

Presidents Leading

The Dynamics and Complexities of Campus Leadership

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American Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century

Social, Political, and Economic Challenges

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While the work of academics—teaching, research, and service—is the core of an institution, they need someone who can attend to the following:

1. Manage their finances and budgets and provide key services, such as payroll, and health and retirement benefits
2. Serve as a go-between to the scholars from different disciplines and coordinate individual course offerings to create a coherent curriculum
3. Act as a conduit to outside councils, government agencies, alumni, donors, and communities when representing, as well as defending, the academics
4. Steward, but more importantly increase, the available financial resources
5. Oversee facilities and ensure their maintenance
6. Serve periodically as a target for academic ardor and aggression

The nature of this position requires a single individual to be a leader, academic, planner, mediator, politician, advocate, investment banker, conductor, showman, church elder, supporter, cheerleader, and, of course, manager. These roles, and many more functions—including providing leadership; setting institutional

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strategy; planning; financing; and ensuring compliance with multiple regulations, laws, and policies (and politics)—are the domain of a campus head, a position labeled president or chancellor, vice-chancellor or rector, depending on the continent and the system.

Today's colleges and universities rely on presidents for many things and have high expectations for their campus chief executive officer.¹ As the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities noted in its statement by the Task Force on the State of the Presidency in American Higher Education: "No leader comes to personify an institution in the way a president does. A president must provide leadership in maintaining the institution's academic integrity and reputation. He or she must assimilate and tell the institution's story to build pride internally and support externally. The president has the primary responsibility for increasing public understanding and support for the institution . . . and must lead the institution as it confronts new external challenges."²

Thus the organization of colleges and universities, the influence of the external environment, the multiple roles that presidents must play, and the constituencies they must please make it challenging for presidents to fulfill expectations. This chapter explores contemporary dimensions of the position, including the roles and functions of presidents, the organizational and environmental factors that shape the position, notions of presidential leadership, and what the future of the presidency might look like. While the nation's 4,000-plus colleges and universities each have a president, the job, context, and leadership most likely vary. This chapter strives to be representative of the position, as it cannot be inclusive, given the tremendous diversity of institutions.

The Presidential Profile

Presidents do not come from a single mold; however, some patterns exist in key characteristics. The typical president is approximately sixty years old; holds a doctorate, most commonly in education or higher education, social sciences, or humanities; and has served in his or her current position for 8.5 years, according to the American Council on Education (ACE), which has been tracking presidential profiles for twenty years.³ In 2006, approximately 70 percent of presidents had served as a faculty member, a decrease from 75 percent in 1986. Women hold 23 percent of all presidencies, an approximate doubling in twenty years. Minorities hold 14 percent of presidencies, with African Americans holding 6 percent, Hispanics holding 5 percent, Asian Americans and Native Americans holding 1

percent each, and 2 percent who note themselves as other. This is an increase from the 8 percent of presidencies held by minorities in 1986. The most typical path into the presidency is from that of chief academic officer (CAO), such as provost or vice president for academic affairs (31%); followed by other presidential positions (21%); posts outside of higher education (13%); and other academic affairs positions, such as dean or vice president for research (12%). Most presidents are newcomers to their institutions, with 72 percent of their prior positions being outside of the campuses they now lead (i.e., external hires).

The Job of the President

While presidents may not deliver the key functions of a campus, they create the context that supports (or in the case of poor leadership, impedes) that important work. They are arguably the single most influential person on a campus, having their authority delegated from legally recognized boards.⁴ Presidents are charged with leading their institutions. They are responsible for the wise use of scarce resources and are accountable for their institution's effectiveness. They coordinate institutional strategic direction, develop and put into action both master and strategic plans, and are accountable for the institution's future well-being. They support faculty work by making choices—for instance, regarding space and facilities, enrollments, and budgets. They liaise with critical external stakeholders, such as policy makers, alumni, and donors, and hire and manage other key campus leaders. Their leadership matters, as does the attention they choose to give to certain activities, functions, and issues. Further evidence of their importance is the sizable financial investment made by trustees in identifying and retaining talented presidents, with the highest salaries and benefits headed toward \$1 million (but still lagging behind football and basketball coaches).⁵ Successful presidents are essential to dynamic, relevant, and robust colleges and universities. Seen from the other direction, failed presidencies are costly in all-too-numerous ways. Regrettably, higher education is often reminded of these unfortunate costs. Presidents face a series of complexities—organizationally, politically, and systemically—that shape their ability to lead and influence how they approach their responsibilities. They are the administrative heads of the institutions, serving as chief executive officers (CEO). They spend their time on fund raising, budget and financial management, community relations, strategic planning, and governing-board relations.⁶ They manage an administrative cabinet typically composed of vice presidents responsible for key divisions, such as academic affairs,

administration, student affairs, and external relations. The majority of presidents report to a board of trustees, although in some public campuses presidents report to a system head, and some for-profit, health- and church-related presidents may report to corporate or church executives.⁷ Most presidents have written contracts for their appointments, varying between one and five years; however, close to 30 percent serve "at the pleasure of the board," meaning that their tenure is dependent on meeting board-specified performance objectives.⁸

Much of the president's time is spent outside of the campus, with off-campus constituencies, and the external demands on the position are growing. In an ACE study of college presidents, 57 percent of long-serving presidents (those who have been in their positions for ten years or more) report that as new presidents, the constituents with whom they spent the most time were internal campus stakeholders. In contrast, only 14 percent report that as experienced presidents, internal constituents still occupy the majority of their time. Instead, 39 percent spend the most time with external constituents, and 47 percent spend time equally with external and internal constituents.⁹ While new presidents are likely to invest time on campus establishing themselves as the new leader, the sizable difference experienced presidents have reported in the amount of time previously and currently spent on campus suggests that the nature and demands of the job today are also different. Much of the on-campus leadership is now delegated to the CAO, who tends to be the campus number-two leader (behind the president) and reports spending little to moderate time on off-campus activities.¹⁰

The external work of campus leaders is tied to the growing importance of the need to secure more resources as expenses grow and public dollars do not keep pace, and institutions cannot raise tuition high enough to support their expenses.¹¹ Presidents find themselves as the lead entrepreneur.¹² Of the ten areas identified most frequently by long-serving presidents as taking more time today than these areas initially did during their tenure, half are directly related to securing or spending dollars (fund raising, capital improvement, budget and financial management, entrepreneurship, and operating costs) and three others are indirectly related to this (technology planning, strategic planning, and enrollment management). Furthermore, fund raising is the task all presidents, regardless of their time in office, most often identified as being the one they were underprepared to address when they began their position.¹³ Presidents meet with potential donors to the institution, such as alumni, and they are the key lobbyists interacting with public officials in the statehouse as well as in Washington, D.C. They build relationships with corporate leaders and sign off on technology trans-

fer and licensing agreements; sponsor new business incubators; seek to capitalize on patents and intellectual property rights; and are ultimately responsible for traditional and innovative auxiliary services (such as hospitals, residence halls, and athletics), investments, and endowment returns.

