data. The results of the study indicated there was no difference in leadership patterns based on the demographic setting or locations of the institutions (rural, suburban, urban/inner city). There were, however, differences in the CEOs leadership patterns based on race and ethnicity, education levels, and experiences. The study broke down race and ethnicity into subgroups. Presidents in the subgroup titled "other" demonstrated the ability to Inspire a Shared Vision and Encourage the Heart

more often than African-American or White presidents. In the findings for education, presidents with doctoral degrees averaged higher in all five leadership patterns. Finally, the study broke down the leaders' experience levels into subgroups, and the pattern of Enabling Others to Act became statistically significant. Stout-Stewart (2005) concluded that "overall, the leadership patterns and behaviors, as rated by female community college presidents, were considered high according to Kouzes and Posner's percentile ranking chart" (p. 314).

A dissertation Mott (1997) completed used qualitative methodology to research gender and leadership as she studied and reported on the leadership agendas of five women community college presidents. Mott's findings supported an emerging leadership model that "argues for a humanistic and cooperative leadership approach" (p. 286). Her examination of the leadership characteristics of the five women participants indicated that each understood and perceived leadership in different ways, and used various strategies in her role as president. Mott also found that women as students and employees continue to face persistent, although more subtle, barriers to full and equal participation in community colleges.

Next, I focused on studies of women leaders at community colleges. Vaughan's 1989 article focused on perspectives from women community college presidents. The study Vaughan (1989) conducted used a survey to gather data from 58 female community college presidents to provide data that might offer insights and understanding into the personal impact women community college presidents have had on reaching their full potentials. Vaughan (1989) found that "governing boards, current presidents, and the

college community should strive to assure that all presidential vacancies are filled by outstanding leaders, many of whom will be women" (p. 26).

Buddemeier's (1998) quantitative dissertation provided a descriptive profile of female community college presidents that included a view of their career paths. Using a survey instrument sent to 145 female community college presidents, her findings reveal the following. First, mentor relationships were very important to female presidents' careers, especially in attaining their presidencies. Second, participating in continuing professional education programs assisted in their career development. In attaining their current presidencies, most female presidents did not follow a traditional academic career path (teaching faculty, division chair, and Chief Academic Officer). However, one half of the group did attain their presidencies from their employment in academic affairs within a community college immediately preceding their presidency.

The next study I reviewed reported similar conclusions to the Buddemeier (1998) study; however, it used a qualitative design. In her dissertation Ballentine (2000) used a sociological, multiple life-history methodology to examine the life histories of three former female community college presidents. The purpose of the study was to examine the career development experiences of these women who were pioneers in a community college system in a southeastern state. Using in-depth interviews, the women shared the stories of their experiences and identified factors that were influential to their careers. Ballentine concluded that a combination of factors influenced these women's careers. Briefly, these factors were: (a) mentors and role models were an important aspect in the development of their careers; (b) parental interaction and modeling was very valuable; (c) education was key to career success, and a doctorate is essential; (d) educational

nurturing from teachers and professors made a difference; and (e) an academic path to the presidency is the most useful path. The next factors that influenced the three women's careers were oriented more toward institutional experiences. These factors include the following: (a) the glass ceiling had been broken for women in senior academic positions; (b) they recognized different experiences as steps that prepare leaders; and (c) there is a need for recruitment and career guidance for women to move into senior-level positions.

Ballentine (2000) stated that further research was needed on female and male higher education leaders and their career trajectory. One of her recommendations was to explore the career development experiences of current female community college presidents and examine their self-perceptions of influences leading to their presidencies.

Research has been conducted focusing on women leaders within four-year colleges and universities as well. In her dissertation Velivis (1990) conducted a phenomenological study to understand what it meant to be a college president, how women experience this position, and what the impacts were on their lives. Velivis interviewed 10 female four-year college presidents using open-ended interviews to gather data on the pathways to their presidencies, their leadership and styles, and qualities of women college presidents. Specifically, she found that the career pathways to the presidency varied in terms of how each woman moved upward in her career and in the respect that these women did not plan their career paths in advance. These 10 women had established academic credentials and had held some type of academic leadership position prior to their presidency. Velivis' study revealed that there was no single preferable style of leadership distinctive to women. However, as a group, these women's leadership style was predominantly participatory. Velivis (1990) concluded by saying that even though

the number of women college presidents had increased, women are still under-represented in these positions.

The next study, a qualitative dissertation by Rosynsky (2003), explored the experiences of four women presidents at four-year institutions by documenting their individual oral histories. Rosynsky found that women in four-year institutions tended to follow a traditional career path to the presidency. This traditional path began with a career as a faculty member and then movement into an administrative position. She also found that networking, professional associations, and mentor relationships were significant to these women in achieving their presidency or moving from one administrative position to another. Her study also found that the low number of women in college presidential positions could be attributed to several factors; first, that search committees have a preconceived notion about women in upper-level administration positions, and they consider male characteristics typically (strength, leadership, intelligence) as what are needed to be successful as a president. Search committees and boards considered hiring females a risk. A second finding was that, generally speaking, faculty members were not comfortable with women in upper-level leadership positions. This suggested a larger problem of non-acceptance of women in leadership positions in higher education overall. Lastly, Rosynsky indicated that the women in her study were able to find a balance between their personal and professional responsibilities, and that this capability was an important strategy that enabled them to become presidents. This study confirmed there is a need for more information about how women achieve leadership positions in higher education.

The third qualitative study I reviewed was a dissertation that examined female presidential leadership at six selected four-year colleges; it focused on leadership from the perspective of women college presidents (Gatteau, 2000). The study concentrated on the lives and leadership paths of the selected participants. Additionally, goals of the study were to develop a greater understanding of the relationship between gender and female presidential leadership, the significance of personal characteristics and experiences, and the types of four-year institutions women college presidents lead.

Gatteau (2000) summarized his findings in saying, "the challenges facing these women leaders are formidable, as confirmed by the stories of the participants in this research endeavor, but the opportunities are equally immense" (p. 174). He continued by saying that women presidents in higher education are career-minded and have a "wide array of positive qualities and characteristics" (Gatteau, 2000, p. 174).

Demographics

The number of women holding leadership positions at two-year colleges has increased over the past twenty years (Curtis, 2002). However, even though the number of women in leadership positions has increased, "women were underrepresented in certain administrative positions, most notably the offices of president" (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002, p. 1).

According to Weisman and Vaughan's (2001) study of American community college CEOs, "the percentage of community college presidents who were female increased from nearly 11 percent in 1991, to 28 percent in 2001" (p. 2). Corrigan (2002) reported the findings from a study conducted by the American Council on Education that described the backgrounds, career paths, and experiences of college and university

presidents. Corrigan (2002) noted that "more than one-third of new presidents at two-year colleges were women—a larger proportion than at any other institutional type" (p. 2). This study concurred with findings reported by Weisman and Vaughan (2001). Corrigan found that 27 percent of public two-year college presidents were women; and overall the percentage of women presidents for all colleges and universities has doubled, from 9.5 percent in 1986 to 21 percent in 2001. Similarly, Curtis (2002) noted that "progress has been made for sure, but some of the institutional barriers remain strong, allowing only certain women to break through—typically women who are relentlessly optimistic and driven by a mission" (p. 1).

There is a growing research agenda that examines the topic of women college presidents. Studies using quantitative methodology have gathered data from large groups of participants. There still remains, however, a gap in the literature that focuses on the career pathways that women take to obtain community college presidencies. It is important to hear the voices of women who are willing to share their journeys to the community college presidency.

Researcher Perspective

My background and professional experiences during the past 25 years instilled in me an interest in understanding how women achieve leadership positions. The past 10½ years have been filled with one of the most gratifying professional and personal experiences I have had, working at a community college. As I have reflected on my career and educational pathway, I have found myself wondering how others with nontraditional backgrounds have pursued leadership positions within academia.

Reflections

I moved to the mountains in Colorado in 1978 after receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in Recreation Leadership from a university in the American Upper Midwest. I had not intended to stay in Ski Country USA for long. I originally intended to complete a master's degree in student services. However, I was able to weave together a passion for the mountains, skiing, education, and recreation. Teaching in a world-class ski resort was a fun and challenging opportunity and it ultimately provided me with experiences that enabled me to look beyond this industry and grow professionally. After three years as a ski instructor, I changed my position and began work in the ski school's training department. I soon found myself immersed in teaching pedagogy, teaching and learning styles, and organizational leadership. At the same time I formed professional relationships with people at the local community college in order to work together to provide training and education.

Through these professional relationships with community college personnel I gained knowledge about the college and decided it was time to change my career by pursuing a master's degree. I completed a master's degree in Counseling Psychology, with an emphasis in student services and human resources, in 1997. Then in 1998 I applied for and was offered an administrative position at a local community college campus. Since that time I have been appointed to three successive challenging administrative positions. The first of these positions was as a division director, which I held for one year. The second position was as a division director II, which I held for two years. The third position was as dean in the college's instructional area, which I have now held for eight years.

In my work as dean I am responsible for the career, technical, and professional degrees and certificates, and for workforce development. This position has provided me with opportunities to develop and grow professionally and personally through interactions and networking with other administrators, faculty, and staff locally, state-wide, and nationally.

Reflecting on my career to date, I see that it has been a culmination of all these experiences. These experiences have sparked an interest in me to gain an understanding of executive leadership and specifically women in these leadership roles at community colleges.

My interest in the topic of women community college presidents became more focused in 2002 when I began my work in the Community College Leadership doctorial program at Colorado State University (CSU). As I traveled with the 2002 cohort to different community colleges, we heard presidents and other senior leaders describe their career paths to the positions they were holding. Many of these presidents were men; however, two of the colleges we visited were led by women. The path to the presidency the two women presidents took did not begin with a long teaching career and then a move into an administrative position—the kind of path that the literature seems to consider as traditional to obtain a presidency or senior leadership position (Eddy, 2002). Instead they told about following alternative routes that included positions in workforce development, developmental studies, and student services. As I listened to their stories, I recall thinking that this was not what I had imagined as the typical pathway to a community college presidency.

Over the next few years, I began to develop an interest in the topic of women, leadership, and career pathways in higher education. Now I am interested in hearing the stories from women who essentially have "been there and done that" and are willing to share their views with others. What are the career paths that women have taken to become senior-level leaders in the community college? What experiences did they have along the way?

My study will contribute to the research on career pathways of women as they moved into senior-level positions within community colleges. As institutions have retirements, there is a need for this research, to prepare future leaders. Additionally, many conferences include sessions that address the concerns of boards and current presidents with looming retirements by asking the following questions: Who will become the next generation of community college leaders? What can women learn from these experiences that will help them grow and advance in their careers? How do women achieve these goals? My study provides some insight to these larger questions by focusing on a select group of senior-level, higher-education professionals with a story infrequently shared on campuses and in the literature.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided a rationale for my study that includes the purpose, the research problem, and the research questions. Additionally, I have provided a description of the need and significance for the study, as well as my perspective as a researcher. It is the purpose of this study to contribute to the research through the study and interpretation of, and reporting on the career pathways and lived experiences of women who are serving as community college presidents. My goal has been to tell the

stories of these women participants and, more specifically, to focus on their roads to their presidencies, to share with future women leaders the experiences of these women community college presidents. The choice of phenomenology as the strategy of inquiry allowed me to investigate, interpret, and share the experiences of how these women became community college presidents—their career pathways, leadership roles, and choices along the way.

Chapter 2

The purpose of this chapter is to review the relevant literature that addresses three major issues: (1) the factors that have shaped the leadership styles of women, (2) issues of leadership and gender, and (3) organizational leadership. As senior community college administrators retire over the next decade, the number of women in senior-level administrative positions, including presidencies, will likely increase (Stout-Stewart, 2005). Succession planning for the next generation of community colleges leaders is imperative. This planning will need to include women who are ready and willing to take on the role of community college president.

Historical Perspective of Community Colleges

Two-year colleges are considered a unique American invention located between secondary and higher education, adult and higher education, and industrial training and formal technical training (Ratcliff, 1994). These two-year institutions, referred to in the literature as "community colleges," "junior colleges," or "technical colleges," are unique educational systems and have demonstrated the ability to be adaptive within higher education to meet local needs. Ratcliff (1994) says these two-year schools are difficult to define, due in part to "a wide variation in mission, governance, finance, and structure of two-year schools in the United States" (p. 4).

Community colleges have been in existence since the early twentieth century. At that time William Rainey Harper, then president of the University of Chicago, agreed to

accept students' first two years of college work through formal agreements toward a baccalaureate degree at the university. This arrangement allowed two-year colleges to provide a general and vocational education to students, and "the universities would be responsible for the higher order scholarship" (Ratcliff, 1994, p. 6). Gillett-Karam (1994) focused on another dimension of Harper's views concerning higher education. Her review of Harper's writings led her to conclude that Harper believed "a *women's place* in higher education meant a separate institution for women. Thus, he proposed a "junior college," where women would not impede the progress of higher education" (p. 94). This perspective might indicate that Harper, and perhaps many others of his era, believed that women would not be successful in higher education.

Growth of Community Colleges

The growth of community colleges in the early years of the twentieth century was due to an increase in high-school populations; the support from the business community as it provided trained workers; and communities' view of these colleges as a measure of prestige (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Transfer education was a primary purpose of the early community college. Community college enrollments, and specifically vocational enrollments, which came at the expense of the liberal arts or the transfer areas, grew after 1945 (Gleazer, 1994). Community college growth during the decade of the 1960s was considered "explosive" (Ratcliff, 1994). During this era the instructional programs two-year colleges offered broadened as vocational and technical schools became comprehensive community colleges.

Since 1901 more than 100 million people have attended community colleges (Phillippe & Patton, 2000). Today community colleges are now educating more than half of the undergraduates in the United States.

Women in Higher Education

In 1974 young men outnumbered young women in post-secondary education participation (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2005); however, since 1974 both young men and women have increased their participation. In 1970 5 percent of law degrees, 8 percent of medical degrees, and 1 percent of dentistry degrees were awarded to females. Over the next thirty years, the picture changed drastically for women. In 2001 the percentages indicated that women received the following share of the credentials: 47 percent of law degrees, 43 percent of medical degrees, and 39 percent of dentistry degrees were awarded to females (Freeman, 2005).

The participation of women in higher education has increased since the 1970s (NCES, 2005). In 2003 the number of young women in higher education outnumbered young men. Although women are doing as well as or better than men on many indicators of achievement and educational attainment (NCES, 2005), women are still underrepresented in some fields of study. According to Amey and VanDerLinden (2002), the number of women holding administrative positions has not been proportionate to the number of women in the classroom or as faculty at community colleges. Women continue to be under-represented in senior leadership positions at community colleges as well. Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) say this fact was most notable in the office of the president, with women holding 28 percent of the community college presidencies.

The literature showed that community colleges grew significantly during the twentieth century. There was also a gender shift during this time. However, women continue to be under-represented in senior leadership positions, and, as Amey and VanDeLinden (2002) indicated, most notably as presidents. In the next section I provide background information related to career pathways in community colleges specifically as these pathways relate to women.

Career Pathways

Amey, VanDerLinden, and Brown (2002) designed a study to replicate "in part" the survey that Moore, Martorana, and Twombly conducted in 1985. These two studies examined career pathways for administrators in community colleges. In focusing on career pathways in upper-level administrative positions, the Amey, et al. (2002) survey provided a look at the various positions that traditionally led to a presidency. The researchers raised questions concerning strategies appropriate for developing and supporting alternative career pathways to leadership positions in community colleges. Continuing in the same line of questioning, they additionally asked whether community colleges, with their diverse missions, could afford to define leadership in a traditional manner, especially with the pending number of retirements in upper-level positions.

Amey, et al. (2002) reported a more diverse career path for administrators than what was found in 1985. Findings in the 2002 study showed the largest percentage (25 percent) of presidents in the study had been a president at a community college in their previous position, 37 percent had been a provost, and 15 percent indicated prior positions as Associate Dean, Assistant Dean, Academic Dean, or Dean of Instruction. A significant difference in career paths was not found between men and women. Twenty-six percent of

the men had been community college presidents in their prior positions, compared to 23 percent of the women. Within this group of women presidents 23 percent had been promoted from within, compared to 20 percent of the men (Amey, et al., 2002).

Amey, et al. (2002) indicated that the stepping stone to a presidency previously had been from the Chief Academic Officer position; and, although this is still common, it was not the dominate path it once was. In 1985 65 percent of the presidents came through this traditional pathway of Chief Academic Officer to a presidency. Amey, et al. (2002) found that the traditional pathway from the Chief Academic Officer to a presidency was changing. Promotions into the Chief Academic Officer position had generally been from a similar senior position (8 percent); Associate, Assistant, or Interim Chief Academic Officer (8 percent); Associate or Assistant Dean of Instruction (31 percent); or Department Chair (4 percent), for a total of 51 percent (Amey, et al, 2002, p. 579).

Amey, et al. (2002) found that women have gained their greatest stronghold in community colleges within student affairs. In the 1985 Moore, et al. study, women represented 41.3 percent of the Senior Student Affairs Officers, and in 2000, women represented 54.8 percent of the Senior Student Affairs Officers (Amey, et al, 2002). According to these studies, to move into a presidency from Student Affairs is not a common or traditional pathway, even though there is greater diversity in Student Affairs leadership.

Amey et al. (2002) indicated that organizations have not given consideration to how administrative positions evolve or what strategies would be appropriate within an organization for developing or supporting alternative pathways. Amey et al. (2002)

questioned whether community colleges can afford to continue to maintain their narrow definitions of leadership, their limited criteria of "acceptable experiences," and "their traditional professional construction of leadership" (p. 574). In their concluding remarks Amey et al. (2002) suggested that with support from institutions there might be more opportunities for women to achieve senior-level positions as well as community college presidencies. This support would depend on institutions changing how they consider individuals with a career aspiration of becoming a community college president, and on putting aside traditional beliefs about pathways that might limit a narrowing pool of candidates even further.

In another study Miller and Pope (2003) specifically looked at faculty senate-governance involvement as a pathway to a community college presidency. Miller and Pope (2003) collected data through a survey derived from the work of the National Community College Chair Academy. Their sample included 150 randomly selected community college presidents and 150 randomly selected community college faculty senate leaders. Miller and Pope's (2003) research indicated that "participation [in faculty governance] provides neither a direct pathway nor a debilitating roadblock to the presidential position" (p. 127).

The overall findings of these studies suggest that there are multiple ways to pursue a high-level position in higher education. Not only are women achieving presidencies by first holding a Chief Academic Officer position, but they also are gaining a stronghold through student services. Also women planning a career in community college leadership will see faculty leadership as one potential pathway, but certainly not the only pathway, to the presidency.

Women Community College Presidents

Guthrie (2001), a former community college president, has given her personal account of her experiences, saying that the motivation to seek a presidency comes from two distinct career paths. Guthrie suggested that there are those women and men looking for high-visibility assignments, and that these individuals plan each career move with the ultimate focus on a future presidency. They are individuals aspiring to become a president, and they are competitive in their pursuit, with each move planned out. They move each time to larger, more visible and prestigious institutions to advance their careers. They might be considered career presidents and move from institution to institution. Guthrie suggested that other individuals follow a career path that progresses as their skills develop and networks are established. In this manner they are positioned to not only advance but also find satisfaction in work and life.

According to Guthrie (2001) the myths that surround a community college presidency are numerous and resistant, and they stem from a detached, ivory-tower perspective that has existed in academe. She described these resistant myths as (a) the president is all powerful, (b) the president directs the institution, (c) college presidents are above politics, (d) presidents work with enlightened political and community leaders, and (e) a president's time is devoted to the big picture. Guthrie (2001) provided the following perspective for those pursuing a community college presidency:

> For those whose interests and values are consonant with those of the presidency, the position provides rewards. A genuine understanding of both rewards and realities is essential to making an informed decision vis-à-vis this quest. The presidential aspirant would do well to study power, leadership, and presidential memoirs. (p. 8)

As Guthrie reflected on her years as a community college president, she provided a forthright, honest description of the commitment to this most senior-level position at a community college. Understanding not only the joys and challenges, but also the realities of the long hours and personal commitment is important in the planning of a career where one aspires to the community college presidency. Guthrie shared her reasons for resigning after four years in office. She stated, "For me, the contrast between myth and reality was stark. Given the typical 80-plus hour work weeks and the loss of privacy, the presidential compensation in a small, grossly underfunded, understaffed, multi-campus college was no bargain" (p. 244).

Blevins' (2001) journal article described the experiences and insights from personal accounts and stories of selected women community college presidents. Blevins' interviews focused on the women's experiences of becoming a community college president, as well as their experiences while in the position. She interviewed seven current or former women community college presidents. Their stories reinforced the value of the mission of the community college and the impact their leadership had on the lives of students. The following paragraphs provide a brief review of each woman's story of becoming a community college president, her challenges and joys, and what each had hoped to leave as a legacy.

The first woman began her interview by sharing her experience of seeking a senior administrative position at her institution. She reported that she had to speak with each board member to solicit his or her support. She later learned the board felt that a woman wouldn't be able to handle the job and wouldn't be able to speak to men's groups.

A second woman told of being one of two senior administrators at the college, and that she felt a personal responsibility to assume leadership of the college. Her motivation to seek the presidential position was from having an understanding of what needed to get done and yet never seeing those goals accomplished.

A third woman had spent more than twenty years in her college's district. When the district reorganized and opened a new campus, she applied for and was moved into the presidency. At the time she was named president, there was no campus or facility, only a space in the barrio in the east end of Houston.

