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**Preparing Latinas for the Community College Presidency**

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**Preparing Latinas for the Community College Presidency**

by

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## Dedication

I appreciate the many individuals who provided love and encouragement to me during the last several years. My family offered their support even when they didn't fully understand what I was involved in or why I decided to pursue this goal. Dad, even though you passed on many years ago, I felt your presence whenever I needed it most. Special thanks go to my sister Marian McNeely; I admire you in so many ways. My children Bernadette and Mateo kept me grounded; Bernadette, you inspired me to accomplish what seemed impossible! Mateo, you helped me move toward the next phase of my life. Thanks for being strong!

I am so blessed to have my long time friends who hung in there with me through all the ups and melt downs. I also treasure the new friendships that sustained me during the Block 61 experience, especially those that will last a lifetime. Lastly, I have so much gratitude to offer Ray DelZotto, my partner and best friend. You gave me the strength and courage to keep going. Thank you.

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## **Preparing Latinas for the Community College Presidency**

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With the impending retirements of community college presidents hired during the rapid growth of the 1960s, consideration is imperative regarding how leadership vacancies will be filled. The turnover in leadership occurs at a time of increasing diversity in student enrollments; this gap is in contrast to the primarily homogeneous composition of current leadership. Although women comprise the majority of students and Latino enrollment is growing, the representation of Latinas in community college presidencies is woefully small. Without strategic intervention, the challenge of reflecting diversity at all levels of community colleges will grow in magnitude. The intersection of a changing student body and projected retirements present an opportunity to diversify leadership at the community college.

The primary purpose of this research was to learn from Latina community college presidents about the conditions that influenced their ascension to the presidency. The

conditions and experiences examined were (a) influences that Latina community college presidents identified as having the most impact on personal career success, (b) strategies Latinas have employed to overcome barriers or challenges on the pathway to the presidency, and (c) the organizational climate and practices within community colleges that either hinder or support Latinas. The convergence of these conditions was analyzed to determine effective strategies to support Latinas in achieving leadership roles.

This study utilized mixed methods for data collection, both qualitative and quantitative. Data sources included interviews with 13 Latina community college presidents. Further, 22 participants completed questionnaires that provided demographic information. The following themes emerged from the findings: personal context, professional preparation, professional context, challenges and the leadership pipeline. In spite of the gains made by women in higher education and the increase of Hispanic students entering post secondary education, equity in the representation of Latinas in higher education at the administrative ranks has not yet been achieved. The findings suggests that trustees played a critical role in promoting diversity as the majority of the boards that hired the presidents in this study included representation from women and other minority groups. Moreover, although systemic barrier exist the Latinas presidents in this study refused to allow bias to prevent them from succeeding. Recommendations for further studies and implications for developing Latinas to gain access to the leadership pipeline were discussed in the findings.

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CHAPTER 1:  
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

The recent emphasis on community college constituencies has made us aware of an irrefutable fact: women and members of racial-ethnic minorities are underrepresented in higher education. Minority students, minority teachers, nor minority administrators in American community colleges are represented in numbers equivalent to those in the general population. This under representation demands our immediate attention and calls for positive action. (Gillett-Karam, Roueche, & Roueche, 1991, p. 3)

The absence of women in the uppermost levels of higher education leadership has been evident for some time. Further, the gap between the percentage of female students and women administrators in community colleges has long been recognized (Pettersen, 2003). The American Association of Community College (AACC, 2000) noted that 59% of community college students are female, whereas only 11% of community college presidents are women. Thus, “women’s representation in administrative positions...is still not proportionate to their presence in the classroom” (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002, p. 7). The disparity between student demographics and leadership has continued to widen in community college systems. The void appears more glaring when the number of women of color in administrative positions is considered. Additionally, although the female and Hispanic student headcount has expanded, leadership demographics have remained fairly stable. While the number of women assuming presidencies in community colleges has risen, Latinas are a minority group who continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions.

Brown (2005) proclaimed, “Academic leadership should reflect the diversity of the students, faculty, staff and administration in the higher education institutions they serve” (p. 664). Although community colleges are recognized as the educational vehicle for Latinos to pursue their dreams through higher education, (Gutierrez, Castañeda, & Katsinas, 2002) most colleges have not systematically encouraged Latinos to pursue leadership positions at community colleges. Therefore, this inertia has made advancement for Latinos more difficult.