The nature of the presidency is only partially explained by the tasks on which presidents spend their time. Presidents also play important symbolic roles as campus heads.¹⁴ They are expected to articulate the values and image of the institution. In his study on presidential leadership, Robert Birnbaum notes that "presidents, by virtue of their hierarchical positions and legitimacy, are believed by others to have a coherent sense of the institution and are therefore permitted, if not expected, to articulate institutional purposes."¹⁵ They express these institutional objectives both externally and internally. Because of these external responsibilities, a president often is the primary spokesperson for the institution and thus become the "face" of the institution, or, as the president of Muhlenberg College calls the role, that of "the living logo."¹⁶ The images presidents convey—based on how they act, what they say, and what they emphasize (and on what they do not say, act, or stress)—become viewed by internal constituents and external stakeholders as being those of the institution, not of the individual leading the institution. On campus, presidents play important symbolic roles not only at highly ceremonial events and academic rituals, such as convocation and commencement; but also at what may seem like more common events, such as football games, state of the university addresses, or annual alumni-recognition galas. Academic organizations are rife with events that are highly meaningful, and presidents help to build common understandings among disparate constituents who may have their own interpretations of campus events.¹⁷

The symbolic work of leading can be one of the most time-consuming and tiresome activities of presidents. Such a role is not limited to a particular audience, arena, or activity. It is ongoing and can be exhausting. For former University of Michigan president James Duderstadt, the symbolic role of the president defending academic values conjured images of the Wild West:

The president is expected to be the defender of the faith, both of the institution itself and the academic values so important to the university. I sometimes thought of this latter role as roughly akin to that of a tired, old sheriff in a frontier western town. Every day I would have to drag my bruised, wounded carcass out of bed, strap on my guns, and go out into the main street to face whatever gunslingers had ridden in to shoot up the town that day. Sometimes

these were politicians; other times the media; still other times various special interest groups on campus; even occasionally other university leaders such as deans or regents.¹⁸

The Evolution of the Presidency

The tasks and nature of the presidency have evolved as higher education has matured as an industry. The presidency has not always been as just described. Early American colleges were tightly connected to various religious denominations, and religious appointees (often reverends) served as their heads. In the very early colonial colleges, the president was first among equals in a faculty of resident masters; the position had no previous training or career ladder, as individuals came immediately from a faculty position to become president. From these beginnings, early tensions emerged regarding the amount of influence presidents versus boards had on the institution and its direction.¹⁹

By the 1800s, the presidency had evolved from the first-among-equals tradition to one in which presidents were sole authority figures, a position of power over college matters that Christopher Lucas described as "nearly absolute."²⁰ During this period, the college president's job became increasingly complex and burdensome as presidents oversaw activities ranging from raising funds to disciplining students, collecting tuition and dispersing funds, recordkeeping, and also teaching.²¹ Administrative specialization and decentralization had not yet taken hold. By the mid-1800s, a philosophical belief and practical reality emerged: colleges needed to separate faculty and administration. Faculty were better suited for engaging in instruction, and administrators were needed for running the college. From this understanding, a distinct administrative class emerged and the authority of the president grew.²²

In the late 1880s, a new type of postsecondary institution emerged, one much more complex in its activities, mission, and oversight—universities—and, with them, secular college presidents. Although they often assumed the same authoritative power that old-time college presidents maintained, their jobs were different. The old-time president "lived at the college, was not absent for long periods of time, probably taught every member of the senior class, and knew most of the students by name," noted Frederick Rudolph.²³ New-time university presidents, in contrast, were more removed from students and teaching and became more involved in the management of their increasingly complex institutions, even in the early days of universities. Academic disciplines emerged in the late 1800s and

created departmental structures within institutions, particularly in the universities. Faculty further asserted their responsibility over the curriculum and the importance of their involvement in academic decision making, challenging the reach of the president.

At the turn of the twentieth century, university presidents' positions became increasingly complex as the missions of the institutions grew. Administrative oversight expanded to include research laboratories and observatories, libraries, athletics, facilities, and performing arts centers. With this functional diversification, the size of the administration expanded, as did the scope of presidential responsibility. As a result, a bureaucratic model emerged in order to manage the multifaceted organizations; the old-time collegiate model no longer worked. Universities were looking for presidents who would be akin to captains of industry and finance, and thus less intimately steeped in students and student discipline, the curriculum, and other educational affairs. The increased bureaucratization of higher education institutions created tension regarding faculty participation in academic decision making, and presidents grew more and more distant from such key decisions. External fund raising also became vastly important. Said Rudolph, "The financing of the American college and university was one of the problems that would keep many of the presidents overworked . . . It was also the age of the alumnus and the philanthropic foundation."²⁴ Even small colleges began to break with the tradition of religious presidents and started to hire secular presidents with broader financial and managerial experience.²⁵

After World War II, the roles and responsibilities of college and university presidents became broader and more external. Important trends during this time included a tremendous enrollment explosion and the expansion of large-scale research funded by the federal government, which was mostly the domain of public and private research universities. Research universities also developed comprehensive medical centers and athletic programs. Many began to establish an international footprint, often through development work abroad, as well as joint research projects and the intentional recruitment of international students and scholars. Presidents found themselves more and more involved with external affairs as these external demands grew, and they began to delegate much of the internal academic affairs of their institutions to provosts and deans, and the finances to chief business officers. The increased external demands on public institutions corresponded with the rise of state coordinating boards, which sought to more directly shape institutional priorities and missions, and thus added another layer of governance oversight. Clark Kerr, the chancellor of the University

of California System, keenly described the difficulty of presidents having to serve so many different stakeholders: from traditional ones such as faculty, students, and alumni to newer stakeholders such as business and industry, federal and state governments, local communities, and, over time, international communities. Institutions faced more pressure to be accountable for institutional performance, often to stakeholders—such as governors, trustees, alumni, and legislators—with competing goals and agendas.²⁵

While some generalizations can be made about the changing historical role of and challenges for presidents, there are incredible differences in the evolution of the presidency by institutional type. As the nation's postsecondary institutions became more diverse, so did the job of the president. For example, because many community colleges emerged out of primary and secondary school systems, the presidency of early community colleges often was akin to a school superintendent and was a more hierarchical position than that of contemporaries at four-year institutions. Historically black colleges, women's colleges, and tribal colleges also developed their own unique cultures and traditions that shaped their presidents. For instance, tribal colleges often followed tribal tradition, and the president operated as a community elder, often working directly with the tribal community in developing policies and decisions. Large comprehensive institutions and urban universities tended to follow the traditions of research universities in terms of the breadth and expectations of the college presidential role. Liberal arts colleges and religiously affiliated colleges often continued some of the historic traditions of the old-time college president from the 1800s, with high presidential involvement on campus, both directly with students and faculty and, frequently, in the classroom.