The fourth woman interviewed told of how she wanted to serve in a disenfranchised urban area and chose a college in this setting even though she had other presidential opportunities. This opportunity fulfilled her personal mission. She later moved into a second presidency in another urban area and considered it the best fit for her. She said if she had been able to develop a college from its inception, this second institution is what she would have designed.

Unlike the other women mentioned, the fifth woman was groomed by her chancellor to become chancellor of the college district or of another district. She said that others saw "stuff "in her that she hadn't recognized. It was after these experiences that she decided she wanted to move into a CEO position. She began to get involved in various leadership roles, attended leadership development, and worked with her mentor, the chancellor. She indicated that she was committed to teaching, but had realized she wanted to be involved in higher education within the state of California; so she accepted the position.

The sixth woman was already a president when she was solicited by a search firm for two other positions, one as a system president and the other as a community college president. She was content at her current position, but these other opportunities offered new challenges. Her decision to subsequently accept one of the positions was driven by the potential of that institution. Additionally, she noted that she wanted to be associated with a college, not a system.

Blevins (2001) the author and the seventh woman, offered her own story of becoming a senior leader, but she felt that her account was not as exciting as the women she interviewed. She said:

> The story of my decision to accept the position of chancellor of Rancho Santiago College in 1991, which I held until 1997, is not nearly so exciting as my sisters' stories. In my 15 years as CEO, I've moved from the Kentucky coal fields to the California sun. (p. 508)

Still she noted that each experience she had as she moved through her career path offered a variety of lessons, and these were powerful and engaging. The women's stories offered a look at both the challenges and the opportunities women leaders might have if they seek them out. Blevins concluded saying, "these community college CEOs affect the communities they serve as they assert their presence and a hope that they make an important difference" (p. 516).

Leadership and Gender

Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) presented data on leadership styles and gender in their journal article titled "The Leadership Styles of Women and Men." The authors stated a general consensus has indicated that women face more barriers than men in becoming leaders. This is especially the case as women move into leadership roles that traditionally have been held by men.

Gender role expectations, or the attributes that describe how a person understands leadership, are considered either communal or agentic characteristics, according to Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001). *Communal characteristics* are shown to be related more to women and consist of characteristics that are associated with the concern for the welfare of others. Within a work environment, examples of communal characteristics might be speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting direction from others, supporting others, and contributing to the solution of interpersonal problems.

Agentic characteristics, in contrast, are related more toward men and are described primarily as behaviors that are assertive, controlling, and confident. For men, examples of these characteristics in the workplace might be speaking assertively, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity to compete tasks, and making problem-focused suggestions.

Women and men have different expectations of their own behavior within organizations, and these gender role expectations are seen as a part of that behavior. Most people have internalized how they react to leaders, leadership, and organizational behavior based on gender roles and expectations (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

The authors continued by saying that female leaders may be "more interpersonally oriented, democratic, and transformational. In contrast, the behavior of male leaders, compared with that of female leaders, may be more task oriented and autocratic" (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001, pp. 787–788).

Chliwniak (1997), in a monograph, provided an analysis of the gender gap in higher-education leadership. She reported, as others have done, that the entering student body is increasingly female; however, leadership in higher education does not reflect this

majority. Women are under-represented in all leadership ranks, contributing to a gender gap in higher education. Furthermore, higher-education institutions are still very comfortable with their patriarchal culture and have not fully included the different voice of women. This male-dominated or patriarchal leadership is based on masculine norms, and these characteristics have become associated with administrative leadership within higher education. Chliwniak (1997) identified these norms as rational, logical, objective, and aggressive male traits, but she added that the strength of both genders will be what dispels the myth of the generic man as presenting the ideal pattern of behavior. Chliwniak's (1997) research of the gender gap was an attempt to uncover "differences in the leaders' values and leadership modes based on gender, age, institutional type, years of experience, educational background, and/or position" (p. 46).

One conclusion Chliwniak reached was that leadership perceptions "are not necessarily dependent upon gender and that position is shown to be statistically significant in the perceptions of survey subjects..." (p. 49). And based on her outcomes, she showed that "the gender gap in leadership has more to do with inequity than with variation in how leadership is perceived" (p. 49). For instance, higher education is male dominated, with 8 of 10 university and college presidents being male; this ratio indicates that higher education leadership is not reflective of the student body where more than half of the students enrolled are female.

A second conclusion Chliwniak reached was that women need to be more transformational and embody the "ideals and cultural values toward which the organization strives" (Chliwniak, 1997, p. 81). When women move into certain positions, they have the ability to influence other women, which can encourage a more

transformational culture. To change that culture, or to be effective within an area, women might want to consider becoming involved with institutions that are small, new, or in a transformational process. Women should carefully and objectively review their career aspirations; however, regardless of the position a woman holds, she needs to eliminate the sense that women are marginalized. Micro-inequities exist, and working toward eliminating them is a major step toward bringing full equity to women. Colleges can build a culture that is inclusive by establishing cultural norms that are supportive of women and that become part of the institutions' norms. Finally, the issues brought out in this study might be the result of the systems in place and not specific individuals (Chliwniak, 1997). This means systems can and should be examined and changed and institutional cultural reshaped. Lastly, characteristics of effective leadership do change as society's values change and shape what is acceptable and effective (Chliwniak, 1997).

Stout-Stewart (2005) conducted a survey of 125 female community college presidents on their leadership patterns and behaviors. As a supplement to the Leadership Practice Inventory (LPI) originally developed by Kouzes and Posner (2002), Stout-Stewart (2005) developed a questionnaire. Kouzes and Posner designed the original LPI to gather data about the presence of five exemplary leadership practices: (1) Modeling the Way, (2) Inspiring a Shared Vision, (3) Challenging the Process, (4) Enabling Others to Act, and (5) Encouraging the Heart. Stout-Stewart's (2005) questionnaire gathered the following additional data: demographic settings, race/ethnicity of presidents, educational levels, years of experience, and enrollment. For the study, Stout-Stewart identified potential participants for the survey using the 2003 American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Membership Directory.

She analyzed the data and found no significant difference among female community college presidents of rural, suburban, urban/inner city areas and the leadership practices as stated in the LPI. This meant that the size or location of the institutions was not related to the leadership behaviors of the presidents. However, education and experience were related to performance as assessed by the LPI.

When Stout-Stewart analyzed the educational level of respondents, she found that presidents with doctoral degrees averaged higher on all five leadership patterns than presidents holding master's degrees (Stout-Stewart, 2005). When she broke down the educational level further, there was a significant difference in the leadership pattern of "Inspiring a Shared Vision" between presidents who held doctorates and those with master's degrees. The data revealed that the longer a CEO had been in leadership positions, compared to those with less experience, the higher she scored in the leadership pattern "Enabling Others to Act." Additionally, the data showed that the more experience leaders had in their current position, the higher they scored in the leadership pattern of "Enabling Others to Act" (p. 312). The study also showed "no significant difference between the total numbers of students enrolled on the campuses and the leadership patterns" of the women community college presidents (p. 312).

Summary

The first article in the reviewed literature on leadership and gender discussed gender roles and how communal, or female, characteristics and agentic, or male characteristics, attribute to a person's expectations or behaviors. In the second review the gender gap was related to higher education. The author, Chliwniak (1997), stated that women are under-represented in all leadership positions in higher education, which

contributes to the gender gap there. As women move into certain positions, they have the ability to influence other women and encourage a more transformational culture. The final reviewed article surveyed women community college presidents on their leadership patterns and behaviors. The author, Stout-Stewart (2005), used the original LPI developed by Kouzes and Posner (1987; 2002) and designed to gather data about the presence of five exemplary leadership practices. Stout-Stewart developed an additional questionnaire to gather data for her survey.

Next, I will provide a review of a leadership model that proposes frames, or perspectives that can guide leaders and organizations.

Organizational Leadership

Bolman and Deal (2003) asserted that attributes associated with good leadership are lengthy. These attributes include articulating a vision, setting standards for performance, and creating focus and direction. Similarly, the traits admired most by managers are communicating the vision, caring deeply about their work and the people who do it, inspiring trust, and building relationships.

Organizational Frameworks

I reviewed this leadership model because it is directly related to the next section in my literature review that describes four generations of presidential leadership in community colleges in terms of Bolman and Deal's frames, or leadership theories. Additionally, Bolman and Deal's (2003) leadership theory, described as frameworks, might be useful to leaders in understanding and interpreting various situations. A leader who has more than one perspective, or is able to use multiple perspectives in decision making, might be far more effective. Birnbaum (1988) affirmed this when he noted that

the best way for leaders to "interpret any situation" (p. 209) is to understand various organizational models as well as various leadership models. Presidents able to use multiple frames can see and/or understand situations from the perspective of others.

The purpose of Bolman and Deal's (2003) frames was to assist leaders in finding meaning and clarity in understanding what is going on in an organization. Each frame offers multiple views that one can use as a map or tool to solve problems and get things done (Bolman & Deal, 2003). These frames, (a) structural, (b) human resource, (c) political, and (d) symbolic, can provide leaders with a process to understand problems and then creatively construct solutions to issues they are encountering in their organizations. This background is important because it provides leaders with a method through which they can think in more complex ways and improve both their own and their organizations' performance.

Structural Frame. Bolman and Deal (2003) report that the structural frame is one of the oldest models and one of the most widely used ways of thinking about an organization. Applying the structural frame to an organization involves looking at the goals of the organization and determining how to best organize the work and people to achieve those goals. According to Bolman and Deal (2003), "the structural perspective champions a pattern of well-thought-out roles and relationships. Properly designed, these formal arrangements can accommodate both collective goals and individual differences" (p. 45).

The structural frame is based on six assumptions:

1. Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives.

2. Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and a clear division of labor.
3. Appropriate forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh.
4. Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal preferences and extraneous pressures.
5. Structures must be designed to fit an organization's circumstances (including its goals, technology, workforce, and environment).
6. Problems and performance gaps arise from structural deficiencies and can be remedied through analysis and restructuring.

Organizational structure provides a blueprint for formal expectations and exchanges among internal players (employees) and external constituents (customers and clients). However, the structural frame is not meant to be used in a "machine-like or inflexible" fashion (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 47). In a stable environment this frame can facilitate leadership that is inventive, flexible, and participatory.

Human Resource Frame. Bolman and Deal's (2003) second perspective, the human resource frame, centers on how characteristics of organizations and people shape what they do for one another. The human resource frame is premised on the core assumptions that leaders must have an understanding of people, their needs, and their symbiotic relationship with organizations. Additionally, the human resource frame offers a view that organizations don't have to be alienating, dehumanizing, or frustrating, and that the potential exists for an organization to be energizing, productive, and mutually rewarding.

Political Frame. The political frame views politics as an essential element within the life of organizations. Using the political frame, organizations are viewed as coalitions rather than hierarchies. Coalitions exercise multiple sources of power in a variety of ways. As coalition members bargain for resources and power, conflict is created within the organization. This conflict is a constant component in change and problem solving.

Whereas the structural and human resource frames emphasize the structure of work and the needs of people within an organization, the political frame highlights the role of coalitions and conflict in an organization. By recognizing that scarce resources, combined with divergent interests, produce conflict, a leader can apply strategies and tactics to manage the conflict. Doing this benefits an organization through the stimulation of new ideas and solutions.

Symbolic Frame. An organization's culture is frequently expressed or characterized and communicated through its symbols. These are "the beliefs, values, practices, and artifacts that define for members who they are and how they are to do things" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 243).

Myths, visions, and values give an organization a sense of purpose and resolve. Myths are said to be the anchor of an organization's values; they are intangible and uniquely define an organization. An organization's vision turns a sense of purpose into an image of what the future might become. Values are the abstract commitments that are most important to the organization. The distinctions between myths, visions, and values are subtle and often blended.

Heroes and heroines are living symbols of what is cherished and sacred. They are human icons whose words and actions illustrate and reinforce core organizational values.

Stories provide explanations, reconcile contradictions, and resolve dilemmas in order to communicate corporate myths, spread the word, and recognize accomplishments.

The symbolic frame also focuses on rituals that can bond a group together and permeate an institution with traditions and values. The use of ceremonies in our lives serves to socialize, stabilize, reassure, and convey messages. Subtle differences occur between rituals and ceremonies, with rituals being simple and ceremonies grand. The use of metaphors, humor, and play loosens things up and takes participants to a deeper level that offers a diversion from facts and logic. These tools also relax the rules, which enable participants to explore alternatives, and encourage experimentation and flexibility.

In summary, Bolman and Deal (2003) assert that organizations can use these frames to guide the leadership process, although they are "no substitute for judgment and intuition in deciding how to frame or respond to a situation" (p. 312). Even though operating across frames can be difficult, this practice allows leaders to look at situations from more then one perspective, framing an event in multiple ways. The next section provides a view of how the frames have been used to define four generations of community college leaders.

Frameworks and Community College Leadership

In her 2001 journal article Sullivan (2001) provided a point of view on the four generations of community college presidents, which she labeled as (a) the founding fathers, (b) the good managers, (c) the collaborators, and (d) the millennium generation. Sullivan described the four generations of leadership at community colleges using Bolman and Deal's frames.

Leadership in community colleges has changed from the traditional white male of the past who was married, in his 50s, and who moved up through academic ranks, to what Sullivan (2001) terms the current "leaders of the collaborator generation" (p.561). Those coming from the traditional ranks were seen as leading with a style modeled after American industry, which was very hierarchical in structure. The first two generations of leaders, the founding fathers and the good managers, moved community colleges though their growth period in the 1960s and 1970s, at which point they became, in some instances, large bureaucracies with vast resources and community support. Sullivan (2001) considered these leaders successful as they built, from the ground up, community colleges that continue to serve local communities.

Sullivan claimed that generally it was the first two generations of leaders within community colleges, the founding fathers and the good managers, who preferred the structural frame. Leaders operating from the structural frame used more formal roles and relationships to guide their actions. These leaders, considered analysts and planners, made decisions based on established rules and policies (Sullivan, 2001).

Sullivan (2001) identified the third generation of leaders as collaborators. These leaders are currently the majority in leadership positions at community colleges. She presented this generation of leaders as having remodeled the strong foundation that the previous two generations of leaders built. This generation has seen changes in the demographics not found in the previous two generations. Sullivan (2001) indicated that within this generation there are more women presidents and more minority presidents. A distinction of this generation of community college leaders is that they did not always follow the traditional career path to the presidency. Even though they might have had

faculty assignments at the high school or college level, they earned a master's or doctorate degree in higher education or administration, and not in a teaching discipline. Additionally, some of these leaders intentionally prepared for administrative careers by attending professional development programs specific to community college leadership.

Sullivan (2001) stated that this collaborative generation of leaders, with experience in the 1960s around social action, operates from a human resources and political frame and has a more participatory style. These leaders have been effective by involving others in decisions. They understand and have incorporated the value of structure and the power of symbols. They also have demonstrated the ability to operate from a multiframe perspective or style. This generation uses the structural frame the least because they are more collaborative. This does not mean that the third-generation leaders cannot analyze and plan, but that they have a different skill set and different talents, and they have sought out new thinking and formats.

As Sullivan (2001) describes it, the collaborators operate in the human resource frame. She states, "it appears that this is the preferred mode of operation, particularly for women and people of color, whose leadership style emphasizes participation, win-win negotiation, consensus building, caring, and nurturing" (p. 563). Leaders who are effective in the human resources frame understand people's needs, values, and skills. They create a sense of collegiality and consider people before productivity and regulations.

Also, the third generation of leaders is comfortable and able to work effectively in the political frame. This frame involves people competing for political power; leaders

will build coalitions both from within and outside the organization, and rely on "personal savvy and negotiating skills" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 564).

Additionally, the symbolic frame is the frame that many third-generation leaders apply through the use of symbols, rituals, stories, and slogans to inspire followers (Sullivan, 2001). However, this frame tends to be more difficult to learn, requiring a high level of maturity and confidence; and it is the last frame that many leaders naturally use. Many third-generation leaders have developed their use of the symbolic frame through experience.

Sullivan believes that, in the current era, hierarchical, top-down leadership will not be successful and middle management will become more significant in its members' ability to change the focus of leadership. As she noted, this current generation of leaders is more collaborative, having been built on the foundation of the past two generations; and in some areas, it has remodeled this foundation. The current generation has had to make these choices to respond to an environment characterized by new challenges, such as pressure for more accountability, an increasing number of under-prepared students, public distrust, and the explosion of the Internet (Sullivan, 2001). The trend is that the current group of leaders is more diverse. And the number of women college presidents has doubled since 1986, with the majority of these new presidents leading two-year institutions. This is the generation that is now considering retirement.

The fourth generation, which Sullivan (2001) refers to as the millennium generation, is now moving into leadership positions. These leaders are characterized by the demographics of the third generation; however, the personal computer and Internet, the development of partnerships with business and industry, K-12 schools, and

government agencies are all playing a major role in the development of these new leaders' skills. As a new generation of leaders continues to emerge, Sullivan (2001) indicates it will take a few years to see how this millennium, or fourth, generation of community college leaders identifies its preferred frame and leadership style.

Conclusion

In chapter 2, I provide a review of the related literature as a backdrop for this phenomenological study to offer a foundation to gain an understanding of women community college presidents' pathways to the presidency. Moustakas (1994) recommends providing a review of the relevant literature to guide the development of a phenomenological study. Through its investigation of prior studies—their designs, methodologies, and findings, my study also will be able contribute to the overall knowledge base (Hart, 1998).

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 provides a description of this study's qualitative research design and rationale, and an overview of phenomenology. After this overview, I describe how I selected participants and collected the data. In addition I offer a discussion of ethical considerations and how I maintained confidentiality. Finally, I explain how I analyzed and interpreted the data, and the measures of trustworthiness I used to support this study.

Research Design and Rationale

My study inquired into the experiences women community college presidents had as they advanced in their career, which culminated in their presidency. I determined that a qualitative design was the approach that best brought their stories into focus. I gathered detailed information about the participants' experiences directly from them through interviews. These stories as the participants told them were brought to life using their interview data and quotes to provide their perspective. Through this interpretive process, I was able to focus on understanding their perspectives and the meanings of the comprehensive experiences these selected women had along their career pathways.

I chose phenomenology as the design to build on participants' first-person accounts of their life experiences relating to their career pathways to the community college presidency. By including both background information and previous reviews of related literature, I have provided readers an account of what others have addressed previously on the topic of women's career pathways. My focus has been specifically on

community colleges and literature related to career pathways, and on leadership development that resulted in women becoming community college presidents.

In this study I used the word *what* to frame the research questions. Doing this enabled me to ask about the women's experiences and engage them in depth about their experiences. This study additionally employed a series of subquestions to guide the process as needed, so I could hear from the participants the stories of their experiences.

As the researcher conducting this phenomenological study, I have an interest in developing an understanding of the experiences these women have had. I made no presumptions as to what their experiences were like for them. The concept of epoché within phenomenology helped me have an open frame of mind (Moustakas, 1994). The process of epoché allowed me to see whatever appeared in consciousness and to approach it with an open mind. And, in turn, it allowed this experience to be "just what it is" and for me "to come to know it as it presents itself" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86). These processes required, and at the same time allowed for, reflection and self-dialogue, which helped reduce the influence of preconceived bias and thoughts. My goal was to capture the data to better understand the experiences that these women had, without changing my behavior in the process of listening while interviewing.

Participants

My participants were purposefully chosen as individuals who became community college presidents. For this study, I interviewed 14 women community college presidents. I used criterion sampling to narrow the sample and assure the quality; therefore, the criterion was that a participant must be a woman who is currently a community college president.

I identified my participants through the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Website. After I had first considered purchasing the list of community college presidents, I decided to do a search using the links of member schools on the AACC Website. The Website first listed a link to each of the states and territories in the United States. These links allowed me to link to each state's community colleges. I reviewed each community college in each state, confirmed the gender of the president, and created a database, or what I referred to as a *participant tracking sheet*, of the women presidents. Next, I went to each college's Website and confirmed that the president was in fact a woman because in some cases names were difficult to decipher. I also confirmed the women listed were still the current presidents.

The participant tracking spreadsheet consisted of the names, state, and date the first letter was mailed. This tracking sheet allowed me to track the number of letters I sent, and the individual responses, either yes or no, and when received. The tracking sheet proved useful throughout the process, allowing me to add data such as participants' email addresses, phone numbers, degrees held, and assistants' names and contact information,. And the tracking sheet eventually included each time I contacted a participant.

I contacted potential participants by letter (Appendix A), introducing me as the researcher, explaining the study, and inviting them to participate. The letter explained the anticipated time commitment of approximately 60 minutes to 90 minutes for an interview, as well as additional time for the participant to review her interview transcript. The letter also explained that a second interview on the phone might be needed for

follow-up questions or to clarify details from the initial interview, and that this follow up would take no more than 30 minutes.

The Demographic Information Sheet I sent with the invitation letter asked whether participants were willing to participate in the study and requested basic demographic and contact information (Appendix B). I requested that this sheet be mailed back to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope that had been provided. Next, I contacted willing participants, or their assistants if they requested this, by phone. I had allowed three to four weeks for a response and had prepared a follow-up letter (Appendix C). However, I did not need the follow-up letter because I received enough responses from the first mailing.

After we set up an interview, I confirmed the date, time, and place by email correspondence. Initially I had intended to travel to all the participants' locations to conduct the interviews in person. I did the first six interviews in this manner; however, travel became more difficult in the winter months, and for participants to find time in their busy schedules that coincided with my schedule was becoming difficult. I then decided to conduct the interviews over the phone. Although I missed traveling to their campuses to meet each president in person, the telephone interviews proved to be less challenging, both in terms of scheduling and financially. Correspondence by email after the initial contact and interview became the participants' preferred method of communication.