The roles and responsibilities of college and university presidents varied across different types of institutions, based on the culture and traditions that had been part of these institutions. The sections below focus on the current demands on presidents and the nature of today's presidency. While this chapter cannot do justice to the breadth of presidential experiences, given the diversity of institutions that make up American higher education, it does paint a general portrait of the contemporary presidency.

The Presidency Shaped by Contexts

With the important functions and symbolic role of a president, this position should wield great influence. However, the realities of the organization and the

environments in which the individual is trying to be effective makes what presidential leadership scholars have called an "impossible job" and, at an extreme, "an illusion."²⁷ Michael Cohen and James March wrote, "Important aspects of the role seem to disappear on close examination . . . Compared to the heroic expectations he [sic] and others might have, the president has modest control over the events of college life. The contributions he makes can easily be swamped by outside events or diffuse the quality of university decision making."²⁸ As Birnbaum notes, "presidential leadership is influenced by interacting webs of administrative routines, environmental pressures, and political processes that take place in the context of institutional history and culture."²⁹

Organizational Contexts

Colleges and universities, while having characteristics similar to other types of organizations, have a set of atypical dynamics that shape the presidency. This section explores three of them: dual sources of authority, loose coupling, and garbage-can decision making.

First, unlike more traditional hierarchical organizations, where authority is correlated with one's administrative position, colleges and universities are defined by their dual sources of authority—bureaucratic (or administrative) and professional (or academic).³⁰ As discussed above, colleges and universities evolved in ways that gave faculty priority over the curriculum and administrators responsibility over administrative elements. The result of this evolution is two sources of authority within a single organization. Bureaucratic authority is grounded in the organization's structure and arises from the legal rights of senior administrators, such as the president, to set direction, control and monitor budgets, develop institution strategy, hire and terminate employees, develop and implement policies, and assess progress toward objectives and priorities. On the other hand, the second source of authority—professional authority—stems from the high degree of knowledge, expertise, and specialization required to perform the core functions of the institution (i.e., teaching and research). This authority provides the faculty with a different and often competing source of influence. The effect is that authority is not consolidated in the hands of the organization's positional leaders. Instead, it is dispersed; some might suggest that authority is shared. But rather than two sets of hands dipping into the same stream of authority, two different streams exist. Depending on the topic and the context (such as budgeting and planning), administrative authority can be the stronger source. However, professional authority is dominant in decisions about faculty hiring, curricular

offerings, and the research that is pursued. Nothing defines the core functions of a college or university more than its teaching and research activities, key elements that are shaped by professional and not administrative authority.

This dynamic is codified in the 1966 *Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities*, jointly formulated by the American Association of University Professors, the American Council on Education, and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.³¹ The statement attempts to outline areas of responsibility for faculty, administrators, and trustees, as well as areas of shared authority. However, decisions are not easy to categorize, and a topic can easily overlap traditional areas of responsibility, leading to conflict between sources of authority. When the University of Illinois attempted to create its (now aborted) World Campus to offer online programs and degrees, administrators invoked administrative authority regarding planning, budgeting, and setting the strategic priority of the institution. Faculty, however, invoked professional authority focusing on the curriculum. The result was a long-standing stalemate that needed continued negotiation between influence wielders.³²

Second, the relationships between various units and the central administration and between the units and departments themselves can be described as loosely coupled, which makes central coordination and oversight, and, by extension, the role of the president, difficult.³³ Loose coupling describes weak connections among organizational units. Both the relationship between units, and that between units and the center, are weak. Information travels slowly and indirectly between these areas, and coordination among them is difficult and minimal. Long-time University of Chicago president Robert Hutchins's definition of a university serves as a pointed reminder of the nature of loose coupling in higher education: "The university is a collection of departments tied together by a common steam plant."³⁴ While it can be expected that loose coupling is most descriptive of large institutions, even smaller colleges are defined by it. While loosely coupled organizations create problems for central administrators seeking to coordinate organizational activities, these weak relationships also give some advantages.³⁵ First, loosely coupled systems are able to respond more sensitively to environmental changes. However, the likelihood is just as great that the unit will pay attention to external stimuli rather than requests from a president. The benefit here, for example, is that new professional standards in accounting may affect one department, but they do not require a curricular overhaul throughout the institution. Second, loosely coupled organizations promote and encourage localized innovations and, at the same time, prevent poor adaptations from spreading

to other parts of the organization. The curricular change described above does not require the consent of a busy president or consensus by other departments; instead, the individual department concerned can respond more quickly. Furthermore, poor ideas are not spread easily throughout the institution. Keeping bad decisions quarantined means that although presidents may not know about the adaptations occurring throughout the organization or may not be able to coordinate those adaptations, they will probably not have to fix widespread damage caused by bad ideas. Third, loosely coupled organizations benefit from localized expertise. For instance, the president does not need to be an expert in all disciplines. Local decisions can be made by the people who know best. Lastly, loosely coupled organizations have few coordination and centralization costs. A large central bureaucracy is not required, allowing institutions to invest more resources locally rather than centrally.

Regardless of the organizational pluses of loose coupling, one drawback is that presidents cannot easily create organizational efficiency because of weak central coordination. Instead, they struggle to disseminate helpful innovations widely, because communication between units occurs indirectly, sporadically, and unevenly.³⁶ Presidents may learn that units are working at odds with one another, and with the central administration, as they each scan their own environments and pursue local adaptations. One unit may be advancing its service-learning activities, while another is focusing on graduate education, and a third internalizing its curricula. Aligning activities and priorities is a continual challenge for university leaders, what the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities called "institutional coherence."³⁷

A final dynamic is garbage-can decision making. Decision making in colleges and universities is complex, and, to the frustration of most presidents, the decisions that are rendered often seem only peripherally related to the problems that leaders thought they were attempting to solve. Three additional organizational dynamics beyond the control even of presidents create these conditions. First, colleges and universities pursue a set of inconsistent, ambiguous, and uncertain goals, and these goals may conflict. For instance, institutions are concerned both with serving local students and with having a global effect; they seek the unfettered pursuit of knowledge and the leveraging of scientific breakthroughs for economic gain. Second, the ways in which they conduct their core functions—particularly teaching and learning—are complex. Most faculty do not really agree on how students learn best, nor do they understand the essential processes involved in creating civic-minded students or globally competent citizens. The

result is that multiple informal theories of what should happen and how it should happen exist within the institution. Third, because time and attention are limited, participation in decisions is fluid as faculty and administrators choose among competing opportunities, based on their own preferences as to what is important. Although they are busy people, key decision makers cannot be in all places at all times. "Every entrance is an exit somewhere else Participation stems from other demands on the participants' time."³⁸ Taken together, these three elements create situations Cohen and March label "organized anarchies."³⁹

The effect of these organizational realities is that decision outcomes depend on the combined flow of (1) decision makers, (2) institutional problems, and (3) potential solutions that are present in the institution. In places where they are in contact, these three streams of people, problems, and solutions come together in a range of metaphorical garbage cans throughout the institution. Solutions are in search of problems as much as problems are in search of solutions, and decisions depend on the mix of people, problems, and solutions in the garbage can at any particular time.⁴⁰ Organizations are often thought to render decisions after leaders have defined the problem, explored potential outcomes, and selected a course of action to maximize the effect of the decision.⁴¹ However, the dynamics of colleges and universities create a situation within organized anarchies—described as garbage-can decision making—in which the prototypical, rational approach to rendering decisions is only one way to actually reach a decision.⁴²

In the garbage-can model, decision making takes place in one of three ways. Decisions can be made by *resolution*, in which participants make a concerted effort to apply solutions to recognized problems. Decisions can also be made by *flight*, when problems become attached to other unintended solutions or participants. For example, a suggested science or foreign language requirement can easily turn into conversations about faculty hiring, classroom space utilization, or the undue influence of accrediting agencies, different and potentially seemingly unrelated sets of problems and solutions. Finally, decisions can be made by *oversight*. Key participants are too busy to participate in all decisions, so problems and solutions in another garbage can become coupled together with little attention and involvement from key campus leaders.

It is the mix of problems, solutions, and people in a decision opportunity that shape the outcome, not just the preferences of administrative leaders. To render their desired outcomes, presidents can (1) spend time on the problem, since people willing to invest time on any particular decision are likely to have a disproportionate effect on its outcomes; (2) persist in the decision process and see the decisions

through to fruition, as intended outcomes may be undone as the mix in the garbage can changes; (3) exchange status for substance, since individuals may be more concerned about being involved than in achieving a particular outcome, and facilitating their involvement in decision processes may be more important to them than the actual outcomes; (4) put a large number of decisions on the table to hedge one's bets, so that eventually a decision on one of these presidential issues will be rendered unobtrusively; (5) provide multiple garbage cans to attract undesired solutions to other problems; and (6) focus on a series of small-scale changes that have a cumulative effect and avoid the attractiveness of a high-stakes decision.⁴³

Environmental Contexts

Presidents not only operate within an organizational context, but also in a larger environmental one.⁴⁴ Public college and university presidents lead institutions that are either a part of a state system for higher education or under the auspices of a statewide coordinating board. Although the reach and degree of influence of coordinating boards varies among states (and even within states) on an almost yearly cycle, they do shape presidential influence.⁴⁵ For instance, presidents are frequently frustrated when they seek to offer a new major or degree, only to be stopped because of perceived program duplication among public institutions in the system. Additionally, state boards set hiring policies and operating procedures, such as procurement, lease agreements, and capital projects.

Part of the political environment also includes state legislatures. They determine the amount of general state support for public institutions through block grants. Furthermore, in many states legislatures set tuition levels (although this is sometimes done by state boards), thus determining the amount of resources from the institution's primary source of revenue. Legislatures also develop accountability goals and metrics for public institutions that shape institutional priorities. For instance, Virginia has outlined a set of eleven goals, referred to as the "state ask," which institutions must negotiate individually and then address.⁴⁶ Such accountability schemes often press priorities on institutions that the institutions may not think are important strategically.⁴⁷ Birnbaum notes that "as the locus of influence moves from the campus to the state, public sector presidents may find themselves becoming like middle managers in public agencies rather than campus leaders."⁴⁸

Such oversight is not limited to state governments and coordinating boards; federal regulation and the courts also shape the context in which presidents operate. Decisions regarding admissions and financial aid—as they relate to diversity and affirmative action goals—are common, if not frustrating, examples of

federal and legal influence. As Charles Bantz, the president of Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, said, "Every one of us has read the Michigan cases. Everyone's trying to follow as carefully as possible what Justice O'Connor approved, but I sense an enormous nervousness. There's a fear that if you push to the edge, you'll see anti-affirmative-action activists swoop into town. It's a worry. At [our university] we got around that by doing things like giving scholarships to students from the inner city. But I wonder if there is a [national] backing off?"⁴⁹ Other topics—such as electronic file sharing, international student visas and admissions, patent policy, college costs, and even toxic waste produced in university labs—are additional issues shaped by federal and legal interventions.

Voluntary accreditation, both regional for institutions and specialized for particular fields and disciplines, also shapes presidential discretion. Accreditation, although not federally regulated, is tied to federal oversight. In order to be eligible for federal funding, including student financial aid, accreditation is essential for most institutions; it allows campus graduates to work in some fields; and it can seem, as one president said, to be "a straightjacket of many colors."⁵⁰ For instance, accreditors can threaten to withhold accreditation unless the institution hires more full-time faculty in a particular department, alters curricula, develops new assessment methods, or provides more resources. Even the head of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the oversight organization for higher education accreditation, notes that "while presidents and provosts want to sustain a voluntary system of quality review and self-regulation, they are quick to complain that accreditation is intrusive, costly, and ineffective."⁵¹

Presidents lead their institutions not only in a political environment, but also in one that is strongly shaped by competitive market forces. The rise of market-based state policies, the creation of quasi markets for public services, and a decline in public support have resulted in a heightened competitive environment for colleges and universities.⁵² One insightful description of the dynamics of the competitive environment is what Robert Frank and Philip Cook call a "winner-take-all market."⁵³ They argue that the result is a competitive system in which those at the top get a disproportionate share of the rewards. This encourages more institutions to want to move up the pecking order. This strategy has fundamental flaws; no more than ten institutions can be "top-ten" institutions at any given time, and those at the top are uninterested in moving down. Ellen Hazelkorn's global study of rankings found that 70 percent of the university leaders surveyed said they wished to be in the top 10 percent nationally, and 71 percent said they wanted to be in the top 25 percent internationally.⁵⁴

To move up, institutions look to mimic the current winners, regardless of their own institutional strengths and resources and without solid evidence that what they seek to mimic will improve their standing. They seek the best researchers, try to field the best athletic teams, recruit the brightest students, and build the most elaborate student and research facilities. All of these strategies are pursued not for absolute gains, but in terms of what other competitors are accomplishing. This behavior creates an overreliance on prestige, which is not an outright performance indicator, but rather the appearance of doing what highly regarded institutions do. According to Brewer, Gates, and Goldman, "certain characteristics of a college or university become associated with good providers, even though these characteristics are not directly related to the quality of the output."⁵⁵ Finally, newcomers overestimate their chances of winning; thus too many competitors become easily attracted to a situation that will only pay off for a small number of people. Most institutions will invest to keep up and not significantly improve their lot. They are trying to compete against already successful leaders, and they do so by mimicking them from inferior positions.