Initially I selected participants based on those who responded first. Then I used the Demographic Information Sheet to select participants, based on the number of years they had served as community college presidents. I felt that having diversity in the length

of time the participants served as presidents would provide richness in the data I collected. Participants in the study represented diversity in regard to the length of time they have been community college presidents, whether this was their first presidency, the number of years they have been in higher education administration, and the educational levels they have achieved (see Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Information for Community College Presidents Interviewed

Presidents	First Presidency (yes/no)	Current Presidency (years)*	Previous Presidencies (years)	Years in Administration	Education
Anne	Yes	0.5	–	29	MA
Louise	Yes	1.0	–	15	PhD
Terry	Yes	1.0	–	10	PhD
Kristine	Yes	1.5	–	22	PhD
Brenda	Yes	2.0	–	24	EdD
Patricia	Yes	3.0	–	30	PhD
Margaret	Yes	3.5	–	24	PhD
Susan	Yes	4.0	–	30	PhD
Judith	No -2nd	4.5	4.0	23	EdD/PhD
Carolyn	Yes	10.0	–	21	MA
Jean	No – 4th	1.0	2.0, 6.0, 3.0	14	PhD
Laura	No – 2nd	11.0	4.0	26	PhD
Helen	yes	17.0	–	20	EdD
Barbara	No – 2nd	4.5	17.0	33	EdD

*at time of interview

Note: The information presented in Table 1 was derived from the individual participants' Demographic Information Sheet (see Appendix B).

Participants signed a consent form before they participated in the study (Appendix D). This form included the following information: that participation is voluntary, and the participant has the right to withdraw at any time; an outline of the procedures of the study so that participants understood what to anticipate in the research; and that they could request results of the study. As noted, I assured participants that their identity and the

identity of their institution would be protected (Creswell, 2003). To insure this, I assigned pseudonyms to all participants and removed other potential identifying information.

As I tell the participants' stories, it is the women I keep in my lens, to tell their stories using their words. This focus provides an opportunity for women who want to be a community college president to hear how other women achieved this position.

Data Collection

As the process of data collection began, my goal was to capture the experiences of these women without imposing my viewpoint or my experiences upon the data collected. Having this goal allowed me to create an atmosphere that was open, and to develop a rapport with each participant for conducting the interviews. Also, it was important for me to recognize if and when my biases, assumptions; or beliefs intruded into the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

To hear the stories and gain insights into the experiences these women have had, I conducted interviews in an informal, interactive process; I used open-ended questions (Appendix F) so participants could tell their stories (Moustakas, 1994). I audio-recorded and transcribed the interviews. With this method of data collection, I was able to conduct six interviews in person and eight interviews over the phone; I analyzed the data by transcribing and sorting the interviews. I kept a constructivist framework in mind. I did this to rely on the participants' view as they told their experiences, and on how they made sense of those experiences based on their social and historical perspective—in other words, how they constructed their meaning (Creswell, 2003). I transcribed the interviews verbatim and returned them electronically to the participants. I did a follow-up interview by email, which offered participants the opportunity to discuss any issues that remained

from the first interview. I also provided a second opportunity for them to review a section of the interview related to their career pathway; this portion of the interviews makes up chapter 4.

Data Analysis

I transcribed and reviewed the recorded interviews. The process of transcribing gave me the opportunity to become familiar with the data collected. After I transcribed the interviews, I read through each one while listening to the recording, not only to see the words, but to hear each participant's voice. Doing this gave me a better understanding of what was said and how it was said.

To analyze the data, I created a four-column table in a Word document, and then I downloaded the transcriptions, or raw data, into the document. Using Corbin and Strauss's (2008) method of breaking data apart, I began coding the data. Coding involved extracting concepts from the data. This method of coding, referred to as *open coding*, allowed for a brainstorming approach to the analysis by opening the data to all possibilities (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These open codes created meaning units within the data. From there, I carefully examined these meanings to reduce the amount of data I had to work with. To accomplish this data reduction, I reviewed the participants' key words that seemed to fall into natural categories; and the concepts began to emerge for each participant. During this process, with so much data, I used a white board to visually list key words and concepts as they emerged.

Next, I began to relate the different concepts I had identified to each other, in what Corbin and Strauss refer to as *axial coding.* In this process I looked for similar concepts throughout the data, particularly overlapping concepts or emerging themes. I

then reduced the meaning units again by carefully selecting the themes that emerged over and over. This process helped me arrive at the core themes: perspectives and philosophies, career barriers and challenges, and influential individuals.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in its most basic description is how a researcher demonstrates to the reader that the findings are worthy of attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness, for the purpose of this study, consists of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability within the qualitative research methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility is the process of member checking, in which participants can verify the data in the transcripts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After I transcribed the interviews, I made them available electronically to all participants, to give each one an opportunity to agree, or not, that this was what she meant to say. Member checking "provides the opportunity to assess intentionality" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). Reviewing the transcript gave each participant the opportunity to agree, or not, that this is what she meant to say.

Transferability, a term Lincoln and Guba (1985) used, refers to the generalizability of the findings from this study to another setting. Through the process of interviewing and transcribing the interviews, I developed rich, thick descriptions of participants' leadership perspectives and their career pathways. My results might not be capable of replication; however, the methodology can be replicated. My responsibility as the researcher was to provide these descriptions in a way that resulted in the greatest possible amount of pertinent information.

Dependability is a compilation of techniques that I used to demonstrate credibility, or to show that my study has that quality. Dependability consists of an audit and an audit trail; it uses some of the same processes as an inquiry audit that is undertaken in establishing confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability refers to my providing an audit trail based on the research I conducted. I kept an electronic audit trail, which consists of the audio recordings of each interview, interview or observational notes, and the typed transcripts. An auditor will be able to show that the findings of the study are grounded in the data I collected. This evidence will allow other researchers to see the steps that I took and to verify the results of this study.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the research design, methodology, and theoretical position for the proposed study. This chapter has also described the participant selection process, ethical considerations, the data collection and analysis process, and my approach to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4

The findings presented in this chapter are a result of interviews with 14 women community college presidents. After we completed the interviews, I transcribed and coded them. During this process, I began to sense that in only analyzing the data I was losing the essence of the women's individual stories. To capture the essence of each participant's experience while honoring her individual story, I felt it was important to tell her story. In this chapter I have written a profile using each participant's own words, crafted into a first-person narrative. I have changed some grammatical structures, and in some cases added or deleted words to allow the narrative to flow. Seidman (1991) considers a profile using the participant's words to be most consistent with the process of interviewing. He also says that "telling stories is the most compelling way to make sense of interview data" (Seidman, 1991, p. 92).

After I completed the profiles, I emailed each participant a copy of her individual narrative and asked for feedback, corrections, additions, or comments. During this process of member checking, I asked each participant to read the narrative and provide written feedback on anything she felt needed to be corrected. I received written or verbal communication from 13 of the 14 participants.

The next section provides a snapshot of each participant's experiences and journey in reaching this pinnacle in higher education. I have given each participant a pseudonym to protect her identity. Additionally, I have omitted or changed names of

other people, and names of schools and locations. These stories capture the essence or the texture of the participants' lives. These are their stories.

Career Pathways

"Take a moment to look back, to reflect on previous accomplishments, and use them as a basis for building confidence as you accept future challenges."

~Jim Hayhurst, Sr.~

Helen—Education Saved My Life

Education saved my life; it got me out of a mill village, and I wanted to do the same for the rest of the world. For the past 17 years, I have served as president of a large southeastern community college. I have worked at this institution for more than 35 years, first as faculty, and then as an administrator. I am 64 years old, so that tells you I've been around a long time. It also tells you that when I made my career choices about majors and those things, back in the '60s, there were not as many options open to women as there are today.

I began my career teaching high school in the 1960s. In those early years I moved often, following my husband. We ended up in this southeastern city; and to help support two small children because he was making very little money, I needed to work part time. I had applied to teach at two institutions in the area, and I chose the community college because he was working at the senior one. I taught English part-time for a year, and then became a full-time English teacher. I never thought I would stay here 35 years. But I did stay here. I went through a couple of divorces; I have a couple of children, and along the way, my job changed.

I moved from teaching to administration for one simple reason: I had two children to support. I started paving a way to leave teaching, to make more money. I didn't want my kids to grow up the way I had, with little money to do anything. But at the same time, I realized I didn't make enough money for my kids to have much opportunity.

I never knew I wanted to be a president; I knew I had to get a doctorate, but I wasn't quite sure why. I figured that to reach my full potential, and stay in education, a doctorate was necessary; but again, I didn't quite know why. I assumed that I would probably be in academics the rest of my life.

When I decided to get a doctorate, I knew it had to be a practical degree. I commuted and was able to complete a doctorate in curriculum and instruction. When I had applied for graduate school, the application asked what my highest aspiration was, and I thought that to become the Vice President of Academic Affairs was a good goal. I never had a specific plan. I don't care what people tell you, I never did. I knew that I loved education, I always worked hard in whatever job I had, and I loved teaching. During the time I was going to graduate school, I did become the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

I suppose it's all an accident that I ever became a president. I was very, very happy being Academic Vice President, but the president we had at the time abruptly left. The board named me interim, and then the board decided to let me apply for the job. Then they took a chance, and named little green me to be president; and I've been here 17 years. Most of this was not a plan; it happened, and obviously I have a great job, and I love the job. It's great to make a plan, but it's also good to leave yourself open because opportunities can come around.

If you had asked me in 1980, "Would you ever be a college president?", I couldn't have seen that happening. And I would have said, "Of course not." Yet, I think that I've been a pretty good one. But it wasn't a pathway. I had a pathway, but it wasn't this one. I think you just have to be wide open to what doors may open when you don't even know there is a door there.

Anne—Creating Your Own Opportunity

I always thought I would be a teacher. I am 55 years old; and at the point in my life when I was choosing a career, there were two reasons that you went to school to get a degree. That was your MRS, which means you married someone, and to obtain your undergraduate degree as a nurse or as a teacher.

I decided to pursue a teaching degree; but I made the selection of my courses in such a way that I loaded up with the history and sociology early on, and thought I would take the educational component toward the end of the program. Into my fourth year, I changed my mind since I was loaded up with student loans because I put myself through school. So I completed my bachelor's degree in history and in sociology, and decided to go straight into the workforce. It was 1974, and it was a time when affirmative action was really rocking the labor force. And before I knew it, I had become a regional marketing manager for a major company.

After a few years went by, I realized that even though I enjoyed my work and had some really good experience in business, which I hadn't been exposed to previously, I really missed the educational environment. So after 3½ years, I left to work as a professional fundraiser in a major nonprofit that raised millions of dollars. I still longed for being associated in some way with the educational environment. I started looking, and

I noticed that the local private university had an opening for a personnel assistant. I applied, and my serendipitous journey into higher education began.

I was offered the position and accepted it. I didn't know at the time that they were releasing the director of personnel; so I functioned pretty much independently in the personnel arena, and learned on the job. I had really good mentors through a professional association. In 6 months I became the director of personnel at a major institution. I was 26 years old at the time. I stayed with the university for 20 years as the Director of Human Resources, and during that time I obtained a master's degree in business administration.

My philosophy was that personnel, as it was called then, shouldn't be a stand-alone function; it should serve to support everyone in the organization so that we could serve our students. I made it a personal approach to subtly interject myself into all kinds of projects, from building buildings, to fund raising, to program reviews, to working in faculty relationships; and I had quite a nice career and could have retired from that university.

However, I never thought I would spend my entire life in the place I was born, and I had never thought I would work for the same institution for 40 years. I decided that I would really like to continue in education, but in a different place. I absolutely loved where I was and what I did, but I really wanted a different environment, if I could, in education. With that focus in mind, as well as an affiliation with a professional organization that had exposed me to other types of institutions, of which community colleges were one, I pursued the next chapter of my life.

I was a big fan of community colleges, based on the mission of serving students, and I decided that the community college was where I would focus my search. When I decided to look for a different job, I focused on where I would live. I am single, and having had a background in human resources, I knew I didn't want to retire, then move somewhere absent a network or any sort of familial relation. I also decided that I had another 15 to 20 years to work in some sort of occupation. I also wanted to develop a network while I was working because, if I retired in that same area, I would have put down roots, and developed a personal and professional network.

I accepted a position as the Vice Chancellor for Human Resources in 1998 in a community college system, and subsequently made a decision to move. This move was from a large urban university setting on the East Coast to a medium-sized city in the Southwest. Over the next 9 years, I was given opportunities to take on more responsibility. I had virtually everything except IT, finance, and the educational side of the house.

In July 2007 the chancellor appointed me to the presidency at one of the campuses. I was overwhelmed in thinking of how my career had started with my wanting to become a teacher, and then [progressed] to becoming a president at one of the campuses, at one of the largest community colleges in the United States. My background has been crucial to this position, but there is also a huge learning curve. I had not taught in the classroom on a consistent basis, but I knew other areas that often are pitfalls for a president, such as facilities, safety, finance, managing human resource problems and opportunities, and developing the workforce. In these areas I was ahead of the curve. It's creating your own opportunity, but it's also being at the right place at the right time.

Louise—Keeping All the Options Open

I think my pathway has been a very different and unique pathway than a more traditional pathway. I did not come from the faculty ranks at all, but I don't think it has hindered me. I've been very fortunate.

My undergraduate degree is in psychology, and my master's degree is in counseling and guidance, with a focus on substance abuse. The only reason I got into higher education... it was a total fluke. I was a graduate student, and I needed a job. The dean's office was looking for a graduate student who could be a mentor for incoming minority freshmen. I applied for the job and got it. I was able to get to know all the deans who worked in the Dean of Students' area because they were in charge of the program, and I really started to like that area. So when an opening came up for recruiter, I applied, got the job. I was 23 or 24 at the time, and I would travel around the country recruiting students from the Midwest and the eastern part of the United States. It was a great eye-opener for me to really start thinking of a career in education. Up until that time, I really thought I was going to do substance-abuse counseling. So I didn't intend, with my career choice, to even go into higher education; it just kind of happened.

From there, I went to work as the Director of Training and Development at a local community college. This included continuing education, adult education, as well as business and industry training. The local university liked what I was doing at the community college and hired me to work on developing their baccalaureate specializations. This allowed me the opportunity to obtain my doctorate in educational leadership. The doctorate led to an internship in student services. While writing my dissertation, I was able to do a second internship with the university's Board of Regent's

office. It was during that time when I started to think that I missed student affairs; and so my next job was back at a local community college.

During the time I was writing my dissertation—and I was 33, single, and I didn't have a family other than what was nearby... so I figured I could go anywhere. I began to apply for dean's positions around the country. I knew I had to finish my PhD, because I didn't want there to be a job that I couldn't apply for, or I wasn't qualified for. So that's what motivated me at the time to get my doctorate. I was really lucky because I had several mentors who helped me along the way. I really did not have my sights set on a presidency until I got the job. It wasn't something that I was saying, "Oh I've got to become a president!" All I knew is that I wanted to have all the options open to me.

I was fortunate to be offered a dean position when I was just 33. I was hired as the Dean of Students and Community Services for a suburban community college in the Upper Midwest. I had all of student services, tutoring, business and industry training, continuing education, public relations, and marketing. So that was my portfolio, and I did that for about 4½ years.

In 1996 I decided to apply for positions back in the southwestern region of the United States because I couldn't stand the snow. My next position was as Dean of Students at a campus within a large community college system, which I did for 8 years. Next, I was the Dean of Instruction at another of the system's campuses for 2 years. During this time, I married, had my daughter, and got a divorce. So I was raising my daughter by myself, and I really thought, you know, being a president would be too much. I wouldn't be able to handle being a single mom. But you know, I've been lucky, because I have support systems. My mom, who is 85... And she helps me with my

daughter, picks her up from school. My daughter is older now; but in her early years, when she was little, my mom helped me out.

In 2006 I was appointed president at the system's newest campus, which I had actually helped open in 2003 when I was the Dean of Students. My experience has been primarily student services, although I have instruction, continuing education, and business and industry training, as well. It has been a real advantage for me to have had so many varied experiences, because if I had not had the instruction side as the Dean of Instruction, I would have been missing out on an important area. Likewise, if I didn't have the student services side, I would have been missing out in that area, as well.

Judith—Divine Intervention

Being a community college president was not my first career choice. I got here through a very happy series of changes and new directions. My first job out of college, with a bachelor's in English, was as a social worker. I still remember my boss and my mentor there, both women. My then husband was in the Air Force, and folks didn't like to hire you when they didn't know how long you would be around. But they told me I looked really hungry, and they were going to give me a chance. So I became a social worker, and I enjoyed social work very much. When we were finally transferred, I decided to go back to school to earn my master's in sociology. Next, we were stationed in the Midwest, and I continued with social work but didn't enjoy it as much as my first job.

A friend told me about an opening for a state probation officer position and offered to submit my name if I was interested. That sounded good, so I decided to give it a try. I loved the work and thought I would make law enforcement my career. But then we were transferred again, to a new state, where probation was set up differently, and it

was not a good fit for me. I went back to school to specialize in law enforcement, but commuting to school when I had small children was too difficult.

At that point, I took a job teaching high-school English at a private Catholic school. Unfortunately, I wasn't all that happy teaching students who weren't that much younger than I was. So I quit after my first year.

Next, I went to the local community college with my master's in sociology and criminal justice, and bachelor's in English. The college asked if I could write a syllabus and curriculum in criminology. I said, "Sure, I can," and then had to scurry to find out what writing a curriculum meant. But I did it, and they hired me on the spot, full-time, and that was it. I fell in love with the community college, and stayed forever and ever.

After teaching at the community college for 8 years, I needed to decide between becoming a master teacher or an administrator. A good friend and mentor recommended that I consider some administrative courses, so that I could advance in my career. I took her advice, tried some courses, and loved them. When I came to candidacy, I declared for Administration in Educational Leadership and Cultural Studies.

I think I have held almost every position in community colleges except in student services. I was a grants writer; I did the whole co-op program, community and resource development; I was a fund raiser; and I did economic and workforce development, which I dearly loved. However, I had never been an academic dean, so when I made a decision to pursue being a chief executive officer (CEO), I researched it to see if it would be a good fit for me.

I went to the League for Innovation's Leadership Institute for a week. It was wonderful. It was very intense and really made me do some introspection about whether I

really wanted to move into senior leadership positions. For me, it was exciting and exhilarating, and I decided I would keep going. The price, however, of becoming a CEO was pretty high because my then husband didn't think it would fit with his career. We ended up divorcing; it was very bitter.

My next position was in academic leadership. This was a very big step because everyone told me that I would have to be a Chief Academic Officer, or get back into academe because academicians don't like presidents who haven't come up through the ranks. I tried and tried to get that academic leadership position, but coming from grant writing, continuing education, and workforce development, it was a big stretch. Finally, it may have been divine intervention that made the difference. There was a college in the Midwest with an opening for Vice President of Academic Affairs. My mother lived in that area, was aging, and was not in the best of health; and I hoped to relocate near her. I had been turned down by many schools, but it was worth another shot. They gave me an interview and offered me the job.

The school was so dysfunctional that it was mere weeks after I started that I knew I had to get out, but I worried about how soon I could make a move without ruining my career. I watched for the first opening for a CEO position in a small school anywhere nearby, and I seized the opportunity. I went to a nearby state and became a community college president. By that time, I had remarried. My current husband, who is just a magnificent person, told me to make the decision, and if I wanted to go, he would follow.

I was president for 4 years at that small midwestern community college, and now I have been in my second presidency for the past 5½ years. Being CEO at this college has

just been wonderful. I still say every day, every morning, "Oh boy, I get to go to work." I believe that when you can't say that any more, its time to either move on or retire.

Barbara—Serendipitous Events

I began my higher-education career right after I graduated with my bachelor's degree in journalism. I was hired by that same university as Director of Public Information for the school of continuing education. I worked there a couple of years, and when I decided to leave, I began looking for other opportunities in public relations. And, of course, because I had worked in a higher-education institution, one of the institutions interested in me was a local community college district.

So I started as a public information officer, and since life is filled with a series of happy coincidences or serendipitous events, I was assigned to the district office rather than one of the nine colleges in the system. I was 24 years old, and I was young and energetic. I was responsible for the employee publications, and I immediately began changing the look, the feel, and the content of them. Then, in the process of doing so, I was discovered by the chancellor of the system.

Within a year of joining the system, I became the Director of Communication Services for the district; and, at 25, that made me not only the youngest director in the system, but I was also the only female at the time. That was 1975. So much of the early part of my career was spent as the only woman in meetings and on the cabinet.

During the next 5 years or so, I looked around and realized that if I was going to move up in the system at all, I needed a master's degree. So I went back to school on Saturdays and got a master's degree in public administration. Then I had my first baby and was away on maternity leave for 6 or 8 weeks. When I returned, I realized it was just

like I had been gone for the weekend, and there were not any new challenges in the job. So I rather boldly went to the chancellor and told him that I wanted something more interesting to do. In fact I told him that in time I thought I wanted to be a college president.

That was a pretty bold statement for someone who was the public relations chief of the college district. I'd never worked a day on a campus; I'd never taught. But I had, as a member of his immediate staff, sat for years watching the presidents and vice chancellors making decisions, both good decisions and bad decisions. I thought that I could probably do as well as or better than they were doing. Happily, the chancellor agreed with me and sent me on a path to prepare myself, which included getting a doctorate that I completed in 1980, in community college administration.

I changed jobs, thanks to the chancellor and the power that he had to be able to move me. The job he put me in was Director of Educational Services, but the task was to conduct a study of the status of technical education in the college district. In the course of doing that I began working with a lot of different advisory councils in business and industry, labor unions, and government agencies. This was in 1980, when community colleges were not doing very much in terms of contract education or workforce development, particularly with the incumbent workforce. Employers started telling me that what they really needed was on-site, short-term, state-of-the-art training for their incumbent workforce. I went back and reported this to the chancellor and the board, and they said, "That's a great idea, but we don't have any money to do this, and we're not going to do this at the expense of any existing programs."

In the course of doing that study I befriended the head of an agency that did worksite education and training using federal and state money. So I started talking to him about the possibility of using technology in the workplace to train workers. He thought this was a great idea, and he proceeded to award the college district $3 million to start that initiative. It was the largest grant the district had ever received; this really boosted my career fast. I was then made the Director of High Technology Centers and Services for the district.

Over the next 4 years, that initial $3 million increased to $24 million in federal, state, and private grants. We were working with about 600 different employers, and we probably had about 8,000 employees involved in the program. Two years into that process, I was promoted to Senior Director of Occupational and Technical Education, and then after 2 more years, the time had come for the chancellor to recommend to the governing board that I become a college president.

The chancellor recommended that the board put me into an interim position at one of the district's colleges. It happened in the middle of the night, when the board decided to remove one of the college presidents. I was put in that job on an acting basis. I had just turned 36 years old, and I was within weeks of defending my dissertation.

The college that I became president of was an extremely troubled institution. It had lost 44% of it's enrollment in the previous 4 years. I was the fourth president, a 36-year-old female who had never worked a day on a college campus until I became their president, and had never taught a class. To make the challenge more interesting, the governing board told me in executive session that if I wanted to be the permanent president of that college, I had to increase its enrollment by 20% by fall 1986. There was

a flurry of activity on that campus. We didn't increase the enrollment 20% by the fall; it increased 33% that fall, and I became a permanent college president. I then had a baby in my first year as a president. I remained president of that community college for 4½ years. In 1990 I began my second community college presidency, and I have been here 18 years—very happily, 18 years.

Susan—Right Attitude and Enthusiasm

When I started thirty-some years ago, community college employees were coming out of K–12, or out of business and industry; and for me, it was both. I grew up as a military brat, and we moved 15 times before I graduated from high school. By the time I finished college, which also was a long series of many different colleges, I found myself on the West Coast working as a social worker. My degree was in political science, but I ended up working as a social worker.

When I made the decision to get a master's degree, I left my social work position because in those days there weren't many graduate programs at night; nontraditional students probably were not typical at that point in time. I had to figure out how I could work and go to school. I found one college that had a night and weekend program, so I moved to that area of the state. I ended up working as a publicist, as well as running a Chamber of Commerce and getting a master's degree in counseling. After I had my master's degree, I ended up working in K–12 for a very short period of time. I left that position and moved to a Western Plains state. I had decided I didn't want to be in K–12 and thought that perhaps community colleges would be an option. In the meantime I needed a job and ended up as a sales manager for a hotel for a short period of time.

It was then that I began to make plans to find a position in a community college setting. I knew from the first time I walked into a community college that I wanted to be a president. It wasn't something that somebody had to convince me to do. I always thought it would be wonderful to be in a position that could have such an impact. I can remember interviewing for a job, and walking in; and now that I think about it, it was pretty gutsy. I was in my twenties, and I said to this man, "I want your job!" He was the president. From the beginning there was no question in my mind.

When an opportunity presented itself, I interviewed and began my career at a community college. My first position was in an adult education program that was part of a federal grant project. Then I had a position in counseling, and at one point in time I ended up as director for counseling. Wanting to have the opportunity to expand my vision, I applied and was selected head of the Continuing Education and Small Business Development Center. Next, I became the Assistant Dean of Instruction, and then my next position was as the Division Dean of Life Health and Physical Health Sciences. This was interesting because my field was psychology, and now I am in Life, Health, and Physical Sciences, and psychology was not part of that division. And all of this over a period of 22 years... At one point, I had all the campus facilities. These were very large facilities, including a 3,000-seat arena because in this region there was agriculture, rodeos, judging. The college owned livestock, horses, cattle, and sheep.

I was moving up through the organization pretty quickly, and at one point I had applied for the Vice President of Instruction position. I was an applicant and a finalist; however, I wasn't chosen. This was the first time I had failed in applying for a job. So my president talked to me and said I leaped too many times and didn't have all the

foundation. I was going to have to go back and fix the gaps in my career pathway that I had sort of skipped over very quickly, so I could be a more solid candidate the next time I applied.

That was when I became the Division Dean of Life, Health, and Physical Science. Even though I had been an Assistant Dean of Instruction, and had done grant and development writing, as well as program evaluations, I had never had direct program responsibility or faculty supervision, and I had missed out. By this time, there wasn't much more in the mission of a community college that I hadn't been involved in.

I was very fortunate to be in an institution that allowed employees to try things. Most of my direct supervisors at one point or another really made a difference. Because I think many times supervisors make a decision that a person needs to have the skills first, and I think my bosses made the decision that if you have the right attitude, you can learn the skills. Thank goodness for that, because many of these jobs I had no skills for, but I was enthusiastic, and I wanted to do the job. I wanted to learn, and I think that is what carried me along.

I took on new challenges so I could learn. I don't know if that would have happened at other places. Because you can be in some institutions, as you know, that in order to move up, or lateral, or whatever, you almost have to shoot the person who is in the position that you want, because people don't move on, especially in a small institution. They are oftentimes there for their entire career, so how do you get the experience? So I was really lucky. I thought, if I want to make it to the presidency, I need to know more about this, this, this, so I better volunteer to get on that committee, and so

on, so that, when the day comes, I can say I do know, I did do that, and therefore I am ready.

I'm sure somebody had said something to me at one point in time to volunteer for things you don't quite understand or you need to have a better handle on. So I can remember volunteering to chair the accreditation visit for North Central, and do this and that because I really didn't know anything about it; and I felt, unless I get involved, I'll always be sitting here not knowing. I think I was fortunate to be at an institution that did not stereotype me. I think sometimes when institutions see you on a certain pathway; they don't allow you to diverge from that pathway. At this particular institution, they were just so pleased that you wanted to try something different, they let you. I think what worked so well for me was the fact that I had such a broad view of a community college mission. This is my first presidency. I was appointed president of this rural community college in 2003.

Patricia—Seeds of Possibility

I took the long and tedious way, if you look at the number of years that it took for me to reach the presidency. My first career choice after completing college was to dedicate my life to a Catholic religious community, which I did for 13 years, while at the same time I was head of a program at a high school. I've also spent 20 years in community college administration, and another 15 years in the corporate world in a variety of vice presidencies. So I have a trinity of approaches to the presidency, never thinking I would pinnacle at a community college presidency. But fully knowing that my interest in leadership, along with my type A personality, and my ability and interest in education, as well as working for and with people, would ultimately define my future.

After teaching high school as well as college students, I spent a year in a Midwest state's Department of Education as a program officer. During that time, I applied for and received a Ford Fellowship. I then moved to the East Coast for a period of time. When I went back to that state Department of Education, I was told by the superintendent of schools that the state wasn't ready for a woman. At that time, I knew I wouldn't be a superintendent of schools, so I left to work for a private company, which subsequently closed because of lack of funding.

I then decided to work at a community college, and during the time I was at the college, I held seven different administrative positions, moving forward every year until I left as a vice president. I was then recruited by a major corporation to be its Vice President of Corporate Development. I accepted the position and stayed 13 years, until the company was sold. It was at this point in time that I decided I wanted to become a college president.

I then made the decision to go back into community colleges and not stay in the corporate world. And I was hired at a midwestern community college, where I stayed for 9 years. Once I had decided that I wanted to be a college president, I prepared myself by serving in every position exclusive of the presidency. What prepared me for administration was learning the ropes, not just jumping from a department chairperson to an administrator, and expecting I would get the next job. I held seven senior administrative positions at one community college. I learned the job from others, and learned the profession. It wasn't until I had completed my work in business that I really knew I could be a college president. I was a collaborator and facilitator, and I was

purposeful and dedicated to leading a college. I sharpened my skills in the corporate world; I refined them in academe.

I applied for private 4-year college presidencies and was a finalist for two. But I had many good solid experiences in the community college. I have been on boards of 4-year public universities, of 4-year private universities, of hospitals, and so on. But, I knew community colleges pretty well; so when I went from the corporate world back to the community college, it was like "I never fell off the horse." I understood the community college, and I am comfortable there. I also felt that 1,250 community colleges should offer me a relatively good opportunity at being a president. I worked hard at getting my presidency. Ultimately, the right one came along, and I love the job! I was fairly selective about where I wanted to share my gifts and talents. The college community chooses the president, and, in the end, it was a "goodness of fit." Being a college president is indeed a gift for me, and I am honored to share my life with faculty, staff, and students. It is a highly rewarding experience for me.

Carolyn—A Very Fulfilling Career

In one sense it just happened. I mean, I did not embark on my career in education thinking that at some point I wanted to work into administration and work my way up to a presidency. It was a result of maybe two or three factors. First, I found administrative work enjoyable, productive, and more manageable, frankly, than teaching. I started off teaching, and simply because of my personality, and the way I work, and what I do, I found it extremely difficult to place any limits on myself when I taught. The students would take anything you gave—any amount of time, any amount of concern, and any amount of care—they will take it. They are not going to draw any lines for you, and I

found it extremely difficult to do so for myself. I found administrative work much more definable. I found it much easier to say, "This is my home, and this is my work." I recognized that if I was going to stay in education, for my own family's sake, I would need to move out of the teaching arena and into administration. Second, I found that I was good at it, that I was productive, and that I could be successful. I started with grant writing and management, and I was successful at that. I just found that I could make a difference.

Third, and definitely the most important factor in actually getting me into a presidency, were mentors, both male and female: administrators who saw that I did have talent in this area, that I was capable, that I could make a difference, and who encouraged me, and in some cases pushed me into more and more responsible kinds of positions. That's how I got there.

My career in education actually began with teaching college-level English. Then I transitioned out of education entirely when my husband had a job opportunity that required us to move. I took a position as an assistant personnel manager at a large retail store, helping to open the first major department store in the area. It was an extremely useful excursion for me, out of education, into personnel. It gave me so much more of a concrete and real appreciation for what we are supposed to be preparing our students to do in the world of work.

Then the college received a major Title III grant and needed an administrator for the grant. That is when I went back into education, and it was my first sojourn into a community college. I went in as a Title III coordinator, and from then on I just handled a variety of responsibilities—first, the Title III coordinator, then a computer specialist (this

was so long ago they didn't require that you had a computer degree because there weren't very many of them around). I simply had taught myself to manage most of the applications as part of getting out the Title III grant, and computerizing the campus had been one of the major Title III projects. I taught myself a certain level of programming in order to do that because there were customizations of the software that we just didn't have the money to do.

The first administrative position I had was as the Assistant Dean for Academic Support. This position supported the library, the learning center, cooperative education, and the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) grant. This was the first time the college had this position, and it allowed me to "write the job description," or at least have direct input. Writing and managing the Title III grant involved me in student services a great deal. Previously, I had done a short stint as a temporary academic advisor. So I had experience with student services, with advising; I had experience with academic support; and I had experience with instruction. And all that has been very important for me in managing the multiple aspects of a college.

In 1990 we moved, mainly for my son's education. I stayed within the community college system but moved to a different city. I came in contact with the chancellor simply because I was working nearby. I worked at the employment training center as the Assistant State Director, and I became more involved in systems work. The chancellor wanted to move the community college system along in the area of distance learning. She talked to me, and she talked to the Vice President for Planning and Policy about having me do a short-term project. I changed positions and moved over to the vice president's

office as a program policy officer and tackled the job of rewriting the distance learning policy for the university and community college system.

The chancellor just kept moving me along. And when the provost moved from the college to become the executive administrator for the Board of Regents, and the provost position was open at the school I had previously been at, the chancellor moved me there on an interim basis. When the provost officially left the position, it was opened up; I applied, and I got it. The chancellor had her own plan in mind about people she saw in the system that she wanted to move up, and I'm not the only one. She was very canny about identifying leaders throughout the system.

As I look back, and approach retirement, I can say it's been a fun ride. The 10 years in this position is the longest I've ever been in a single position in my entire career. I have moved, and usually up, but I have moved around a great deal; and as I said, I found that extremely useful. It's been a very fulfilling career. It's had its moments; it's had its pain, and because I've taken this meandering kind of path, it's had its toll on my family, too. But all in all, it's been good.

Terry—Being a Change Agent

My pathway to the presidency actually started when my husband and I were on a trip with our two children. We stopped in this coastal community, and we loved the ambiance and the warmth of the people whom we encountered. At one point, my husband, in all seriousness, told me he wanted to move there. A few months later, I happened to see an ad in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for the position of president at this community college. I hadn't seriously considered a position as a president at that point. My background is in student affairs, and I knew that it was not as common a path

to the presidency. However, when I saw the announcement, because of the uniqueness of the locale, I began wondering if it was possible.

I first became introduced to the field of student affairs as an undergraduate residence-hall assistant. I actually became so involved in the department of residential life that I decided I would stay and pursue my master's degree in education. Because of my experience, I was able to secure a graduate assistantship as an assistant residence-hall director. One thing led to another, and soon I was continuing in the doctoral program, and working in a full-time professional position as a residence hall director for one of the largest residential life programs in the country.

It was apparent to me that it was easier to advance professionally if I was willing to relocate; so after completing my doctorate at age 29, I searched for, and found a position at a university on the West Coast. My fiancé and I married just before we moved across the country for me to take that job as Assistant Dean of Residence Life and Student Activities. Within a year, I was promoted to Dean of Students and found myself the chief student-affairs officer of the institution.

My career goal had been to become a Dean of Students. I was at a private university that was very small; in fact, enrollment issues had plagued the institution continually. And during the university's accreditation visit, the financial stability of the institution was called into question. This fact jump-started my career path. When the institution began to make significant financial decisions, and lay-offs became an obvious inevitability, I decided to move on. I applied at other schools and took a position as Dean of Students at a much larger institution, a public university in the South that had an enrollment of approximately 15,000 students.

I was the Dean of Students for more than 6 years, until circumstances began to cause me to choose principles over position. One weekend, after having returned to my job from my maternity leave, I received a telephone call from the college police. A young woman student had committed suicide; she hanged herself at her parents' house. I soon learned that this student had been a rape victim at an unofficial but well-known fraternity house adjacent to the campus. The rape had occurred during the time I was on leave. The Vice President of Student Affairs, a man who recently had been moved from a position as a member of the business faculty to the position of Vice President of Student Affairs, had been informed within days after the rape; but he did not reach out to help the young woman. He did inform other administrators, including the fraternity advisor, who was the college's EEOC officer and a lawyer by training. None of these men acted to help the student who had endured the rape and subsequent harassment by the frat brothers who she had been reporting to officials at the school.

The Vice President for Student Affairs was trying to cover it up because it would have been bad press for the school. I was pushing the issue forward because rape had happened more than one time with a campus fraternity. This fraternity's advisor said in deposition that he had basically gone back and told the fraternity to wash their clothes and get rid of evidence. I had taken a very firm stand on the integrity and safety of the institution, and I was a constant reminder to them of the failure to act in the way a responsible administration should have handled the issues, and I was forced out as Dean. Having taken the right action, I was punished for it, and it wounded me; but I was determined to stand my ground and never give up my principles.

After that, I became the Vice President of Student Affairs at a 4-year college in the Northeast. It was a school on the move, and during my tenure there, we built two new residence halls and a library; it was a very successful post for me. I was there 4 years, until I became a community college president.

At that time, I don't think I would have gotten a job at a traditional liberal arts college or research institution as president because I didn't have that background for an institution like that. But, by the same token, if I'd been a traditional academic, I don't think I would've gotten this job. Each institution is different, and it's a matter of finding the right fit; I had to learn what that fit was, and then leverage my strengths in that direction.

I think I was a very different choice for this institution than what they had previously. I think the main experience I brought was being very entrepreneurial, and having the experience of what it means to keep the student at the center of what the college does. So while I have an educational background, I also have the administrative background that comes with handling auxiliary enterprises and managing finances.

I had called the search consultant before applying, and I asked what they were looking for in a president. They told me they were, in fact, looking for a change agent, and I've always been a change agent.

Kristine—Amorphous Idea

It wasn't a planned path; it was a very convoluted path. I think at times I was doing the groundwork without really knowing where I was headed, but with an amorphous idea that someday I might aspire to higher and higher positions. Eventually, it worked out that way.

I had wanted to teach high school originally; but I couldn't get my foot in the door, partly because I'd been so busy with graduate school I never did any teaching beyond my student teaching. When the community college opened, I thought to myself, this is my last chance! I had just moved here, and I was working as a phlebotomist, which was not something I ever intended to end up doing, and I really want to get back into education.

I interviewed, and I eventually got a part-time position teaching English. This was in 1983, when the college opened. Then I could see that I could be a part-time English instructor for 50 years, and never get hired full time because there are so many English instructors. So when a secretarial position opened up at the college, I decided I wanted to do that because it was a full-time job. I could be there, and watch as other jobs opened up. So I took it, and immediately people started asking why I wanted to work as a secretary when I already had a doctorate. I responded that I just wanted to be there, and contribute in some way, and move up if opportunities arise.

I did that for about a year, and continued to teach. Then I worked in recruitment and admissions for a short period of time and learned that side of the house. When the first administrative position opened up, running Corrections Education programs in prisons across the state, I applied. I had studied juvenile justice and criminal justice in college. I got that job, despite the fact that I had not a clue how to do administration. I just learned the job by the seat of my pants—how to order equipment, work with the instructors, and travel across the state. It was very interesting work. I cut my eye teeth in Corrections Education and learned the administrative side.

I did this for about 5 years. After that, I knew occupational training programs very well, having set all of them up from scratch. I transitioned into doing occupational training on campus. I did that for many years through various renditions and positions, for a variety of different types of programs. Then I ran a project called External Programs at the request of the dean, developing out-of-the-box programs like distance education, and flexible scheduling.

When the dean became the president, he asked me to become his assistant. So I came over to be the assistant to the president. I kept learning more and more, and worked with various areas of the college. By then, I had been asked to serve in a variety of interim positions when needed. I stayed as the assistant to the president for three presidents. It was a very good training ground, to find out what presidents did, and the kinds of challenges they faced.

At one point previously (when one president, who I felt treated me unfairly...), the thought had entered my head that, if I was president, I wouldn't treat people that way. That thought went underground, but I did continue to develop myself. I had my doctorate, I knew a lot about higher education, and I thought maybe someday I could be a president.

Throughout the years as the assistant to the president, I was also going to future leaders' training. Then, at one point, I was made the Executive Vice President and began supervising vice presidents and running the campus. I did that for a couple of years, until the last president announced his retirement. I then asked myself if I wanted to work for another president. I thought, No, and I'm not ready to retire. So, I asked myself, Who loves this school more then I do, and who knows it better than I do? I had been here for 23 years, and I thought I might as well go for it.

I knew I had an uphill battle because of the statistics about internal candidates, and my image in the college because people still remembered me as starting as the secretary. There was this thing: you're never a prophet in your own land. So I did a kind of image restructuring. I had been through all the future leaders' institutes, so I knew the kinds of things I needed to do. I knew I had to pay attention to my hair, and my dress, and I knew my strengths and weaknesses; so I just started studying, and changing certain things that I had control over.

Other presidents had just been placed in the job, and I think my fantasy was that I wouldn't compete for it. I didn't think that my chance of competing against experienced presidents was good. When it became clear to me that the board was going to make me compete, I thought they would probably give me a courtesy interview, and that they weren't going to do me any favors. So I kept studying so that I would just do well in the interview, so they couldn't find any objections. I did do very well on the interview because I know more about this institution than anybody else. In the end I had some very stiff competition. I just did the best I could and said, "Whatever decision you make, I am here for the college."

A critical moment for me was when the past president said he felt I could do the job. I don't think I ever believed I could really do it. I thought of myself as an imposter, that syndrome where you think you are a fake. I thought, I am just convincing myself I can do this; and when he told me he thought I could do the job, it made an incredible difference. I have been here as president almost 2 years, and every dream I had for this institution is coming true.

Brenda—Passion and Persistence

After obtaining my bachelor's degree in sociology, I didn't really know how I was going to make a living. Someone suggested that becoming a librarian would be a good thing to do. At the time, I had the understanding there was a nationwide shortage of librarians. While I had no compelling desire to be a librarian, I figured I could go to graduate school, and in a year and a half I would have that training, and at least I would know what I was applying for. I went to graduate school, and I got the degree; and in that year and a half, whatever nationwide shortage there was for librarians dried up, so there was really nothing out there on the horizon.

I knew I wasn't interested in being a public-library librarian, or a children's librarian, and the idea of being a university librarian was unappealing to me; but the idea of community college appealed to me. So I applied to every community college in the state, whether they had a job announcement or not. I heard from one saying they did have an opening; I applied for that position, and got the job. I was 23 years old at the time.

The first year or two, I just did my job and eventually became more active on the campus. I was asked to join the Academic Senate, and be on their Executive Committee. It was a great opportunity for me because it provided me with a broader picture of the college. I served as the Senate's chair of the Personnel Policy Committee for 2 years and continued as a librarian. Next, I was elected Academic Senate president and did that for 2 years.