The result is that institutions end up outspending one another and, by doing so, cancel one another's investments. Such behavior creates an arms race among contestants, with few winners and many negated investments. Roger Geiger notes that "universities must continually seek improvement even to remain in the same relative position."⁵⁶ In the end, all players run harder to stay in place, and those that choose not to play the game quickly slip behind. The implication for presidents is that they have little choice but to do what others are doing. An extreme but illustrative example focuses on recreational climbing walls, as described in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*:

The competition for students and recognition is fierce in Texas . . . The new distinction [of the biggest climbing wall] will help separate [the University of Texas, San Antonio] from the rest of the pack. The wall . . . beats out [the University of] Houston's wall by one measly foot. That should sound familiar to Houston officials. Two years ago they built their climbing wall to be exactly one foot taller than the one at Baylor University . . . Texas State at San Marcos plans to build in 2008 "the tallest Texas collegiate climbing wall."⁵⁷

The organizational and environmental contexts in which presidents must operate create a complex set of rules of the game. However, effective presidents understand these dynamics and act accordingly.

Effective Presidential Leadership

There is no lack of interest in or attempts to explore effective presidential leadership. They approach the common question from a range of perspectives, driven by different assumptions.

Perhaps the most insightful school of thought has focused on the *contingency of leadership*. Effective presidents understand the importance of the context in which they are operating, and they know that being a good president varies by the institutional context, environmental conditions, campus culture, and leadership dilemma being addressed (technology versus diversity, for example).⁵⁸ Essentially, effective presidential leadership varies by context and situation. As John Levin notes, "in all cases, institutional context is equally or more important than the perception of presidential influence in contributing to organizational actions and outcomes . . . Presidents who were perceived as the most influential are those who fit into the socially constructed story of the institution."⁵⁹ In other words, the organizational and environmental contexts vary so much that effective presidents modify their actions to make sense of and be effective within their specific campus context.

One very important contextual element that effective presidents pay attention to is the set of unique characteristics individual institutions possess.⁶⁰ As discussed above and throughout this volume, colleges and universities are characterized by certain features that distinguish them from other organizations and, in turn, affect their leadership. Some examples of these features are shared governance; academic freedom and autonomy; tenure; multiple and complex authority structures, with boards of trustees and faculty senates; and unique reward structures that are distributed between the disciplines and the institutions. Birnbaum noted that presidents in his studies were more successful when they worked within and acknowledged these various aspects of the academic culture.⁶¹ After reviewing the findings from studies of presidential effectiveness discussed below, this insight will become apparent across a variety of research efforts. At the institutional level, for instance, Anna Neumann noted that presidents who develop communication skills, style, and a strategy that is culturally appropriate are perceived as more effective by key constituencies.⁶²

It is not the specific behaviors, styles, traits, or actions of leaders that make them effective, but the extent to which those elements are accepted and viewed as legitimate by key stakeholders. Underlying contingency theories of leadership

is the notion that presidents need the support of different groups of individuals in an institution, groups that often have very different priorities, passions, and perspectives.⁶³ Effective presidents are able to meet all of these different and often competing expectations.⁶⁴ As Birnbaum notes, "good leadership is what its constituents believe it to be—and they don't always agree."⁶⁵ For faculty members, presidential effectiveness may mean giving them significant autonomy and including them in key decision-making processes, while for trustees, it may mean defining an aggressive campus growth agenda or raising money to advance the institution's mission.

A third element in the contingency approach to effective leadership is temporal. Over the last forty years, the characterization of effective presidents has altered quite markedly, and these shifting notions of presidential effectiveness reflect changing views in society about what is effective leadership.⁶⁶ Forty years bounds the timeframe, because it is the period during which the college presidency has been more formally studied. Forty years ago, more hierarchical and authoritative images of college presidents were seen as being effective.⁶⁷ The characteristics noted for effective presidents were also often considered typical masculine traits, such as risk taking, task orientation, confidence, and the ability to work alone. Contemporary views of effective presidents focus more on relationship building, collaboration, and a quest for input, characteristics often associated with women and reflective of more contemporary social customs.⁶⁸ It is only more recently that women have moved into college presidencies in substantive proportions, and therefore these changing qualities may reflect alterations in expectations of what is deemed appropriate. In 1986, women held approximately 10 percent of all presidencies, while in 2006 their share more than doubled, to 23 percent.⁶⁹ For instance, James Fisher and James Koch, drawing largely on studies done in the 1980s, suggest that presidents should use more unilateral forms of power, and judiciously punish and reward; demonstrate expertise; maintain appropriate distance; and develop charisma and public presence.⁷⁰ Later studies, in contrast, focus on power and influence as a two-way process and show that effective leaders are negotiators, coalition builders, and facilitators.⁷¹ The fact that presidents use power effectively has remained important throughout the decades, but the understanding of the concept of power and its dynamics is different. This understanding is evolutionary, reflecting changes in management and business literature and in contemporary society, as Western views were challenged and expanded by the success of Japanese firms. While time itself is important, the

key point is that time is a proxy for the ways in which environments continue to change and evolve, ways that might suggest that different behaviors and skills are needed to be effective.