I had started off as the afternoon and evening librarian, and each year added to my responsibilities. And little by little I had done every professional job in the library. When the library director retired, it was announced that the college was going to fill the position

internally. I applied and was appointed to the position, in part because I had been active in the Academic Senate; and I had also spent the 7 or 8 years I had there involved in committee work, as well as having been involved in other college-wide experiences.

I was Dean of the Library from 1983 to 1997. Soon, I was not only responsible for the library, but also for the learning center and tutoring, and then off-campus programs and chairmanships of various committees. Many times when the college had vacancies in another division, I would serve in various interim positions as well as my own job. Little by little, I was becoming one of the more experienced deans and, in time, one of the more senior administrators.

In 1997 the college hired their first woman president. The district felt that it would be good for her to have some insiders in place on an interim basis while she was getting a sense of the place, and while she was putting her own organizational structure together. The district appointed me to be the interim Dean of Instructional Operations, handling curriculum, staff, and everything related to instruction. I did that for a year while the president put together an organizational structure. I was the chair for that reorganization committee and was involved in the writing of the organizational plan. However, it was a difficult time for me, I felt that the president didn't recognize the work I did, or my contributions.

It was during this difficult time that it occurred to me that the president was a vindictive enough type of person that it wouldn't be beyond her to reorganize again, and require everyone to reapply for their jobs, and require a doctorate for the position. This motivated me to go back to graduate school and get my EdD. In 2002, as I finished my degree, the chancellor of our district stepped in and appointed me to be the Vice President

of Instruction. Eventually, the chancellor removed the president from her position, and I stayed on as Vice President of Instruction. At that time I had no intention of leaving the institution after 30 years of working there.

However, when the college hired a new Vice President of Students and paid him more than they were paying me after 30 years, I objected. I was told he was making more where he was before than I was making now, and we needed to attract him. I felt I should have been paid at least the same as the other vice president, and it was very offensive to me to be paid less.

This situation prompted me to apply for a presidency. I also thought this might send a message to the senior decision makers not to take me for granted. This didn't happen, and they didn't beg me to stay when they learned I had applied for another position. I didn't get that presidency; instead, I wound up getting my name on the list of recruiters who would then notify me of all available presidential positions. I was notified of several other positions that were open, and each time I would say no, I wasn't interested.

When the recruiters told me about this presidency, my initial reaction was still no, I wasn't interested. Still, there was something that compelled me to learn more about the opportunity. I researched the college and found that it was approximately the same size and age as my current college. I went through the process, having learned from the first failed attempt; and I applied what I had learned in graduate school. I applied for the position, and I was selected and have been here for 3 years.

Laura—Intentional Pathway

I am a first-generation high-school graduate, as well as first-generation college. In the 1960s if you were a woman, particularly in the Midwest, and your parents hadn't gone to college, you were not aware of the options. So I figured I could be a secretary, or a nurse, or a teacher, which was a pretty typical set of options. After a semester of typing, I decided that wasn't a good career choice. I didn't really want to be a nurse, and my grandmother told me I couldn't be a doctor because I was a girl. I thought about what I enjoyed doing. I knew I liked books, and I liked cooking and sewing. At that time, there was an overwhelming number of qualified English teachers who couldn't get jobs. So I decided to become a home economics teacher.

I married my high-school sweetheart, had a child, and was teaching junior-high home economics, while my husband completed his master's and PhD. Then my marriage fell apart, and I was a single mom when one of my friends told me about a new community college opening. This was in 1976. I applied for a position and began my community college career working on grant money in a Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) job.

I worked the CETA job for the summer as a career counselor for at-risk high-school youth. It was a summer contract only, so I needed to find a more permanent solution. So I made an appointment to see the president of the college. He asked me if I could write and said, "There are some requests for proposals, and if you can write a fundable project, there may be a position in it for you." So for 3 years in a row I wrote grants, and got them funded, and worked for the college as we were building the first campus.

My president knew I was searching; I was in my late twenties, I was a single mom, and I needed money. During those 3 years, I got my master's at night, and he encouraged me to get a PhD. Then, somewhere during that time, as I watched him do his job, I said to myself, I think I could do that. So I set a goal to become a college president. I set myself a timeline: become a dean by 35, and a president by the age of 40. It wasn't very realistic, but it was a concrete goal.

I did have a sense of what I would need to have in the way of credentials, in addition to the master's and PhD, and that was a set of experiences and skills. During the time I was completing my PhD, I remarried; I had two more children; I had a daughter in grade school and now had four step-children. I decided I needed to go to work and took a job at an historically black university.

I had grown up in the Midwest, and I hadn't known anyone that didn't look like me, speak like me, or have cultural experiences like me. I had no higher-education diversity experience at all, so those couple years were really wonderful. I began to see a world that was full of differences, and many, many people who shared the drive to educate themselves. I knew after a couple of years in the 4-year environment that I needed to get back to the community college. My passion was the community college mission.

I probably wasn't realistic about how much time it would take to gain the necessary experiences to prepare myself for the presidency. But, I was fortunate to work with some really wonderful presidents and vice presidents. I was honest with them about where I wanted to go with my career, and they reached out to help me have those experiences. I was pretty intentional in making my career choices; the normal career track

to move into a presidency usually comes on the arts and humanities side, at least [it did] in the '70s and the early '80s. I chose a less-than-traditional approach.

My background is in vocational education. So I started looking at vocational positions, and I intentionally looked at deans of technology or vocational education. I knew the risk was higher because if I wasn't successful, being one of very few women in those kinds of role at that time, I couldn't hide. I also knew that if I did the job well, it might give me a leg up and would distinguish me from the crowd.

Some of the experiences I wanted to gain included experience with organized labor. I also wanted both small and large urban community experiences. I wanted experience working with large budgets, and to learn about fund raising. I had a good background in curriculum and instruction, but there were many individuals with this preparation. So even as the Dean of Trades and Technology, I'd volunteered to do projects to gain experience. I tried to learn as much as I could, to be exposed to a broader scope of experiences. I knew that would enrich my standing, and hopefully add to my skills, and certainly strengthen my marketability.

The position that I held before my first presidency was as the District Dean for Trades and Technical Education at a large midwestern, urban technical college. I had opportunity to prepare and, in a sense, to lead a community college because I had seven associate deans and an operating budget in my division that was bigger than the operating budget at my first college presidency. This was an important position in my career pathway because I had all aspects of curriculum development, curriculum approval, program review, and budget. I served in that position for 4 years. I was first hired as a dean, 6 weeks before I turned 35; and I was 41 when I was offered my first presidency.

So I only missed the goals I set for myself by a year. I served in my first presidency 11 years and have been in my second presidency at this college for 6 years.

Jean—Never Far from the Community College Mission

My pathway is quite convoluted. I spent the first 11 years after high school working in business and industry doing clerical, secretarial, and bookkeeping work. I was married and had two little boys, then got divorced. I was in some really crummy companies where they treated people very poorly, and finally I was insulted and harassed for the last time. I came home one day and made myself a promise that I would get an education. I already had one class in accounting and decided I really liked it. I remarried about a year later and had the opportunity to go to a community college, and I took it.

I went straight through, planned every semester to get my associate's, bachelor's, and master's; and I had another baby in the middle. I had a bachelor's and master's in accounting and business administration, and I wanted to teach full time. I had been teaching adjunct since completing my associate's degree. After graduating with my master's, I was offered a teaching position at a campus within the university system. That was wonderful; except it was a 45-minute commute across town on the freeway, with rush-hour traffic. I did that for one year, and really enjoyed it, and then a position opened up at the community college, for a full-time business instructor. The college was 4.5 miles from my home, with no traffic, not even a signal light!

I taught there for 6 years, but I wasn't able to teach accounting at that college because there was another faculty member in that area. At the end of one academic year, the district offered a retirement opportunity, and about 33 people in the district retired. Two of these retirees taught accounting at the other college in the district, and I applied

for and was given a transfer. I was able to teach my specialty without having to fight somebody for it. I spent 6 years at that college.

After 12 years of highly successful teaching, I was in my late 40s, and I kind of woke up one day and thought, If I ever want to do something else, I better consider it before I'm 50, or I'll be too afraid to make a change. I made the decision to go back to school and get my PhD. I talked to my husband, and he said if I wanted to do it, he'd stay with the boys. So I earned a PhD in Community College Leadership. I made a decision then that I really did want to go into administration. That was a very big decision for me to leave a secure, tenured job, in a district where I would have had lifetime medical benefits, to go to a new environment where they no longer gave those benefits, and where I didn't have tenure, didn't have a contract, didn't have anything. I had to perform or else; but having come out of business and industry, that's just the way I had operated, so it didn't bother me at all.

My first administration position, after being a faculty department chair at a large urban community college, was as the Dean of Instruction at a small, Upper Midwest, rural community college. I went from a college of 14,000 to a college of 750. That was a real learning experience. I also found out when I made this move that I really did have moxie, and I could deal with the challenges of administration. I was at this college for 18 months officially; however, in the first year I lost my eldest son to cancer. It was a very difficult time for me, especially since he was back on the West Coast.

Shortly after his death, I received a call from the interim chancellor of the state community college system, and he said he needed a favor. He needed an interim president at one of the urban community colleges and needed someone who knew

something about accounting, because of budget issues; and he needed someone he could trust, because he didn't know how bad it would be. So, there again, the master's in accounting served me well, and I became an interim president at a community college less than 2 years after I was a department chair.

That was a huge opportunity that fell in my lap. I attributed my ability to move up so quickly within the community college system to my outstanding doctorial program that focused on real transformational leadership. One of the things we had to do was an internship. I managed to do my internship in a large, urban community college district with an exceptional chancellor who still mentors me to this day.

After that first interim presidency, I was hired to be a president at another college in that same state. This was a college that was engaged in the stressful time of a higher-education merger. My first job was to complete the merger of a two-campus technical college and a single-campus community college. I was there 3 years while we accomplished the merger. The life of a major change agent, however, is short, and I seem to be thrown into places where they need major change. After 3 years, I went to a multi-campus college, where I spent 6 years as a campus president, instituting major change, both on my campus and within the district.

I then decided to come back to this state where it all began because I had taught here so long my retirement was tied up in the state's system. In 2004 I was hired as the first woman president for a West Coast college. This college was not a good fit, and after 2 years I left and came to my current presidency, which is a rural community college within a larger district. After working for 2 years to build a new team, and instill energy and creativity, the college is suddenly thriving; and industry is falling in line to ask us to

teach courses for them. We are developing new curriculum for specific industry needs, partnering with K–12 districts, and enjoying the largest spike in enrollment in the college's history. Our self-esteem is just going through the roof; it's wonderful. This is my last position; I will retire after this. Although I will probably never be far from the community college culture and mission.

Margaret—Making a Difference

I didn't start out thinking I was going to be a president. I was raised on a ranch in a Western Plains state, with a father who was never very well. We all became responsible for our part of doing what we had to do to keep the ranch going. Both my parents and grandparents told us, "You can do whatever you want to do." It didn't make any difference whether you were a female or male: We were all treated equally, equal work and equal responsibility. My parents wanted me to be able to have a career if I wanted one. My mother was a school teacher, as was my grandmother before her.

After high school, I went off to college and got my degree. It took a little longer than planned because I met my husband at college, and we married. My first teaching job, about 2 years after I got married, was teaching fourth grade. At that time, I had only 2 years of college because then you could get a temporary teaching credential. Teaching 35 fourth graders helped solidify my decision that I was not going to have a career teaching grade school. I loved teaching and felt I did a great job; but it was a lot of work, the age of the kids, and I really didn't have that much attachment to it. I then had the opportunity to stay home for about 8 years and raised our family.

My husband was a college teacher, and his career has always been in higher education, so we were always connected with colleges. After my husband finished his

doctorate degree, we moved to a large urban area in the West where he had a position at a private university. I went to work in business and industry, in accounting, while also working on my accounting degree. I worked in accounting for about 6 years and thought I was always going to stay in that profession. But my husband took a job in another state. When we arrived in this small college town in the Midwest, there weren't a lot of positions for people in accounting; so I finished my bachelor's degree and went into education. I taught accounting and really loved it. I also loved making a difference. That's what you do as a teacher, and that's why I moved to administration: because I felt I could make even more of a difference in students' lives as an administrator. That's probably why I am a president, too; I can make a difference not only in students' lives but in the future well-being of a college and a community.

Early in my career, I was an accounting teacher at a community college, and it seemed that my leadership skills continually were being recognized. I was chair of my department before the end of that first year, and it continued that way. Once I received my master's, I applied for and was hired as a business teacher at a state college.

My bachelor's degree was in business administration with an emphasis in accounting. My masters' degree was in vocational administration because I was teaching at a technical college. This is a good background for a community college president. The knowledge of accounting, the fiscal expertise, is knowledge that you have to have. The knowledge and appreciation for vocational education is important if you want a career in community colleges. I spent 10 years in higher education in this Western Plains state. While teaching, I volunteered to serve as the local advisor for the business student organization Phi Beta Lambda and went on to serve as the state advisor for 7 years. And I

also served as their regional representative on the national board of directors. These leadership positions came naturally, and I guess I always was interested in taking leadership roles in the organizations to which I belonged.

I started my teaching career in 1982, and in 1994 I became an Assistant Vice President for Vocational Education. Then, for the next 10 years, I was the academic officer at a 4-year private, proprietary university in the northern Midwest. Things began to fall into place for me, and it became clear then that it wasn't the degree you have or your past experience as much as it's who you know. It's the network, as well as a lot of mentors to whom you have proved your worth, that will lead the way to a presidency.

I then decided to begin looking for a presidency. With my doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction and Higher Education Administration completed, and 10 years at the university, it was time for a new challenge. This time I looked for a presidency particularly in this state because our children were living here. We wanted to see our grandchildren grow up. I felt I was at a point in my life where I could do that. In the past we had moved to where the job was located. This time, the move was to a presidency specifically in the state where we wanted to live. I had applied for a presidency in this state 2 years earlier and backed out because my mother became ill, and I was the sibling living closest to my mother at that time. My husband was now at retirement age, so I could make the decision about where we would live and work. I applied for three different presidencies in this state, and I never thought I would end up within an hour's distance of both of my daughters. In fact one of them lives in my district. It just fell into place for me.

This college is a good fit for me. I am a workaholic, so I don't mind the long hours, the long weeks, and everything. I think it would be very hard for somebody who wasn't a workaholic. I spend a lot of my off hours thinking about the college and what we need to do. It's pretty much been my life for the past 3½ years.

Conclusion

The narratives presented here, using each participant's words, are from the transcriptions of the interviews. Using a personal narrative, I have provided a snapshot of the participant's experiences related to her career pathway. Seidman (1991) says that through the process of interviewing "we can come to understand the details of people's experience from their point of view" (p.103).

These stories of each participant achieving her presidency are unique. I chose to honor these participants by telling their stories so they stand out from the data analysis and interpretation I present in chapter 5.

Chapter 5

In this chapter I analyze the data I acquired through interviewing, transcribing, and coding. The purpose of this study was add to the available research and information to enable me and others to better understand how the careers of the women participants developed: what their values were; what beliefs lent themselves to their becoming community college presidents; what career barriers and challenges they have experienced; and what influences, mentors, or support systems might have been in place for them along the way. To facilitate the interview process, I created an interview guide based on the research questions (Appendix F). This guide provided me with a systematic process for data collection, since the interviews were conversational and the participants were able to go beyond the bounds of the questions. Additionally, this guide insured that I asked all participants the main questions.

The core themes that emerged fell into three broad areas. First, their perspectives and philosophies were based on their core personal and professional values and beliefs. These core values and beliefs in turn provided insight or self-understanding to the women regarding what guided them and gave them their strength. I defined *value* as "a principle, standard, or quality regarded as worthwhile or desirable" (Webster's II, 2001). Second, career barriers and challenges the women encountered throughout their career pushed them further along, rather than hindered them, on their pathway. The third theme evolved

around the individuals who may have influenced, mentored, or supported the women's careers. Those individuals, female and male, encouraged and supported the participants.

Using their words, and my analysis and interpretation, I provide an insight into the women's personal views on their leadership styles, their values, and their beliefs as women leaders. I have changed some grammatical structure, and in some cases I added or deleted words to allow for ease of reading because participants often recorded additional words while they reflected on their thoughts. But I have changed nothing substantive from their interviews.

Perspectives and Philosophies

Credible leaders first must comprehend fully the values, beliefs, and assumptions that drive them as leaders (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). My participants provided perspectives of their philosophies based on what they valued in their personal and professional lives. In my review of the transcriptions, the following subthemes emerged in support of the core perspectives and philosophies: (a) developing a personalized leadership philosophy; (b) leading ethically; (c) inspiring colleagues; (d) honoring the whole person; and (e) showing persistence. These leadership characteristics guided each woman in her understanding of how she perceived her leadership.

Personalized Leadership Philosophy

When I asked participants in this study about their leadership qualities and what they valued, their perspectives were as varied as the women themselves. Words such as *collaborate, compromise,* and *competent* permeated these conversations and helped define the women's values and beliefs. Three participants—Barbara, Susan, and Louise—used leadership styles to define how they saw themselves as their individual

styles changed and developed. As Barbara reflected on how her style had changed as she developed and grew as a leader, she said,

> My leadership style has changed. I don't take things as personally, although we all internalize. I have become better at negotiation, and better at compromise up front, and not taking charge of everything. You have to delegate. It's a much broader perch, and I've learned to broaden how I think because I believe my job is vision.

Susan referred to leading by using a situational leadership philosophy to be adaptive:

> I think my leadership style—I don't even know if it has a name; I know we can say situational and service. I think mine is "whatever it takes at the time." My preference is to have a leadership style that emphasizes ethics that emphasize trust and respect. So whatever it is that's needed at the time, I hold true to my values.

Louise talked about becoming more confident and competent in making the tough decisions, saying,

> What I've had to learn is how to make the hard decisions. That had to be learned. It's not something that is my preference; I think it is easier for some different styles to make decisions. For instance, when I was in another state, I had to lay someone off. So I had to learn to make some tough decisions at the time. I had to learn to be more decisive. But ever since then, decisions get easier, less difficult to make—even the hard personnel ones. I've had to make some difficult ones, and they come; just with time, they become easier. So I think some of the qualities I bring are decisiveness, organization, intuitiveness, compassion...; and I feel like I have good common sense.

These three women described a personalized leadership style that guided them as they grew professionally. Susan described her leadership style as leading using what works well at the time, while holding on to what was important to her in terms of her value system. Having the ability to grow and to change personally and professionally showed that, as these three participants moved along in their career pathways and in leadership roles, they were not immune to making changes. They were also not opposed to learning new skills related to what it takes to be a leader. Not taking things personally and not having to be in charge of everything allowed Barbara to broaden her thinking. Gaining

expertise in unfamiliar areas stretched all three women so that hard decisions were not as difficult to make the next time. These women also told of developing the ability to adapt and to learn while holding on to their values, in order to make changes to be competent as leaders who lead ethically, and who emphasize trust and respect.

These next four participants spoke about their leadership philosophies as providing them with a structure based on their personal values: quality, relationships, compassion, being fair and consistent, being a continuous learner, and focusing on the learning of the whole organization. Helen spoke about what she considered important for a leader to embrace:

> My leadership philosophy is one of being quality driven. I value service; I value a leader who understands that the real purpose of leading is to serve. It's the involvement of all employees. It's continuous improvement; it's a focus on the customer; it's the excellence of our products, and services; and its data-based decision making.

Barbara described her philosophy as creating a community or a whole organization:

> You have to be a continuous learner. Certainly learning is the focus of our institutions, but it's not just student learning; it's individual learning, team learning, and the learning of the whole organization. You have to accept failure as an opportunity to grow and not bite people's heads off when mistakes are made; because if you do, they'll stop experimenting. I'm not a big respecter of the hierarchy, so we have a pretty flat organization and pretty [*sic*] free flow of communication. I pride myself on knowing, as much as it's physically possible, the names of all the employees. All new employees go to breakfast with me. I very much believe in the creation of relationships in the organization. We spend a lot of time on staff development, on the culture of the organization, on rewards and recognition.

Judith said her philosophy was based on her skill set:

> I think that me [*sic*], as a person, more than anything else—my personality, is one to be more sensitive, compassionate, and intuitive. I think I bring that... again, my background is counseling.

While Anne expressed the following regarding her personal values:

> I think as far as my personal values [are concerned], I know I have a reputation of being tough, but fair and consistent; of having high expectations, but also modeling the behavior for those high expectations.

These four participants used a personal set of values to lead as a backdrop for their professional philosophies—philosophies based on leadership as service and continually improving products and services. These four participants also focused on being learners, and on embracing learning of the whole organization. These values provided what one might almost describe as a safe place, or a base to which the participants could return. These values also helped the participants make tough decisions, while their fairness and consistency moved them forward personally and professionally.

In sharing their personalized leadership styles, these women described values. They used words such as *collaboration, connected, participatory,* and *autonomous* as they defined their personal philosophies. They spoke about their perspectives as women and not just as college presidents. Patricia's comments illustrated this:

> I can probably generalize and say that there is a collaborative and cooperative aspect of many women, and that those qualities are very important to the conversation in education. I think there is a strong connectivity—all these 'C' words. We help to weave the fabric of solution making. We are able to pull things together that aren't always as easy for men to do in their thinking processes. I myself believe I have some patience, even though I'm a high driver.

Patricia continued and spoke of looking for seeds of possibilities in individuals:

> If you are intuitive or counterintuitive... look for the seeds of possibility in all the individuals who you have on your college campus to promote, and support learning... Women come with honoring the gift of all the individuals who are or will be part of the campus culture by promoting, respecting, honoring, and advancing them. So, in our seat of leadership, we can see that great things thrive, and survive, for both the present and the future.

Barbara expressed her views this way:

> I think these are not qualities that are necessarily unique to women, but I think may be displayed more readily by women. I think they start with women tending

> to be very collaborative; and certainly I know from my own personal experiences that they tend to be a little more willing to collect ideas, and to have people participate in the decision-making process. They feel less compelled to be the one who made the big decision. I think women are probably more inclined to empower the people who they work with. I see myself as the cheerleader of the institution. It's my job to listen to folks, to encourage them, to provide opportunities for their development, and to celebrate with them. I believe it's my responsibility to communicate, to explain, and explain, and explain some more.

And Judith described her thoughts:

> I think you have to have courage. You have to value compromise; you have to value competence. I also value some form of autonomy; but yet I love to be in a position to help, and to watch other women grow into leadership. For me, that's probably the most rewarding thing that I've been able to do as a president.

These three participants described their beliefs and guiding strategies for leading. Honoring what individuals bring to the work environment, growing individuals, and being a part of the whole organization were important to the discussion of values for these participants. They stressed collaboration and cooperation and felt that as women they had the innate ability to incorporate these qualities into how they lead. The women described traits that they said women brought to their leadership positions, saying the traits might not be unique to women, but they might be displayed more frequently by women. Those beliefs provided a basis for these leaders who believe in individuals and in their organizations, and who lead by example, while they stressed the belief they have in developing, encouraging, and celebrating with those around them.

Leading ethically. Throughout the interviews participants shared their commitment to living and leading with integrity, ethics, honesty, honor, and trust. They described what it looked like for them to be authentic leaders. These values guided their personal and professional lives and also illustrated what they wanted to instill in others. Barbara spoke of the importance of trusting those around her to be ethical, and she talked

of empowering individuals and allowing for creativity and forward thinking. She explained in the following:

> I think it's my job to be trustworthy and instill confidence in those around me. I very much believe that the vast majority of employees want to do a good job. There are always going to be a few bad apples in any barrel, but that's not where the president's focus should be, or the organization's policies and practices should be. That's really influenced how I run the college. When I came here, one of the first things I did was get rid of copier codes. If you come from the ground of being that the vast majority of employees can be trusted; that they want to do a good job; that they want to be empowered; and that they want to be creative and innovative, they will work hard for you. In terms of values I think you have to be trustworthy; you have to be forward thinking; you have to be competent; and of course you do have to get the job done.

Carolyn emphasized her views:

> It is not so much a quality I brought. It's a quality that I think I had to an extent that I found I needed to develop a great deal in order to be successful in leadership. And that's honesty—honesty with yourself and honesty with everybody you work with. Honesty that can be very, very up front, but kind and gentle to the extent that you can be honest, and kind, and gentle at the same time you need to be. But that's the only way to build the kind of trust that you need to get things done. But you also have to be extremely honest with yourself about what you're really trying to do: asking yourself what your real belief is, and what your real goal is about what you're doing, so that you don't allow yourself [to get] caught up in little whirlpools of irrelevancies that spin off of any kind of big passion.

Brenda described this value:

> The personal qualities I feel have contributed to me [*sic*] being successful in this environment are a concerted effort I have made to be fair and authentic in my interactions with people; not to take situations or statements personally, but really try to understand what the issues are; and to help other people understand what my perspective is, and what perspectives they are trying to share with me.

Patricia described her feelings as follows:

> I think that both men and women help to make leadership at the community college, and they help to make a real, solid, genuine experience. I just came from an all-morning meeting with my leadership team. There really is a great diversity of opinion. We always have rich discussion, but not because they are male or female, but because they're good people—bright, dedicated, and willing to resolve problems.

These four participants told about having a commitment to leading using trust as a base that guided their leadership, and what they personally and professionally valued. They explained that being honest includes being honest with themselves in terms of what their real beliefs are, and of what their real goals are, to build the trust needed to get things done. They considered ethics, honesty, and being authentic to be at the core of leading ethically. This philosophy became expectations within their lives and for the institutions they serve. They valued trusting and empowering their employees. These participants set the stage for how they led their organizations, and they were willing to honor a diversity of opinions.

When Terry's values clashed with her institution, it had a dramatic effect on her personal and professional life. The impact was on such a large scale it had an influence on her career path. Terry told of a series of events in which individuals whom she felt were unethical ultimately led to her leaving that institution. She told about an experience that went against both her personal and professional values and her knowledge base of what student services means:

> Security was an issue that had attracted a lot of national attention because of the perception that schools have covered up security. And in my estimation, our school was starting to cover things up; it was corrupt. I went out on maternity leave, and when I came back from maternity leave, I got a phone call that a student had committed suicide. ...and come to find out, it was a student that, while I was out on leave, had been raped. The vice president, who had a marketing background, was trying to cover that up because it would have been bad press. I was pushing the issue forward because this had happened more than one time. Rape had happened more than one time with that fraternity whose advisor was the college's EEO officer and lawyer. He said in deposition that he basically went back and told the fraternity to wash their clothes and get rid of evidence. I ended up getting pushed out of my job there. As you can imagine, [after my] taking a very firm stand on the integrity and safety of the institution and being a constant reminder to them of the failure to act in the way a responsible administration should have handled the issues. But I was forced out as Dean. Having done the

> right thing and been punished for it wounded me, but I was determined to stand my ground, and never give up my principles.

Holding tight to values and principles forced Terry to make a decision based on a set of beliefs. Terry was put in the position in which she had to stand her ground and make a decision to leave an institution. This ultimately changed the course of her career, eventually moving her from 4-year universities into community colleges. Having an ethical base enabled Terry to make a decision that was value based; it allowed her to stay true to her guiding principles.

Leading ethically was entwined into these participants' personal and professional lives through trust, honesty, honor, and integrity. They had the ability to gain the trust of those around them by instilling confidence and empowering individuals. By getting rid of copier codes, Barbara began building trust with her employees when she first became president. Having developed the ability to lead with honesty, while being kind and gentle, taught Carolyn to avoid the "little whirlpools of irrelevancies" and stay focused on her job.

Sometimes values and staying true comes with a high price, as it did for Terry. Throughout this difficult time she stood her ground and didn't give up her principles. These participants welcomed a diversity of opinion from women and men, to hear their voices as a way of discussing and solving problems. These women described leading with integrity, honesty, and strong ethics.

Inspiring colleagues. Inspiring those around them, creating a vision, and making a difference were easily recognizable values that the participants demonstrated through these conversations. These participants portrayed their inspiration as passion and enthusiasm for student success as well as employee success. Being in a position to see

people grow and knowing they had an impact or were making a contribution evidenced their accomplishments. Barbara shared her view:

> Seeing students succeed, and knowing that programs and services that we've put in place have made that possible, and that [it] might not have been possible for them otherwise... It's very rewarding for me to see how outsiders react to us. We have lots of visitors here as we are a nontraditional institution. So we get visitors from all over the country and all over the world. Then, as corny as this sounds, just walking into the place feels good to me. We had 125 full-time employees when I came. We have over 500 full-time employees now, and I just feel really good about the fact that all of these people have great jobs. So it's really more the sense of having made a contribution, having enabled both student and employee success, and [having been of] some service to the community. That's very rewarding to me.

Susan reflected:

> You know, you can talk about graduations being tremendous, seeing people grow... I used to teach ESL, and English is my second language, so I have empathy, certainly, for seeing people grow from that perspective and graduate with a baccalaureate degree. ...or the young woman I saw who came through and became a medical doctor. I think of every single person, and their stories, and figure out, "You had some sort of impact."

Louise had this sentiment:

> I get a lot of joy from the little accomplishments. When I was a dean and more directly involved with students, I got a lot from seeing students succeed, and being a part of that success, and I had a lot of that for many years. As a president, you are away from that quite a bit. So your accomplishments are in other areas.

As they described what inspired them, these three participants focused on students and seeing them succeed. These three participants found joy from what they described as little accomplishments. They felt rewarded by seeing the success of students, employees, and their communities, and knowing they had had an impact.

Inspiring and valuing those around them who helped make an impact was meaningful to Jean, Margaret, and Susan. They felt that they could have more of an impact and make a difference as administrators than as faculty members. They were

passionate and compassionate about making a difference. Jean shared her thoughts on how women and men differ in making things happen:

> It's the little places where you make a difference. I think women see that. I don't think men see it as much; I think they see the big picture. I tend to see the small places where you make a difference because it comes back in the long run. So I'm looking at what differences I can make in my communities as well as in my college, and I will be better for it. Men oftentimes tend to stand up in the spotlight. I tend to spotlight the people that make it happen because, you know what? It's going to glow back on me, and I don't need it.

Contemplating her career, Margaret reflected on being in a position from which she could make a difference:

> I love making a difference. That's what you do, and that's why I moved to administration. I can make a difference. I always thought about that: There is no monetary value of going into administration because when you calculate the number of hours you do in your position as compared to a faculty position, you're getting a lot less per hour as an administrator. But I always felt I could make more of a difference as an administrator. That's what I like to do—make a difference. That's probably why I am a president, too: I can make a difference.

Susan explained her desire to make a difference:

> I bring passion and compassion. I am very passionate about what we do, and the work that we do. It wasn't something that somebody had to convince me to do. I always thought, "My gosh! Wouldn't it be wonderful to be in a position that you could have an impact?"

Making a difference, and helping others make a difference, is how these three participants see their life's work. They described how making a difference professionally had had an impact on their personal lives. These participants noted that their enthusiasm and passion came from seeing the success of students and seeing the people around them grow. This opportunity enabled participants in their individual ways to make a difference and to be an inspiration to those around them. Envisioning the future and being able to make a difference helped drive these participants into senior leadership positions, while their values clarified their sense of purpose. As presidents, they described their

accomplishments as being in different areas than in the past, and sometimes these accomplishments were in the little places where they made a difference, such as in seeing students succeed. These participants had the ability to empower others to make a difference in people's lives, and they found that to be personally rewarding as well.

Honoring the whole person. Participants spoke of long days, the commitment to their position, and an awareness of balance throughout it all. Honoring the whole person is a value that described the participants' physical as well as psychological well-being. This value blended finding a balance with maintaining a balance, acknowledging personal limits, and learning what worked for each participant's individual style.

Finding and keeping a balance between professional responsibilities and having a personal life that also provided meaning was different for each participant. Each recognized that there is a certain reality of the position, such as long hours or feeling as if they are working 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, which is outside a traditional work week. Participants described what worked for them to maintain the physical stamina required of this position. Jean described what has worked for her through four presidencies:

> In my 14½ years of administration I have not taken work home ten times. I've pushed myself to get the planning done, and if I know I have to have something done or written, I start it way ahead of time, or I have files where I work on it as I go along. That's the only way I could do it; otherwise, I'd end up working on this stuff at home every night. And I don't want to be tied down like that. My husband and I like to go places. Even if he says, "I want to go over to the Elks lodge tonight," which has given us a lot of good social company in every town we've been in, I don't want to say, "I've got to work." I want to say, "Sure! Let's go," because that's what makes life worth living. So I try very hard not to take work home. Sometimes I have to, but if that's two or three times a year, that's about it. I think it's important to find what balance is for you. If your weekends are the important... maybe you have to work later on Thursday and Fridays. But find out what is important to you. For us, it's spontaneity to get out of town. I take a lot of long weekends, instead of taking one big vacation. That gives us a more restful break.

Louise described the reality of her job, and the balance she needed in her life to keep up with the workload:

> You have to be willing to work, not 24-7, because I believe you need to be balanced; but my job is not 8 to 5, and I never intended it to be 8 to 5. I do emails until midnight or 1 o'clock in the morning at times. There are times I have to get a report done, or do a presentation, and prepare. The other thing I would say is you have to be willing to work really hard, and have good physical stamina; because there are people, some of my colleagues, that get really tired, and it really hinders them and their ability to keep up, I think.

Anne said what maintaining health meant to her:

> You have to maintain a sense of self, and you have to keep yourself healthy, through your whole life. You have to have something outside of work that replenishes you in some way.

Louise described how she dealt with an illness and that finding a balance between work and family, work and good health, as well as the ability to maintain balance in support of a healthy lifestyle, was not often easy. She also explained that without good health and a balance her ability to keep up could be hindered. Recovering from a serious illness forced Louise to reflect not only on her health, but also on the balance she needed in her life to stay healthy:

> I got the job July 2006, and I found out a month later, just before classes began, that I had cancer. My boss, the chancellor, was so supportive, because I had to be in and out my first semester as a new president. I mean, going through chemo and the whole thing... that made it really, really difficult. What that taught me was, I used to get by on 6 hours of sleep a night; I can't do that any more. You have to have your 7 or 8 hours, or I'll get sick. So that was something I learned. I'm not saying those hours caused my cancer; I'm just saying that you have to take care of your health, maintaining good health, replenishing yourself.

Honoring the whole person through physical and psychological well-being was recognized as an important aspect of these four participants' lives. They described a philosophy of making sure they maintained their health so they could perform at the level required for the position. Having high energy and stamina and staying healthy while

doing whatever it takes to maintain or get back their health were important to these participants. Finding ways to replenish themselves was something they learned to maintain good health as well as stamina.

Many times the women reported that finding the balance or a sense of who they were was through using humor. Modeling to others by working hard with their teams, complemented by enjoying their work and who they work with, and using humor and laughter as appropriate were important. Anne reflected:

> You know, you have to have a sense of humor about things; you have to. I'm known for my laugh, and my sense of humor. You have to be careful about that sometimes. But we have a good time. I mean, I've heard faculty go by when we have our leadership team meetings, when I am working with the deans; we're working very hard, but they'll hear us laughing, and they'll go, "That is just great to hear our administrative team working together, and having a good time."

Carolyn added that to survive in her role as a leader having humor in the office and around her was important. She provided her "rule":

> I guess the other, the last quality, if you will, that makes for success, but more than anything makes for survival, is a sense of humor. You absolutely have to have a sense of humor about everything, including yourself. We have a kind of unspoken rule in my office that, at least once a day—the secretary, the other deans, anybody in that office—we have to have one good rolling-on-the-floor, belly laugh during the day. There is always something extremely funny that's happening somewhere, and you just need to be able to laugh, at least once a day.

Humor, as a quality these participants valued, became a part of a healthy work and personal life for them. Humor also brought people together as a team and made not only for success, but also for survival when the position seemed too serious.

Honoring the whole person, the physical as well as the psychological well-being, provided these participants with balance and helped them survive in their environments. Keeping focused on their health and well-being while modeling this approach with their staff helped permeate this value throughout their organization. Finding and maintaining a

balance, knowing personal limits, and having a sense of humor helped to keep these participants' spirits and the spirits of those around them lifted.

Persistence. Ambition, persistence, and *lifelong learning* are words that surfaced as I heard the stories of how these participants achieved their presidency. Qualities or values that they described were embedded in their comments about furthering their education and their ability to attain and continue in a presidency. They described ambition to reach a goal in terms of persistence, or keeping one's eye on the goal. Terry described persistence in terms of long-distance running, a metaphor that fit into her life:

> I used to be, in another life, a long-distance runner. I think that a lot of it has to do with persistence and keeping your eye on the goal; and yes, you have to get a fast start off the block. But you have to be ready to go the distance, and you have to always know where you're going. I think that's the most important quality. I think persistence, and being able to go the distance... and the ability to work hard is a quality that you can't underestimate.

Terry continued by describing how she equated persistence to education:

> I think that it is the most important quality in getting a doctorate done. Because I have seen plenty of people, a lot smarter then me, not finish a doctorate because they didn't have the self-discipline and persistence to just keep going at it. I think that is true for a lot of education.

Carolyn also valued being a continual learner:

> You have to be a constant learner, you can never be the kind of person who says, "Oh, no! Another version of Word!" You just have to enjoy the challenge of constantly learning. There are new laws, there are new requirements, there is new technology, there's just always something changing; and if you are going to lead your institution through those changes, and in the right direction with those changes, you better be really comfortable. You can't be a change agent if you are uncomfortable with change yourself.

Margaret described how much fun she was having in her position, and her willingness to continually have her contract renewed by her board:

> If I was 10 years' younger, I would probably finish this presidency and look for another one. It's an exciting field to be in, and I love it. My board asked me... I'm

> old enough to retire; I can if I'd wanted to. And I'm on a 3-year rolling contract. They said, "We'll keep adding another year to your contract every year. Are you going to keep working those 3 years??" I said, "I am having too much fun not to right now." So I haven't talked to my board about when I want to retire. I'll know it when I do, and I don't know what I would do if I did.

Being persistent to reach goals, whether personal or professional, helped these women to keep their eye on that goal. They also described their positions as an exciting field to be in right now. Persistence and ambition, along with constantly learning, and being a learner, moved these participants forward, enhancing their skills and providing them with new opportunities. These participants equated learning new things and being comfortable with change as qualities presidents should be comfortable with if they want to be change agents and lead their institutions.

Summary of perspectives and philosophies. These participants shared their personal beliefs and the values they used in making their personal and professional lives authentic. Values helped guide them and helped them make informed decisions and be constant learners.

These women shared how they personalized their leadership philosophy, or the styles they used to define how they saw themselves and described what they valued. As they moved through their career pathways, they were able to recognize that, to be competent leaders, they needed to grow and change personally and professionally. Participants felt that their leadership philosophies provided them with a structure. They described characteristics that comprised values they indicated could be typically considered as more feminine. They used words such as *compromise, collaborative,* and *competent* throughout their conversations.

Leading ethically was a commitment that these women made to their institutions and that they described as instilling confidence in employees. They felt that if they trusted their employees, these employees would be creative and innovative. This philosophy guided them personally and professionally through their career, helping them be honest with themselves and others, while being kind and gentle at the same time.

These participants formed relationships, were people oriented, and inspired those around them. They also honored and valued students, faculty, staff, and others whom they serve. They described what drove them to seek a presidency and concurred that it was to make a difference or to have an impact on those around them. Their learning never stopped, and they valued being constant learners and persisting to reach their goals.

These participants provided a unique perspective of how they honored themselves by taking care of their health and wellness. They were willing to work hard to also have a balanced home life.

Career Barriers and Challenges

During the interviews, I asked each participant what barriers she had experienced. Although the women noted that there might have been issues, none of them dwelled on those. The participants linked barriers more to being challenges they had to overcome. In some cases these barriers or challenges became opportunities, enabling them to progress in their careers.

The participants also indicated that some barriers might have been their own, described as self-induced limitations. They perceived being proactive, staying in control, and making choices on the personal level as potential barriers; however, they found ways to navigate around them. For some participants, these self-imposed barriers, real or

imagined, were based on age, or thinking they could not do the job. Brenda attributed her presidency to life's circumstances pushing her so she could maintain control of her life.

> I think my path has been unusual in that my biggest barriers have been my own, or the limitations I have I set on myself. I have been a person who has moved through the system without conscious ambition. Life's circumstances have pushed me toward making a choice to protect. When I became a dean, it was either this other person, or me, and I didn't want that person to have control over my life. When I was the interim Vice President the first time, which was to help the institution... And the second time, it was because I was put in place by the chancellor. Now you could say you make your own luck because I would not have been put in place if I had not also been a person who was proactive. But that was more a function of my personality and liking to keep busy. So I don't really perceive myself having experienced a lot of barriers.

Laura provided the following:

> Some of those barriers were self-inflicted. My husband and I are very committed to family and had chosen to have a large family. We have eight children. I chose to have babies while in graduate school. We had a commuter relationship with kids while I was climbing the ladder. They were self-imposed. Those were choices, and I was greedy. I wanted to have both that experience as well as my work experience. I am very thankful that I have health and energy, or [I] couldn't have done those things.

Patricia made the following comments:

> There are probably two; they're probably real, and they're probably imagined. Barriers in the career path could be time centered; they could be age centered; they could be reality centered. They can be contrived by others to militate against success. They can also be imagined—you're thinking that you can't do it. You're thinking that you can't pick up and sell your house, or move out, or move your family. You're limited by the facts, by the reality. If you're not limited by the facts, and you can see a world of possibility, and if you have trust and faith and hope that good things will happen, that the right thing will materialize for you, and you can kind of see your way without hurting or harming others directly, then I think you have fewer barriers.

These three participants shared a common theme of viewing barriers as pushing them forward rather than hindering their career pathway. Brenda described creating her own barriers as she talked about placing limits on herself by not having a conscious ambition to attain higher-level positions. Other perceived barriers participants described as self-

inflicted included things such as having a large family with a commuter relationship and at the same time pursuing professional goals. Whether self-induced limitations, self-imposed barriers, or barriers that were either real or imagined, barriers existed for these participants.

Barriers to advancement in their careers pushed the following four participants to make new choices. These participants felt there were two barriers: that women might not be taken seriously, and that women might not be assertive enough. Participants described how trying to advance at their current institution was a catalyst to jumpstart them into making different decisions about their career choices.

Anne provided the following:

> I did a good job, and I was never going to be seen as anything but the Director of Human Resources there. And, you know, that was okay for them because they were getting a good job done. But it wasn't okay for me because I was tired of doing the same thing after 20 years. But I was not going to be successful getting another opportunity there. You know, in their minds it would have damaged the institution to move me. So, unfortunately, I moved out; and sometimes you have to do that. Sometimes you have to realize there are things you are just not going to overcome successfully, and don't waste your time any longer, and if it's important to you, move on.