Although the most complex and nuanced approach to understanding presidential effectiveness is through contingency theories, there is a long tradition in higher education and in the broader leadership literature that focuses on the traits and behaviors of effective leaders. Bennis, Neumann, and Birnbaum summarized much of this tradition that tried to identify certain traits that would make a leader effective.⁷² Rather than actually testing whether certain traits were associated with more effectiveness, they argue that most of the studies seek characteristics of people who had been identified as effective presidents. The problem with this approach is that such studies strongly mirror expected characteristics, corresponding to the period of time in which each study was conducted.⁷³

Studies that concentrate on behaviors, such as whether presidents should focus on goals, vision, planning, or motivating people to action, fall into similar traps. These studies reflect people's expectations or perceptions, rather than testing effective behavior by looking at how behavior affects certain outcomes. If expectations of traits and behaviors differ by campus climate and culture as well as time (as they often do), then the identified traits and behaviors of effective presidents will vary with individual expectations within the setting, but they may not be correlated with change or effectiveness. These studies, for example, do not look at specific presidential outcomes and measure traits or behaviors against others to see which traits achieved certain outcomes or goals. Many studies of presidential behavior have examined the importance of being task oriented or relationally oriented. While findings vary by campus context, most studies suggest that presidents need to balance an emphasis on completing tasks and demonstrating outcomes with a need to build relationships and effectively manage a variety of stakeholders; in the end such studies reveal little about effective behaviors.⁷⁴

Research has generated some consensus regarding certain qualities that tend to be identified as important across any institutional setting, such as trustworthiness; fairness; honesty; respect, or treating people with dignity; caring; and credibility or integrity.⁷⁵ The importance of qualities such as credibility and integrity suggests that presidents must be clear about their values and act authentically; they will jeopardize their effectiveness if they are perceived as lacking these qualities.

Overall, the search for universal traits and qualities has not proven to be particularly helpful. Instead, such studies tend to offer time- and context-specific insights. Yet, as a set, certain themes do appear vital to understanding presidential effectiveness: honesty, integrity, and respect, for example, seem to transcend context, stakeholder, and institutional type.

An ongoing debate in presidential leadership literature is whether presidents should play a *transformational* or *transactional* leadership role.⁷⁶ Transactional leadership focuses on leader-follower exchange, such as allocating resources, rewards, or status; controlling budgetary processes; creating priorities; and establishing accountability and assessment structures. Transformational leadership, alternatively, involves leaders who interact with followers in ways that appeal to their higher needs and aspirations. They motivate others by connecting through higher moral purposes. Bennis, Neumann, and Birnbaum argue that transactional leadership might be the more effective approach in higher education, given the relationships between presidents and faculty and the organizational contexts in which they must work (such as loose coupling), as a more directive influence by a president may not be effective.⁷⁷ They believe that presidents should rely on exchange, rather than a higher calling, and be influential through ongoing organizational activities such as the yearly budgetary process, the allocation of rewards, and accountability structures. Other studies, however, suggest that effective presidents can be transformational by creating an overarching vision for the campus, playing a role in its overall guidance and direction by motivating and inspiring, and demonstrating commitment for moving forward in a new direction.⁷⁸ A middle ground exists, and recent studies demonstrate that effective presidents use both transactional and transformational approaches. For example, we examined college presidents who are successful in advancing campuswide diversity agendas and found that such presidents articulate a preference for strategies that could be described as transformational, but that they were much more effective when they used both transactional and transformational approaches.⁷⁹ These presidents recognize that different stakeholders respond to different approaches, and that both are needed. They found that the appropriateness of certain approaches is often tied to the stage of the change efforts. For instance, when a campus is initially starting a concerted effort to advance campus diversity, strategies that inspire (transformational leadership) are necessary. As the campus advances in its efforts, more transactional leadership is necessary, using rewards and accountability structures. Our study also

reinforces the importance of thinking about effectiveness as varying by stakeholder, phase of change, and cultural context—again reinforcing contingency approaches to leadership.

While theories of transaction and transformation suggest that leadership is more than behavior or traits, *cognitive theories of leadership* focus specifically on the ways presidents make sense of and shape understanding within a campus. Cognitive theories examine the socially constructed world of organizations.⁸⁰ The premise of such approaches is that organizations consist of events and actions that are open to interpretation: What does it mean when the president is away from campus for a month while fund raising? Does it mean he or she is a disengaged or absent leader, or that he or she is cultivating important donors for needed and desired support? Is opening a state-of-the-art student recreation center a good thing? It probably depends on whether the institution serves traditional-age, residential students or whether students are only on campus for classes. Action and behavior thus proceed from cognition. Shaping and understanding the meaning and cognition associated with ambiguous and uncertain elements of campus life is the centerpiece of this approach.

One of the largest studies of college presidents examined how presidents approach and view their organizations, and people's actions within them, through archetypes: bureaucratic, collegial, political, and symbolic.⁸¹ Leaders using a bureaucratic frame observe their campuses through a lens of structure and organization, pay attention to goals and priorities, and invoke authority and control. Leaders using a collegial frame focus on people, relationships, team building, consensus, and loyalty. Leaders using a political frame see the inherent politics of organizations, build agendas, mobilize coalitions, and focus on negotiation and conflict. Lastly, presidents using a symbolic frame focus on mission, vision, values, symbols, stories, and the history of the institution. Birnbaum's research suggests that most college and university presidents see the world through one or two sets of assumptions or frames.⁸² In particular, presidents tend to focus on viewing the organization and its people through the bureaucratic framework and on approaching their work in a linear and mostly rational fashion. However, his research also demonstrated that leaders were considered more effective by stakeholders when they used three or more lenses, invoking greater cognitive complexity.

Presidents' cognitive approaches shape how they go about particular activities, such as budgeting, planning, or leading change. Pamela Eddy, for example, identified how leaders who have a symbolic framework tend to approach change

as a visionary activity, whereas bureaucratic leaders tend to rely on planning processes and documents.⁸³ Kezar, Eckel, and Contreras-McCavin demonstrated how college presidents were more successful in advancing diversity agendas when they applied all four frames.⁸⁴ Because such change typically involves the use of multiple strategies from all frameworks, presidents who do not adopt complex approaches have limited effectiveness in advancing their agendas.

Since so many studies have identified the importance of cognitive complexity in relation to presidential success, and since few presidents appear to develop ease in using multiple frames, researchers have shifted the unit of analysis from an individual leader to a team of leaders. A single individual may rarely possess all of the skills and knowledge required to be an effective leader. Leadership teams provide an avenue for creating greater presidential effectiveness by capitalizing on different people's strengths—some people might be good working with others and developing relationships, different individuals can influence institutional politics, others can effectively examine data, while still others can communicate and translate information in effective ways to the campus community. Bensimon and Neumann propose that presidents can be much more effective if they work in "real" leadership teams (as opposed to illusionary teams), using examples such as working with the presidential cabinet and capitalizing on greater expertise throughout the institution.⁸⁵ They encourage college and university presidents to move beyond the image of leadership as being invested in a single individual and to conceptualize leadership as a group process. Their research on presidential leadership teams demonstrates that teams can develop and leverage greater cognitive complexity and be more effective, but only if the teams act in what the authors call "authentic ways." Their study outlines many of the characteristics needed to develop real leadership teams, such as ensuring that criticism is embraced, building relationships among the team members so that people feel free to share information, guaranteeing that the president is truly open to sharing power and being challenged, and recognizing the importance of the collective sense leadership team members make together. They also note that real leadership teams fit into the unique culture and context of higher education that has traditionally been based on consensus, collaboration, and an intellectual environment.