Kristine described her thoughts, saying:

> Well, there is that female thing. I do think they tend to take... I don't know who *they* is. People, everybody, men and women tend to take women less seriously. One woman who I had hired who was really loyal, and a supporter and friend, said, when I told her I wanted to compete for the presidency, "I'm going to support this person who is running." I was devastated because she was one of my friends. I realized then that I had not tooted my own horn. I didn't blame her entirely, I just realized that I needed to toot my own horn. So I put together information about all of my pedigrees and experience, and I think I started to get her attention. I think partly I share the responsibility. People don't take you as seriously when you're a woman sometimes; but sometimes, when you're a woman, you're not assertive enough to let people know what your talents are. I think those are two equal barriers.

Terry made the following comments:

> Have I had barriers as a woman? The short answer is sure, of course I have. But at the surface, they're not necessarily because you're a woman. It's not as black and white as that, so much as the way you think and interact. I think that the subtle nuance of how people interrelate with one another creates a certain expectation. I don't think women are tapped as much for leadership roles as men are. I don't think it's because anyone physically thinks, or consciously thinks, "Well, okay; you're a woman, and you can't do it." It's much more subtle and insidious than that. I think it has to do with the way in which we communicate, which is different than men. I think men tend to be much more distant from an issue, whereas women tend to feel more connected to the issue. I think leadership, in general... there is a certain amount of passion you have to display as a leader; but there's also a certain amount of disconnect that you have to display.

Helen articulated the following:

> He didn't even look at me, and he said, "Well, you need to get a doctorate, and you need to go work somewhere else and come back." So let me tell you what that meant. None of the other deans had doctorates, so I put that answer to mean that "You don't have a snowball's chance in Hell of being a dean." He was not the reason I got a doctorate. I had already thought about that. But he was letting me know that he didn't see me as a dean because he was giving me requirements that the others hadn't met. I think at that time—this was in the mid-eighties or early eighties—I think that did have something to do with it. You know what's really strange, though? I've always treated him with respect—always, even though he had basically said, "There's no way in Hell that I'm ever going to give you a chance." And then I did go on to be president. I was in Rotary Club with him. You know, it's as if he forgot that he was such an obstacle. We should never burn bridges, and we should never scratch anybody off our list. Sometimes we're just way ahead of where they haven't gotten yet.

These four participants noted that barriers had not hindered them in achieving their presidency because they didn't allow that to happen. Anne's barrier was that her previous institution only saw her in one position, from which they were not willing to consider other challenges or opportunities for her. Anne made a decision not to stay because she felt it was important to her to move on. Participants also indicated that many times individuals, as well as institutions, place barriers on women by not taking them as seriously as men, perhaps because women are not assertive enough to let people know what their talents are; hence, they are not tapped for leadership positions. These

participants also indicated that this potential barrier might, in part, be related to how women communicate, and their ability to balance out their passion with a certain amount of disconnect. These four participants did not always attribute barriers necessarily to their being women, but they said they did have career barriers they or others might have put in place because they were women. These participants overcame barriers and challenges, and, in many of their experiences, the barriers became the driving strength or influence that moved their careers forward.

Summary of Career Barriers and Challenges

Barriers for these participants held a variety of meanings. All participants indicated that there may have been barriers, but no one indicated that she was unable to break through to new jobs. They also described barriers as choices: choices Laura made to be committed to family or the realistic choice Patricia made to relocate and how that could be a barrier if she had let it. Participants indicated that barriers they did experience might have been those they put on themselves, which they described as self-induced limitations, either real or imagined, but barriers, nonetheless. These participants indicated that their barriers weren't on the surface because they were women; instead, because they were women, others created certain expectations that contributed to their barriers. However, as Patricia believed, not being limited by facts or reality—trusting that the right career move will materialize, that there will be fewer barriers—opens up possibilities.

Influences and Support

Some participants recounted their experiences of being influenced or mentored by individuals who guided them and by individuals who provided support. Others described moving through their career without these influences, mentors, or formalized support

systems. Many times individuals important to these participants were not formally appointed as mentors; instead, they were women and men with whom these participants formed a bond, or had developed a professional relationship. In some cases individuals had no idea they were considered a mentor, but these participants observed them to learn from them. Some of these influences were individuals in influential positions who not only offered advice or guidance but also helped pave the way for these participants to develop and advance in their careers. These participants also described individuals who were a part of a professional or personal support system or a network that encouraged and guided them.

Having mentors became important for these three women in their careers, and the gender of the mentor was not an issue for them. They had mentors who encouraged them and helped identify their talents. In many of these participants' careers, mentors put them on the pathway to their presidency.

Laura described her mentors:

> All of my mentors were men, and most of them were my bosses. I don't know that that is related to picking and choosing more than when I started in my career. In the seventies only about 2 percent of the presidents were women. There is a higher percentage now. There just weren't that many women out there.

Margaret provided this insight:

> It's very important for women to have mentors. I don't think they have to have a female mentor; I think it can be a man. But it just has to be someone who is there to provide opportunities. I had a lot of mentors along the way. When I started on my master's, it was because of a professor at the university who said, "Don't just take this class; take it as graduate study. You need to start on your master's." When I started into my doctorate, my doctoral advisor just kept encouraging me to "go into education; go into administration; we need women administrators...," that type of thing. So it's those people.

Carolyn said that having a mentor was the most important factor in her ability to achieve her presidency:

> The most important factor in actually getting me into a presidency was mentors, both male and female—administrators who saw that I did have talent in this area, and that I was capable, that I could make a difference, and who encouraged me, and in some cases pushed me, saying, "Yes, you're going to do this," and moved me up into more and more responsible positions. That's how I got here.

These three participants told of having female and male mentors. During the 1970s, at the time when these participants were beginning their careers there were not many women in leadership roles to be mentors. These women found it was important that they and other women have mentors, female or male, who were able to provide opportunities and to encourage them to take on more responsibility. They were not always aware of their abilities and talents until a mentor recognized those things and encouraged them.

The following five participants were oftentimes given opportunities by a mentor who was willing to give them a chance. Mentors were formally assigned in Judith's experience, while other participants spoke of having mentors in a much less formal manner. Whether formal or informal, mentors provided support to these participants. Barbara said that she would not be where she is today had it not been for the support and belief a mentor had in her.

> There is no question, absolutely no question, in my mind that I would not be where I am today, that I would not have become a college president at 36 years old, had it not been for the mentorship of the chancellor of that community college district. I was not the only one that he did that for. He was very much in tune to women, and minorities, and lending a helping hand. So he gave me incredible opportunities, including starting, by promoting me to a directorship at 25 years old, and giving me the opportunity, in those early years, to sit in meetings and watch the presidents and the vice chancellors, and him work though problems. I'd sit through all the governing board meetings because I was the spokesperson for the college district to the media. I had years of being on the sidelines, observing what was going on, and that was a tremendous training ground for me. And he also threw all kinds of assignments at me, whether they fit

in my job description or not. This, frankly, I see now, gave him the opportunity to see what I was capable of doing.

Judith shared her experience after having been appointed to her first presidency:

> The first state I was a president in had so much solidarity that they actually gave every new president three president mentors. You could call day, night, weekend—about important things, about stupid things, about minutiae, personal things, professional things, and they were with you for that whole year. Oh, it was tremendous!

Anne spoke of her mentor's influence:

> The mentor who affected me the most, to this day, is the gentleman who hired me. He was Vice President of Finance, and, you know, he was always available to me. He would let me make mistakes; he would let me learn from mistakes; but he wouldn't let me get too deep. There was another individual, who was head of personnel at another university... a very different institution. It was a large, public institution, with thousands of folks attending it. I always felt that I could talk to him—just pick up the phone, and talk through a situation with him.

Louise described her mentors who encouraged her throughout her career:

> My first mentor encouraged me to look at higher education as a career. He was the assistant dean of students for African American students at the university. And I'm not African American, but he took me under his wing. My second mentor was the vice president of student affairs at a state university, and she's still there. I had known her previously, when I was at the university in admissions and recruitment, and she was director of admissions. I just always admired her, even though we worked for different institutions. She did a lot to open doors for me. Then my next mentor was my boss at a community college. She taught me a lot about organizations, expectations, again since I was a really young professional at the time. As I got to be more into the dean's ranks, I didn't have a mentor. My next mentor was the chancellor who hired me; he's since retired, but he was one who was always very encouraging. He would move me from campus to campus, and he was always there, just really good to go to. Since he retired, I still talk to him about professional things and seek his advice. My current chancellor, I would say, has been a mentor to me because he has really encouraged me to apply for the presidency. He couldn't say *apply,* but he gave me opportunities to move into a dean of instruction role to get more experience, and then [he] hired me as president.

Carolyn described three mentors who were important to her career pathway and learning the system:

> One mentor in particular was an individual who sometimes spent hours just letting me talk about my frustration. He had a great deal of experience, and he had a lot of very good advice. Another mentor taught me an enormous amount about the politics of being in a state institution, dealing with the legislature, and dealing with the system. Just watching him work was a lesson in itself. He included me on the internal discussion about "What are we going to do?", and he also brought me along when he went to meet legislators, which was very important. Then there was the chancellor. At that time, the community colleges were each individually led by a provost, with one chancellor who governed the system, and she reported to the system president. When I first started, that's the way the system was. She really was very instrumental in my career, specifically in my presidency.

These five participants described mentors who were in tune with women, and mentors who provided opportunities for them to learn. Having a mentor assigned to her helped Judith get through the first year as a new president; she described this as being a tremendous opportunity for her. These participants learned about organizations and their expectations, they received training, and a variety of mentors gave them resources. These participants described the qualities of their various mentors as people who were available to them, who provided advice, allowed them to grow by learning from mistakes, encouraged and supported them, and opened doors.

Some participants were influenced by individuals who made an impact, and yet these individuals did not know they had been an influence. They might have been individuals whom the women admired from afar for a particular skill or knowledge base. Anne described her experiences as follows:

> A woman, who probably doesn't even know that she affected me in any way, because I never formalized any of these things, was the vice president at a prestigious university. Not only was she one of the few women in higher education who headed up human resources, but she was also African American. She was a professional, and the humor in which she conducted herself was always an example for me. I developed mentors, because what I would do is, say, I like the way this individual approached critical analysis, or I like the way this individual works with groups, or I like the way this individual leads a team...

Kristine described her experiences:

> I would see women who were really down to earth, who dressed casually, who spoke passionately. They didn't have to be brilliant; they just cared about causes and community colleges. And they just came out and talked to us, and they were such incredible role models. I would have to say that was probably the most powerful experience in switching me on to the idea that I could do this, because I am like that person, and I don't have to be somebody else in order to do it.

These two participants described having informal mentors or role models who influenced them. These were individuals whom they had observed for a particular skill or approach. These participants didn't always formalize these relationships, but they described their informal mentors as providing examples of professionalism, humor in the work environment, an ability to lead a team, new approaches to critical thinking, and modeling passion. Kristine attended a leadership training where she had the opportunity to observe women leaders, and she felt this was a turning point for her to begin to see herself in the role of president.

Participants also acknowledged the important role their direct supervisors played in making a difference in how they progressed through their career. Supervisors oftentimes provided guidance and support to make a difference in the women's careers. Anne provided this insight:

> You're not enabled or prepared to take on these kinds of jobs, and I have had great fortune in that the people who hired me and the people I reported to directly have just been extraordinary individuals. So my mentors have often been my bosses.

Susan described her experiences:

> Probably most of my direct supervisors at one point or another really made a difference. Because I think oftentimes we make a decision that you need to have the skills first; and I think my bosses made the decision that, if you have the right attitude, you can learn the skills. Thank goodness for that because many of these jobs I had no skills for, but I was enthusiastic; I wanted to do the job; I wanted to learn. And I think that is what carried me along the way. So my bosses certainly made a difference.

Laura described her relationship with supervisors who were also mentors:

> The mentoring was not where you sat down and said, "Will you be my mentor?" or "I'd like you to be my mentor." I was really clear with them when I was hired that this was where I wanted to go, "Will you help me?" I consider that to be at least an informal mentorship. I was never shy about asking, but I also had some really good bosses who were not shy to tell me when I needed to go a certain direction or when I was misstepping. I was really fortunate. I found the community college kept on growing people, not only students, but also the people working there.

Having the opportunity to observe or work with informal mentors, role models, or supervisors who made a difference in their lives provided these participants a chance to grow professionally. These three participants provided insight on the roles their supervisors played in their career development.

Some participants did not have formal mentors who guided them. The following four participants had support systems in place formally, and in some cases informally, who helped them throughout their careers. These support systems consisted of other individuals who provided guidance and support. Patricia reflected on her experiences:

> I guess I just kind of moved forward through life without being terribly strategic about what I had to have. I just went to the next step without really knowing that if I were to have chosen mentors, perhaps they could have helped me get there sooner. I learned politics the hard way in those office buildings, in business where I had to kind of tough it out. I would say most of my mentors early on were male. Starting with my father, who had [a] very strong work ethic, never went to college, nor did my mother.

Helen explained about the support from her doctoral advisor:

> I did not have mentors. I never knew I wanted to be a president. I knew I had to get a doctorate, but I wasn't quite sure why. I figured for me to be able to reach my full potential, and stay in education, a doctorate was necessary, but again, I didn't quite know why. When I enrolled in my doctorate, I had an advisor who was completely encouraging, and probably he was the mentor. He wound up meaning a lot to me, and I'm deeply appreciative of what he did for me.

Terry described her mentors:

> Interestingly enough, most of them were men, now that I'm thinking about it. Two were lawyers at a university and another was a professor emeritus in higher education and an expert in higher education law. I remember being able to call them when the chips were down, and I needed a shoulder. I remember being able to call them for advice, I remember them teaching me a lot about higher education law which was an area I was very interested in and an area of specialty for me. They were all very instrumental in teaching me about that area. That opened up opportunities to me.

Kristine had this to say about the support she received from her former president:

> It was a critical moment for me when the president, the last president, said to me, "You can do the job." I don't think I ever believed I could really do the job. I think I thought of myself as an imposter—you know, that syndrome where you think you are fake. I thought, I am just convincing myself I can do this, I really can't do this, I don't know how to do this. And when he said, "You can do the job," it was that emotional support that made an incredible difference.

These four participants described working with or having support from a diverse group of individuals. They had mentors who made an impact on them, and they attribute some of their success to them. Patricia learned that perhaps if she had formalized a mentor type relationship she would have reached her goals sooner. Kristine described how her former president's support was a critical moment that made a difference to her.

These participants also received support through networking and by unique individuals who were influential to them. Individuals who influenced these participants were sometimes part of a professional and social network that opened doors and expanded opportunities. Brenda had a very different type of mentor who supported and encouraged her, and whom she felt cultivated people.

> The one mentor was ... very helpful to me at my previous institution. He ... had no position of authority whatsoever at the institution, but nonetheless was someone I considered to be one of the most powerful people at the school. He had no formal education, but he had a lot of street smarts and knew the kind of head games that people played, both in institutions and in the world. It was really interesting as I was going through my graduate program... All the theories I was learning in my classroom was [*sic*] all material that he knew just from working with other people in various situations on the street. He cultivated people moving through mid-

> management, almost like a farmer, where he mentors them, encourages them, and advises them, and helps them move up though the system. So even though he didn't move up, he was, in fact, the power behind administrators there.

Terry indicated that networking was a way for her to gain opportunities and helped build her career:

> I also think that I made a conscious effort to network. A woman once said to me, "You have to network; you have to network half within your organization, and half externally." And I think there is truth in that. Because I have tried to cultivated a network nationally, and that has enabled me to get speaking engagements that I otherwise wouldn't have gotten, and different things that have allowed me to advance my resume, and given me opportunities, success, and recognition, and support that I otherwise wouldn't have had. They've helped me build my career.

Encouragement and support from others was a motivating factor in helping these participants develop new experiences and take on new challenges. Terry and Brenda described how the influence of others, as well as networking, had a profound impact on their careers.

Summary of Influences and Support

Most of these participants described mentors as being individuals who encouraged them, opened doors for them, and in some cases guided or directed their careers. They felt that having a mentor was important, and it did not matter whether the mentor was female or male, just that an individual was there to give them opportunities. These women attributed the importance of having a mentor to the extent that perhaps they would not be in their positions as presidents today if it hadn't been for the mentors' support. Mentors or influences in some cases were not aware that they had an impact on these participants. These individuals influenced the participants from a distance, providing them an opportunity to learn, as they observed the mentors' professionalism and how they conducted themselves.

Many times as these participants progressed through their education, a faculty advisor provided the encouragement they needed. Brenda described her mentor as a person at her institution with no formal authority, but yet a powerful person nonetheless, guiding and offering advice. Networking was another aspect of mentoring and guidance; one participant said that cultivating a network helped her to advance her resume and also gave her opportunities and recognition as she built her career.

Interactions with individuals the women considered good leaders provided them with powerful career development opportunities as they prepared and developed their leadership knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

The analysis and interpretation I have presented in this chapter have provided an in-depth look at these participants' experiences. Using the data from their experiences gave voice to their perspectives and philosophies, to what career barriers and/or challenges they may have encountered, and to how they viewed mentors and influences. Chapter 6 discusses the findings from this research.

Chapter 6

The purpose of this study has been to tell the story of how 14 women community college presidents achieved their presidency. The themes already presented suggest that these women community college presidents are career-minded individuals that had established careers in higher education. Also, these women had an array of positive qualities and characteristics. Their leadership philosophies and values represent the many competencies needed for survival and success in achieving leadership positions and certainly for achieving a presidency. These perspective and philosophies, based on the women's core personal and professional values and beliefs, have provided insight into what guided them. Additionally, their career pathways have been unique, transcending barriers and challenges as the women have advanced in their careers. Many of these participants were guided or influenced by individuals who mentored and supported them, and who opened doors for them along their career pathways. My goal was to present these participants' stories and insights in a cohesive and logical way so readers could hear their voices.

I gathered qualitative data to evoke the participants' rich descriptions as they have moved through their careers. The interviews provided data about their experiences, their leadership philosophies, and factors that have influenced the paths each of them has taken.

Research Findings

There seems to be a shift occurring in how women are achieving the community college presidency. These findings may help explain the contradiction from what current literature otherwise reveals about how women are achieving the presidency. This discussion on the findings consists of (a) career pathways, (b) perspectives and philosophies, (c) career barriers and challenges, and (d) influences and support.

Career Pathways

My study indicates that the traditional pathway may be changing allowing for a broader diversity of background, knowledge, and leadership capabilities for those interested in pursuing a community college presidency. Eleven of the 14 participants in my study came from very broad and diverse backgrounds that did not reflect a traditional pathway.

When I looked at these nontraditional pathways these 11 participants took to reach their presidency, what stood out from the very first interview were the broad experiences these participants brought to their presidency. Six of the 11 participants began their careers in higher education and brought to their presidencies a broad range of diverse experiences, including positions in 2- and 4-year higher education institutions in both academic affairs and student affairs. The other 5 participants began their careers in a variety of specialties. In fact their positions were so diverse that Anne, who began her career doing marketing and fundraising for a major non-profit before she moved into human resources at a four-year private university, thought I would most likely not use any of the information from her interview in the research because her pathway was so unlike other community college presidents:

> You are going to throw me out because I am so nontraditional. My other colleagues that are women are coming up though the academic side of the house—a PhD in education, or something similar. I don't have any of that.

Some of the participants in my study had knowledge on some level, whether personally or from a mentor, that to achieve a presidency they might need to broaden their experiences to include an academic affairs position. Consequently, they searched for an academic position to reposition themselves on an academic pathway. Judith described finding an institution that would give her an opportunity as a stretch, both for her and the institution. Gaining that foothold was a critical step for her. For other participants, opportunities to move into academic positions came via mentors who recognized that the women had talent in these administrative areas and then strategically moved them into various positions so they had more options open to them. Yet other participants were placed in interim presidencies, which allowed them to gain the knowledge and enhance their skills at the same time.

Three of the participants—Helen, Margaret and Jean—stayed on what most would consider a traditional pathway. For most prospective community college leaders that pathway is described in the literature as one in which individuals move from teaching as a fulltime faculty member into a faculty chair position, and then into the Chief Academic Officer position. However, even within these 3 participants' pathways, diversity was evident in how and when in their career they entered higher education. Once they chose the community college as their destination, they stayed on an academic pathway. Helen and Margaret began teaching in K–12 education, while Jean spent 11 years in business and industry before she went back to school and obtained her first position as a faculty member at a community college.

Having an understanding that a career pathway to a presidency can be built from experiences in other areas than what the literature refers to as the traditional pathway may change how many community college practitioners view their own career pathways. I have been fortunate to work at an institution under three presidents, one female and two male, who have come from very diverse backgrounds. This opportunity has enabled me to observe how these diverse backgrounds enrich our college.

In my work as a community college practitioner in academic affairs, I come in contact with many faculty members who are not interested in taking on administrative roles. Their passion is about teaching and seeing students succeed in the classroom. Many times they don't want to be burdened by what they consider the paperwork and administrative red tape. In contrast, many administrators, including me, find that what we provide also ensures student success and supports not only students but also faculty, programs, and other individuals in the academic environment. We are all equally passionate about what we do and how we can make an impact within our organizations. As an administrator, the leadership skills I develop and the relationships I build, along with the knowledge and abilities I gain both in my area of expertise and on a broader level, will contribute to my success and to that of my organization.

My study has presented data that suggest the pathway to the presidency may be changing at least for women. I have found that having the broad range of experiences as well as an understanding of the multiple roles that a president plays are critical to becoming a community college president. Recent research that Weisman and Vaughan (2007) conducted that focused on the positions community college presidents had prior to their first presidencies found that the most consistent pathway to a community college

presidency was the academic one. They found that in 2006 55% of the respondents to their survey were in an academic position before they achieved their first presidency, which was the same percentage overall as what their results showed in 2000 (Weisman & Vaughan, 2001). However, change is slowly occurring within these academic positions. In 2000 Weisman and Vaughan (2001) showed that 39% of the respondents had been in the Chief Academic Officer position prior to their presidency; in 2006 that number dropped to 37.3% (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). Other studies indicate that, although it is still common, the stepping stone into a presidency from the Chief Academic Officer position, the traditional career pathway to a presidency, is slowly changing (Amey, et al., 2002).

I see one strength of this current study as providing both women and men with new research that shows there may be other options available besides the traditional pathway. Such options, which deviate from a traditional pathway on the academic side, may lead to a community college presidency. As noted, not all participants repositioned themselves or came to their presidency through a traditional pathway. Those participants who arrived at their presidency through a diverse background—in human resources, public relations, student services, policy development, occupational or vocational education, and as assistants to the president—all exhibited leadership within those positions, and they received recognition from their institutions for their knowledge and skills in these positions. Their respective roles constantly challenged them and gave them opportunities to expand their scope of responsibilities.

Institutions may need to change how they view women in the future as these women gain valuable, broad experiences in order to effectively lead. My personal view,

based on what I have read about the number of anticipated retirements in senior-level positions, is that institutions will be better served by competent leaders if they consider alternate career pathways to their senior positions. My study supports what other researchers have found in those studies that indicate some institutions, such as many of the institutions the participants in the current study have come from, support alternative pathways to the presidency (Amey, et al, 2002).

Some findings in this study surprised me. Since I began this journey to learn how women achieve a community college presidency, I have been constantly amazed at the diverse and unique pathways these women have followed. I had no expectations about what I would find. My knowledge of how women achieved a presidency came from interactions with two women who had achieved a presidency in a way that seemed nontraditional and contradictory to what the literature had indicated to me. I think that each of the women in my study became the leader she is today because of all of her experiences and every career opportunity she had. Future leaders can learn from these women that they can travel many different career pathways to obtain leadership positions at community colleges.

Education and Career Pathways

Many participants began their professional career, some in education and others in business and industry, after they obtained their bachelor's degree. The exception was Jean, who worked in business and industry for 11 years before she went back to school to obtain her associate's, bachelor's, and then master's degrees. She then began her teaching career in higher education and was subsequently on a traditional pathway to her

presidency. This pathway included completing a doctorate in Community College Leadership.

The master's degree was the educational entry point into higher education for many participants, as it was for me. Eventually, at varying times during their careers, 12 participants completed their doctorates. Some participants were advised to do so, as I had been, or they simply felt that a doctorate would enhance their careers, and if they wanted to keep all their options open, it would be necessary. Others who had decided they wanted to become a president were motivated to obtain this degree to gain an advantage.

Anne and Carolyn did not pursue a doctorate. Other individuals recognized their leadership skills and experiences, and groomed these women for this most senior-level position. Anne indicated that her background in human resources, as well as her other broad experiences in facilities and finance, became essential to her presidency. And Carolyn was in a position to work closely with the chancellor of the district. The chancellor recognized Carolyn's talents and moved her along giving her more responsibilities until she had the opportunity to serve as the interim president before she applied for and was offered the position as president.

The research shows that achieving a doctorate may provide more opportunities for advancement into a presidency. However, it is not always a requirement. Weisman and Vaughan (2007) indicated that in 1984 76% of the presidents who responded to their survey had earned a doctorate; in 1996 89% had a doctorate; and in 2006 88.4% had a PhD or EdD, 1.9% had a professional degree, and 9.7% had a master's degree.

When I began my doctoral program in 2002, I was unsure how doing so would affect me. A former supervisor and mentor had advised me that having a PhD was

important to my career development. Also, as some of the participants in the current study noted, I didn't want to encounter a position I was not qualified to apply for if I so desired. I knew that persisting through and completing a doctorate degree would enhance my future opportunities in higher education. And I also have learned a great deal about community colleges, leadership, and higher education in general in the process.

Motivation to Seek a Presidency

These participants shared one thing in common as to what motivated them to become a community college president: to be in a position that could have an impact on the lives of students and others around them. I observed from the interviews that the motivation to seek a presidency came primarily from wanting to make a difference or to have an impact. Most participants set their sights on attaining this goal by taking on new challenges and gaining a diversity of experiences.

Other times participants were in positions that offered them opportunities to observe how other presidents led. This observation over time motivated them because they thought they could lead as well as, if not better than, those individuals. When they had made the decision to pursue the presidency, they then made a conscious effort to learn all they could by taking on many different activities in preparation even if the work they assumed did not directly pertain to their current position.

I found that my results and comments from the participants supported previous research suggesting that choices of two distinct career pathways to a presidency were tied to motivation. On one path are those who planned their career moves, advancing as they did so. On the other path are those who progressed as their skills developed (Guthrie, 2001). Yet some participants on this second path were unknowingly preparing for their

presidency; they were creating their own destiny by developing new skills and experiences while accepting opportunities to stay challenged. I found that participants in this study self-identified onto one or the other of these two pathways.

The motivation to seek a presidency differed for each participant. However, once in the position, the women on the whole indicated that the reward of being able to make a difference in the lives of others was very powerful for them. After I analyzed the presidents' motivations, it became clear that these women had always wanted to make a difference and enrich the lives of students, employees, colleagues, their institutions, and their communities, as well as their families and themselves. They associated making a difference with the rewards of being a president and this in turn in provided them a motivation to seek a presidency.

Perspectives and Philosophies

No participant used the word *competent* in the interviews. But after having heard their stories and their voices full of passion, I see that they had the kind of competence to inspire others, to lead their organization while bring out the best in others. And from that perspective they had developed into competent and effective leaders. Being authentic, or real, and knowing who they were as leaders was critical to their leadership. Without these qualities these women could have ended up with a voice that belonged to someone else (Kouzes and Posner, 2002).

This study has indicated that the participants led with what the literature considers characteristics that relate more to a feminine leadership model, a more collaborative style (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). My study focused on women; it was not my intention to compare women and men and their leadership styles. So based on the current

study, it would be difficult to know whether or not men's approach to leadership in the twenty-first century is similar to a collaborative leadership style.

My findings suggest that paramount to how these participants did their jobs was that they formed relationships; they were people-oriented; and they valued students, faculty, staff, and the others whom they served. I heard them say that they believed in the importance of building and maintaining these relationships through their use of words like *collaborating, honoring, autonomy, respecting, compromise, courage*, and *being a continuous learner.* They also valued what those around them had to say by hearing their diverse opinions. As they progressed on their pathways, these participants learned that they could also make the tough decisions with integrity.

According to Josefowitz (1980) women's basic orientation involves an emphasis on collaboration, trust, authentic leadership, expressing feelings appropriately, accepting people, and utilizing differences. I found that these participants demonstrated a focus on care and connections as part of what they valued. These are values that may be applied more generally to women and that also are evident in other leadership philosophies. I emphasize a thought Barbara stated, "I think these are not qualities that are necessarily unique to women, but I think [they] may be displayed more readily by women."

I think that it is important for all leaders, women and men, to learn from those who have preceded them in leadership positions. The literature speaks to gender differences and expectations that others have of women as compared to men (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). However, I am wondering whether it is not the leadership style that will need to change or adapt in the future; instead, how other individuals react to, or internalize, women and men as leaders may be where the change will need to occur.

I found these participants demonstrated leadership through a diverse set of values. Again, some of these values may often be more associated with a woman's style (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). However, I also heard the women describe how they learned to be a more effective leader—not necessarily a more effective female leader.

I think that as all leaders learn how to lead their organizations in the twenty-first century, they will learn and need to use a variety of skills and abilities that will set them and their institution up for success. Perhaps leadership in the twenty-first century will continue to be built on a knowledge base of collaboration, and women and men will all lead with a more collaborative style.

Sullivan (2001) described the generation of leaders currently serving as community college presidents as collaborators when she was describing leadership styles and philosophies. These leaders, particularly women and people of color, lead using a participatory style; they value win-win negotiations; they encourage consensus building among their constituents; and they are caring and nurturing (Sullivan, 2001).

Career Barriers and Challenges

Even with their variety of different career pathways, many of the women in this study experienced some type of barrier during their careers. These women were strong and were able to overcome many difficult situations; they broke through the proverbial glass ceiling, that invisible but powerful barrier that allows women to advance only so far (Carli & Eagly, 2001, p. 630). They watched and learned for many years, and they used that knowledge to their advantage to move ahead. However, all participants noted that there had been issues or barriers, but none dwelled on them.

My data analysis shows that many times these women talked about having very limited opportunities when they first went to college. At the time when they were choosing careers, there were few acceptable fields for women: education, secretarial work, or nursing. Because they had a passion for teaching and learning, as undergraduates many of the participants chose education. However, many of the women expressed an interest in pursuing other options; one was told that women, for example, could be a nurse, but not a doctor. So these barriers early in their careers limited them somewhat. However, as I reviewed their stories, I observed that these barriers became less obvious once the women knew their capabilities.

Jean told about living in a large urban area on the West Coast in the 1960s. When jobs were advertised in the local newspaper, they were segregated into female positions and male positions. All the "good" jobs were listed in the male section. She felt equally qualified for those positions and described applying for them, and although she persisted, she was told that women just don't do those types of sales positions or managing positions. This barrier propelled her forward, and she was successful in the business world. However, that world still consisted of other gender biases and barriers. Again, these barriers were the impetus for her to go back to college and complete her education.

I see that all the other participants, too, were propelled or pushed forward at times and overcame potential barriers to their career by sheer persistence. However, these participants were strong women, with a strong sense of who they were as women; they developed the confidence to eventually break through the career advancement limitations women have traditionally experienced. They admitted that gender was a real issue from time to time, but they noted other kinds of barriers as well.

The literature indicates that higher education is still very male dominated, and women are under-represented in all leadership ranks, even though women make up more than half of the student body (Chliwniak, 1997). One barrier is that institutions may not have a culture that is inclusive and supportive of women. The literature also indicates that women need work together to eliminate the sense of being marginalized and institutions need to develop a culture that is supportive of women (Chliwniak, 1997).

I sometimes find—as the participants also noted—that barriers can be limitations I place on myself. In my experience I know I need to let others know what I am capable of and sometimes, as one participant mentioned, "toot my own horn". Sometimes doing this is difficult because I believe that women are socialized to think that tooting our own horn is bragging. But if we don't let others know about our talents, we could wait a long time to have another point them out, and this delay may place a barrier on our career.

I have observed women in leadership positions in which, perhaps because they are insecure in their senior leadership role, they are not supportive of women such as me, and this lack of support creates a barrier for career advancement. Other women I have observed are encouraging and provide leadership and support that challenges and doesn't create barriers.

Women in this study provided insight into how they build relationships with those around them, and they noted that they encourage and support women in their organizations. They recognize other women's talents and provide opportunities and not barriers to career advancement.

Influences and Support

These participants were influenced because of who they were. Their careers were on a track, and by allowing mentors to support them, their leadership abilities were enhanced. The mentors influenced them through encouragement by recognizing their abilities; in turn, these women were able to hear the feedback and accept the guidance these mentors gave them.

Through the observation of others, participants were able to reflect on what they learned to enhance their skill set. The participants also used this power of observation to learn from others, and to credit others as having influenced or mentored them. Many times the mentoring individuals did not know they had made such an impact. Many times individuals need the encouragement of others because they don't always recognize their own talents and abilities. Additionally, they do not always encounter opportunities unless others provide those opportunities for them. "People can make profound differences to emerging leaders, but only if the leaders let them" (Madsen, 2008, p. 158).

The literature discusses the importance of women having a mentor or role-model relationship in their career development, especially as those options relate to attaining a presidency (Ballentine, 2000; Buddemeier, 1998). Participants acknowledged that mentors had made a tremendous difference in their career development, and during their careers participants had several individuals who were important to them.

Until a woman at the previous organization where I worked mentioned to me that I had talent in certain areas, I was unaware of how I could position myself and challenge myself to move forward and ultimately change careers. I have also found that having a mentor or support system in place can move my career forward faster.

My own experience with a mentor has been limited, however. Recently, through a leadership program hosted by my institution, I was assigned a mentor. Although I have enjoyed getting to know this person, I have not seen that his experience will lend itself to my career advancement. However, if in the future I consider a position at a different institution, having this person, who is getting to know me and my abilities, as a reference will be invaluable. I do feel that I have the ability, as these women have had, to observe individuals who are in leadership positions, and through my observation learn from them and how they conduct themselves as professionals. Additionally, having opportunities to attend leadership workshops or seminars will be valuable to my personal career goals.

Implications for Further Research

This study has provided an overview of the experiences 14 women community college presidents have had in achieving their positions. The study has described how these women lead their institutions based on personal philosophies that each woman developed as her career advanced. The participants described how they overcame barriers and challenges, or at least did not let those barriers and challenges stand in their way. Additionally, they provided insight into those individuals who had influenced them throughout their careers. Finally, this study has revealed topics for future research.

First, the findings from this study cannot be generalized for men. Future researchers may want to study male community college presidents to hear how their career pathways have developed, what their leadership philosophies are, what barriers or challenges they may have experienced, and whether mentors have contributed to their success, to see whether this career pathway is changing.

Second, the current research mentions institutional support as an important aspect of career advancement. It may be important for future leaders to learn whether institutions support alternative career pathways into senior leadership positions, and, more importantly, into the presidency. This data would also have implications for institutions' succession planning.

Conclusion

The information presented in the narrative of this research study represents 14 women community college presidents' stories of their experiences in achieving their presidencies. At the time of the writing of these final chapters, two of these women have retired from their presidency.

This research has added to the body of knowledge about women community college presidents. These findings are not predictions about how the next generation of women will achieve their presidency; instead, they are meant to contribute to the body of knowledge about how women are developing such careers. This research may be of interest to individuals seeking or considering a presidency. Additionally, this research should be of interest to institutions as they develop their succession plans and choose individuals for leadership development opportunities. Finally, the research should be of interest to women who aspire to be a community college president.

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Appendix A

Invitation Letter to Participate in the Study

Date

President
Community College
City, state, zip

Dear President:

Women community college presidents represent one of the most significant groups of leaders in higher education. I would like to invite you, as one of theses influential leaders, to help me contribute to the knowledge base on the career pathways to the presidency to share with future women leaders. The result of the study will allow for future women leaders to learn from the experiences of those who have forged the pathway to a community college presidency.

I am a graduate student at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, in the Community College Leadership program under the guidance of Dr. Clifford P. Harbour, Colorado State University, School of Education, 102 Education Building, Fort Collins, CO, 80522. He can be contacted at 970-491-5425 or cliff.harbour@colostate.edu
The topic of my doctorial research is *Career Pathways and Experiences of Women Community College Presidents*.

Your personal time commitment would be small, approximately 90 minutes for an initial interview. After the interview, and if you request, I will provide you with a written transcript of the interview for you to review. I will also schedule a follow-up interview for clarification or additional questions. I anticipate that this would take no more than 30 minutes. Your identity, as well as that of your institution, cities, and other individuals, will be kept confidential.

Thank you for considering my invitation to be part of this research study. I look forward to hearing from you. Your participation in this study will ensure that future women leaders are able to make career choices that can move them into these top-level positions.

If you are willing to participate in the study, please return the enclosed demographic information sheet as well as a copy of your resume in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached during the daytime at [insert office #] in my office or on my cell at [insert cell #]; evenings I can be reached at [insert home #] or by email [insert email address].

Sincerely,

Renee A. Kuharski
Doctoral Candidate
Colorado State University

Appendix B
Demographic Information Sheet

Name_____

Official Title_____

I am willing to participate in the study_____Yes_____No

Contact Information:
Please list your contact information and indicate the best times to reach you or your office.

Phone_____

Phone_____

Email_____

Please list the number of years in your present position? _____

Is this your first Community College presidency? _____

If no, please list the other institutions and years of service.

_____

_____

Total number of years in college administration_____

Highest degree attained?_____

Appendix C

Follow-Up Letter

President
Community College
City, state, zip

Dear President:

About three weeks ago I sent you a letter seeking your participation in a study of women community college presidents. As of today I have not yet received your response. The focus and the title of my dissertation is *Career Pathways and Experiences of Women Community College Presidents*.

Please give this request your consideration. Your participation is essential to the success of this research effort.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Renee Kuharski
Doctoral Candidate
Colorado State University

Appendix D

Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: *Career Pathways and Experiences of Women Community College Presidents*

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WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? We are asking you to participate in this study because you have been identified as current woman Community College President. If you agree to participate in the study, we will ask you to describe your pathway to the community college presidency. We will ask these questions in an initial 90 minute private confidential interview and in a 30 minute follow-up interview. Either or both interviews may be conducted face to face or via the telephone. You will be asked a series of open-ended and focused questions about the experiences you have had in your career pathway to the community college presidency.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? This study is being conducted by Renee Kuharski and Cliff Harbour. Renee is a doctoral student at Colorado State University and is conducting this research as a part of her doctoral dissertation. Renee is the Co-Principal Investigator in this study. Cliff Harbour is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Colorado State University. Cliff is Renee's dissertation advisor and is the Principal Investigator in this study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this qualitative study (a phenomenology) is to understand the lived experiences which women community college presidents have had on their pathway to their presidencies. Participants will be

interviewed to understand their career pathways as they moved into senior-level positions within community colleges. Through the stories of these experiences future women leaders may gain a better understanding of how others have achieved senior-level positions at community colleges. Private, individual, (face-to-face or via telephone) interviews will be conducted, and transcript data will be analyzed to identify emergent themes reflected in the participants' stories. The interviews will be open-ended and in depth to discover the unique, layered experiences and allow the participants to discuss relevant and perhaps unanticipated topics related to leadership qualities, values, beliefs, and perceptions brought to this position, and the challenges and barriers, as well as the rewards encountered in achieving a community college presidency.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? The study will take place at the participants' offices, conference rooms, or locations mutually agreed upon. The study is scheduled to run from September 1, 2007 to August 31, 2008.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? This study will collect data through an analysis and interpretation of interview transcripts. If you agree to participate in the study we will interview you in private at a date, time, and location that we both agree upon. You will also be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. Your identity and the identity of your institution will remain confidential.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no known reasons why you should not take place in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? There are no known risks or discomforts to you if you participate in this study. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no known benefits to you if you decide to participate in this study.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE? The only cost to you for participating in the study will be the time needed to conduct your interviews. We estimate the first interview will take approximately 90 minutes and the second interview approximately 30 minutes.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? The information that you give will be seen by the Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigator, and a professional transcriber. Selected excerpts from your interviews may be reviewed by the members of my dissertation committee. They may also be included in the Co-PI's dissertation or incorporated into journal articles or conference presentations. In all such cases, pseudonyms would be used to identify you, your institution, and any cities or other persons.

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY? We are unaware of any reason why your participation in the study would be ended once your interview begins.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? No, you will not receive any compensation for taking part in this study.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH? The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS? Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the principal investigator, Clifford P. Harbour, at 970-491-5425. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Meldrum, Human Subjects Administrator at 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take *with you.*

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?
Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing three pages.

_____ _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____
Name of person providing information to participant Date

_____
Signature of Research Staff

Appendix E

Thank-You Letter
[The thank-you letters were hand written and individually
sent using "thank you" note cards.]

President
Community College
City, state, zip

Dear _____:

Thank you for participating and contributing to my study on women community college presidents.

Your personal time and commitment meant a lot to me, not only for this study but also to … [EACH LETTER WAS PERSONALIZED]

Please contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached during the daytime at [insert office #] in my office or on my cell [insert cell #]; evenings I can be reached on at [insert home #] or by email [insert email address].

Sincerely,

Renee A. Kuharski
Doctorial Candidate
Colorado State University

Appendix F

Interview Guide

Summary:
A presidency represents the pinnacle of leadership in higher education. The literature has indicated that perhaps there is a traditional pathway. However, there are also studies indicating that there may be a shift or a greater diversity in the background of women who achieve a presidency. To fulfill in part the requirements for the PhD degree in Community College Leadership, it is my goal to tell the stories of women and their career pathways, and, more specifically, to focus on their road to the presidency.

I propose the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences that women had in their career pathways to the community college presidency?

2. What are the leadership qualities that female leaders see themselves bringing to the presidency?

3. What are the values, beliefs, and perceptions that female community college presidents bring to their role?

4. What are the barriers, challenges, and rewards of being a women community college president?

The following are provided as a *guide* for the interview process:

- What have been your career choices?
- How have you maintained balance?
- What were the experiences or choices like?
- When did you assume this presidency?
- What is your highest degree?
- In what area is the degree?
- Have you had previous presidential positions?
- Do you have previous experience in higher education?
- What has been your support system?
- Have you had mentors?
- What is your philosophy of higher education: values, beliefs, perceptions of your leadership role(s)?
- What is your leadership style?
- What are your key leadership qualities?
- What barriers have you experienced?
- What are the challenges that you have had to overcome, and how?
- What have been your personal rewards to achieving your presidency?
- What influences have you had in your life to help achieve this position? Mentors? Family? Networks?