A variety of studies from business and industry also demonstrate the value and importance of team-based or shared models of leadership.⁸⁶ This research confirms that successful leaders not only create leadership teams (such as presidential

cabinets), but also demonstrate how people throughout the organization should be seen as part of a shared leadership process. In the case of higher education, this would include rank-and-file faculty as well as staff. Leadership, through this framework, is a collective activity (rather than a position) that is distributed among members of an organization. Within these approaches to leadership, faculty and staff are delegated more authority when they show promise of creating an important change for the campus and playing a leadership role. In addition, effective presidents identify individuals throughout the institution who can be effective leaders; the president's role is to foster this leadership. Business and industry are increasingly breaking down hierarchical structures and creating cross-functional teams with more delegated authority for decisions, in order to more effectively meet the mission of the institution. In many ways, traditional hierarchical companies are adopting practices that look very much like the ways in which academic organizations work. Presidents become highly dependent on and interdependent with the expertise of their team members and the distributed leadership groups they create within the organization. Peter Senge's work on organizational learning and effective organizations further suggests that the traditional role of the authority figure (as embodied within executive positions) needs to change so that the leadership capacities of others in the organization can grow.⁸⁷ While little research has been conducted to date regarding these trends within higher education, literature from other sectors suggests that effectiveness can be increased when presidents see themselves as one leader among many throughout the campus.

As a set, these theories of leadership provide insight into presidential effectiveness and, used in combination, can help us better understand the complexities of what makes presidents successful. Presidents must analyze and be fully aware of the multiple contexts and environments in which they operate. In a word, they must be anthropologists. They must also balance tasks and relationship building. They need to examine and understand organizations, problems, and people in complex ways that lead to complex actions. And they need to build effective leadership teams, as well as distribute leadership by helping to identify and develop leaders throughout the campus. Given today's complex and contradictory environment, contingency approaches are particularly important, suggesting that what it takes to be an effective leader depends on stakeholder expectations, time period, and institutional context.

The Pipeline for Tomorrow's Presidents

As this chapter has shown, the presidency is important. It can be a challenging position, and theories on what constitutes effective leadership are evolving. However, the greatest challenge of the presidency in the future may simply be having talented leaders in this position; higher education may quickly find itself without the necessary talent pool at the top. Forty-nine percent of all presidents are aged sixty-one or older and quickly approaching traditional retirement age.⁸⁸ In contrast, twenty years ago only 14 percent of presidents fell within this age group. In the last five years, the average length of presidential tenure has jumped from a fifteen-year running average of 6.8 years to 8.5 years, indicating that a larger share of presidents are likely to leave the presidency in the near future, and those who traditionally might have stepped down have remained in the positions longer. Combined, these two factors suggest that higher education may well be facing a large-scale turnover in the presidency.

To look for the next generation of presidents, one has to look at today's chief administrative officers. Forty percent of first-time presidents come from CAO positions, compared with 23 percent from nonacademic offices (such as student affairs, development, or administration), 17 percent from outside of higher education, 16 percent from other academic affairs positions, and 5 percent from chair or faculty positions.⁸⁹ Given that the CAO position is the most likely prior position for new presidents, two key questions emerge: What are the presidential aspirations of this group? And how well suited are their positions as a training ground for the presidency?

A problem exists in that less than one-third of CAOs in a recent national study indicated that they intend to seek a presidency; 45 percent have no such intention, and the remaining 25 percent are undecided.⁹⁰ Furthermore, only 25 percent of female CAOs report presidential aspirations, and another 28 percent report being undecided about seeking a presidency. One-third of male CAOs have presidential ambitions, and 23 percent are undecided. Forty-eight percent of African American CAOs report presidential aspirations, as do 35 percent of Asian American CAOs and 34 percent of Hispanic CAOs. While these percentages are higher than the aspirations of white CAOs (28%), minorities hold only 15 percent of all CAO positions, meaning that only a few CAOs are members of minority groups and have presidential ambitions.⁹¹ The lack of interest in pursuing a presidency suggests that the traditional pipeline to the presidency may not be adequate to meet the expected demand for new presidents.

The top reasons CAOs give for not being interested in a presidency are that they view the nature of presidential work as unappealing, are ready to retire, are concerned about the time demands of the position, don't want to live in a fishbowl, and want to return to teaching or research. Minority CAOs are more likely to report wanting to return to academic work than white CAOs (29% versus 20%), and to have more concerns about the search process than their white counterparts (13% as compared with 3%). Female and male CAOs give similar answers, except that men are more likely to think of themselves as too old to be considered.⁹² CAOs who are ambivalent about seeking a presidency give similar reasons to those not seeking a presidency—uncertainty about the nature of the work, concerns about balancing family and job demands, and the draw-of the classroom.⁹³

The second question asks, to what extent are possible future presidents prepared to assume this complex leadership position? Recent data about CAOs implies that their current position only partially prepares them for the presidency.⁹⁴ On the positive side, they have an institutional perspective (as compared with a dean), and their portfolio, while directly focused on academic affairs (including research at institutions with that activity in their mission), often touches on physical infrastructure via classrooms and laboratories; a large portion of an institution's budget is linked to academic activities and personnel. However, while the presidency is externally focused, CAOs spend little time on external activities. For example, 72 percent of CAOs report little or no time on fund raising (the presidents' top use of time); 75 percent spend little or no time on alumni relations; 58 percent spend little or no time on corporate relations or economic development; and 64 percent spend little or no time on government relations, all important presidential activities. These findings do not suggest that CAOs have never had these responsibilities, as many probably have (one-third previously served as dean, a position that often has sizable external activities), but their skills may be a bit rusty by the time they ascend to a presidency. Furthermore, differences do exist across types of institutions. For example, CAOs at doctorate-granting institutions are much more likely to spend a moderate to significant amount of time fund raising (62%), on corporate relations and economic development (51%), on government relations (50%), and on alumni relations (45%) than their counterparts at other types of institutions. Only CAOs from associate's-degree colleges spend more time on corporate relations and economic development (61%). Nevertheless, most CAOs do not gain important experiences and tested skills on these typical presidential activities.

External activities are only part of the presidential portfolio. The most important institutional activities for presidents are budgeting and financial management, strategic planning, board relations, and personnel.⁹⁵ Although many CAOs have experience with personnel issues, only CAOs from doctorate-granting institutions noted strategic planning and budgeting as one of the top three presidential-type activities on which they spend their time.⁹⁶ Instead, CAOs report spending the most time on curriculum and academic programs; accountability, accreditation, and assessment (master's, baccalaureate, associate's, and special focus CAOs); and hiring, promoting, and retiring faculty (baccalaureate CAOs)—all topics that presidents do not report as their concerns.

The data suggest that if the next generation of presidents are to come from CAO positions, there is much work to be done to both ensure that they want to become presidents and that they are well prepared for the challenges of the position. As discussed earlier, the stakes are high and new leaders must hit the ground running, because even minor mistakes can have potentially large consequences. First, the nature of the presidency is unappealing to most in line for such positions. The dynamics of the job, the press of the external environment, and the activities of presidents are mostly nonnegotiable. The work of the presidency is difficult to change, if not impossible, given the demands and dynamics highlighted throughout this chapter. However, more attention given to the joys and benefits of the presidency may be helpful in convincing CAOs to seek presidencies. Second, the most common prior position of presidents is not a comprehensive training ground for the presidency; however, as leadership is more widely shared, others will have more meaningful experiences to better prepare them for presidential responsibilities. CAOs with presidential ambitions must look beyond their responsibilities to gain additional experiences that will serve them well as presidents. Concerned presidents can craft the CAO position to include more presidential-like activities, or give their provosts enough time and encouragement to develop skills and gain experiences outside of their job. Third, the traditional pipeline to the presidency seems to be insufficient to meet emerging needs. More intentional efforts to develop a deeper, more robust pipeline are necessary, particularly for people of color, and more attention is required to convince those already at the top of the pipeline to seek presidencies, particularly women. Fourth, alternative pathways to the presidency could be developed. Trajectories from other positions both inside and outside of academia, while insufficient training grounds on their own, may open other potentially viable avenues into the top position. Boards and search committees must be convinced to look

broadly at candidates and focus on skills, accomplishments, and experiences rather than only on positions held.⁹⁷ However, thinking broadly about the pathways to the presidency does not disregard academic experience and a deep awareness of academic culture.

Conclusion: Toward a Future of Shared Leadership

As this chapter has demonstrated, the presidency is an important and influential position that must lead, manage, communicate, inspire, and shape, as well as achieve all of the other elements described above. The effectiveness of individuals in the presidency depends very much on their ability to meet the expectations of diverse stakeholders in a fluid context, rather than, for instance, to act or behave in a particular way. However, the presidency will continue to evolve, and one can expect the job to become more complex, with higher stakes and more pressure to succeed.

Effective presidential leadership in the future may depend on an individual's ability to leverage an integrated, shared leadership approach that encourages coordinated and synergistic leadership among many actors. As former University of Michigan president James Duderstadt notes, "Leadership is dispersed throughout academic institutions, through department chairs and program directors, deans and executive officers, and influential leaders of the faculty and student body. However, in most institutions, both the responsibility and authority of leadership flow from the top of the organizational pyramid."⁹⁸ Future presidents may approach leadership as integrated, synergistic, cooperative, and collaborative, effectively moving them from the top of the pyramid to the key node on a network.⁹⁹ Given the organizational nature of the institutions they are trying to lead, with their loose coupling, dual sources of authority, and decentralized decision making, leadership throughout the campus may be the key to future institutional success. What can be different and difficult is creating synergies among what may be, by default, isolated pockets of leaders.

Furthermore, while shared governance is common, shared leadership is not, and traditional forms of governance are not substitutes for shared leadership. Shared governance typically involves faculty in leadership roles, but it often limits their roles and rarely capitalizes on staff and students as potential leaders; however, on campuses with university assemblies rather than faculty senates, there may be a structure closer to shared leadership. Structure may also limit

impact. Second, shared leadership involves the delegation of authority, and very little authority is delegated in shared governance; instead, it is often divided or limited to particular topics. Leadership often occurs in parallel play, rather than in an integrated manner. In shared leadership, administrators and faculty are asked to approach leadership challenges much more collaboratively, rather than sequentially. While there are other distinctions (such as shared leadership involving a great number of individuals and shared governance involving only officially voted or nominated individuals), the above elements provide a sense of the differences between the two models.

A shared leadership team has many advantages, and it also overcomes many of the constraints noted above for college presidents, but it is challenging. Shared leadership is particularly well adapted to address the organizational characteristics noted earlier, such as dual sources of authority, loose coupling, and garbage-can decision making. Moreover, in shared leadership environments, alternative structures for delegating authority and accountability are established, which can take advantage of loose coupling, but also provide levers to make these systems more effectively integrated. For example, within a shared leadership approach, presidents vest more power in leaders across campus, and they put accountability systems in place to monitor decision making and its effect. These new accountability structures might yield more decisions through resolution and less through oversight.

Shared leadership also can help better address challenges that leaders face in the external environment. The rate and pace of decision making has increased; a single individual is no longer capable of understanding the vast array of issues that face higher education, and leaders need to increasingly rely on a broad group of people with varying expertise to address all of these challenges. An overwhelming number of tasks vie for presidential attention. As leadership is shared with more individuals, presidents can delegate responsibility to others and ensure that they spend their own time only on the most critical issues. Second, a shared leadership model allows the institution to address a larger and more diverse agenda more effectively. Colleges and universities will have more priorities, rather than fewer. Shared leadership helps to ensure that an issue is being worked on by the campus, even though the president is not directly addressing this issue. Third, a shared leadership model expands the number of people who embody the values of the institution. Presidents cannot be all things to all people, and a singular focus on the president as the sole embodiment of what is important is guaranteed

to disappoint many. Diversity, access and affordability, and quality are often values that are in conflict, and a shared leadership approach may be better able to cope with such disparate priorities. Finally, a leadership team is a natural evolution of the history of higher education, which has gone from relatively small institutions with a narrow mission to complex corporate structures with multiple missions and a vast array of stakeholders and external influences.

In conclusion, the job of the president is in flux. Presidents of early colleges could be and were successful as the leader, but as times changed, so did the nature of the position. Today and into tomorrow, the effectiveness of a president may well depend on how strong a complex web of leadership—involving cabinet, external stakeholders, faculty, staff, and students—is created for what Birnbaum argued, in the original version of this chapter, may still be an impossible job.¹⁰⁰

NOTES

The authors would like to thank Bob Birnbaum, who wrote the original chapter on presidential leadership for this book. His ideas, thoughts, and reactions are reflected in this chapter.

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