### Emerging Conditions of the Community College System

#### *Student Demographics*

The AACC (2005) reported, “The changing demographics of the nation are apparent on community college campuses. About one third of community college students are minorities” (p. 1). AACC (2005) further asserted, “By 2015 the traditional college-age population of 17- to 21-year-olds is expected to grow from 26 to 30 million,” and, perhaps most poignantly, “Hispanics will account for 49% of the increase” (p. 2).

#### *An Increase in Leadership Retirements*

According to Weisman and Vaughan (2007) 56% of presidents anticipated retirement in the next 6 years, whereas the next 10 years will bring an 84% retirement of the senior leadership (p.1). Americans born in the era of Baby Boomers (1943–1960) are aging, are planning for retirement, or have entered retirement. The implication for community colleges is that the top ranks of leadership must brace for an impending shortage as long-time administrators age and contemplate retirement (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Wallin, 2006). Fulton-Calkins and Milling stated, “A mass exodus of

community-college leadership is expected within the next few years. Many community college administrators and faculty were employed in the early 1960s through the early 1970s” (p. 234). As a result of retirements of college administrators and faculty, community colleges will be burdened with a significant leadership drain.

As these chief executive officers (CEOs) retire, individuals at the vice-president level are also preparing to leave. This exodus presents numerous challenges that include identification of a prepared group of qualified individuals in the pipeline ready to move into vacancies, as well as a pool of candidates who reflect the growing diversity of the United States (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005).

#### *A Gap in the Leadership Pipeline*

A growing complexity of identifying new leaders is the shortage of an interested, qualified pool of individuals prepared to assume these roles. Perhaps even more worrisome is the difficulty in identifying women, especially Latinas who have access to preparation and opportunities to develop the skills required to assume leadership roles. An increasingly necessary condition for consideration for employment is the acquisition of a doctoral degree. Shults (2001) noted, “The number of advanced degrees conferred in community college administration decreased 78 percent from 1982 to 1996-97” (p. 1). “As retirements loom, particularly in the ranks of senior leadership, there is genuine concern about the quality, the experience, and the preparation of those who will follow” (Wallin, 2006, p. 513). Further, Campbell (2002) wrote, “The changing demographics in the United States are signaling severe shortages in the country’s management

ranks....Such shortages will occur as baby boomers near retirement and the average age of the workforce rises” (p. 3).

In spite of growing minority enrollments, the composition of senior executive group members who reflect student demographics falls short. This trend is particularly problematic for two reasons: the growing gap between student demographics and leadership will only continue to widen unless action is taken, and it is unclear who will assume leadership roles when senior-level retirements occur. Without strategic intervention, the challenge of reflecting diversity at all levels of community colleges will only grow in magnitude. However, the intersection of a changing student body and projected retirements presents an opportunity to diversify leadership at the community college.

#### Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study is the uneven apportionment between student demographics and community college presidents, specifically an absence of Latinas in leadership roles. Although women have made strides in achieving presidencies over the last two decades, most female college presidents are White (American Council on Education [ACE], 2007a). Brown (2005) stated, “There is a paucity of female college presidents who are Women of Color” (p. 664). This issue is critical because the majority of community college students are female, and while racial and ethnic diversity in enrollment is increasing, leadership is not representative of the student population. The gap between student and leadership demographics is already problematic, and the potential exists for this chasm to escalate unless concerted efforts are made to prepare

emergent leaders. “Informal contacts are strongly associated with continued academic persistence. For Latina/o students, the importance of role models and mentors cannot be underestimated” (Castellanos & Jones, 2003, p.7).

### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research was to learn from Latina community college presidents to learn about the conditions that influenced their ascension to the presidency. The three conditions and experiences examined were (a) influences that Latina community college presidents identify as having the most impact on personal career success, (b) strategies Latinas have employed to overcome barriers or challenges on the pathway to the presidency, and (c) the organizational climate and practices within community colleges that either hinder or support Latinas. The convergence of these conditions was analyzed to determine how to develop effective strategies to support Latinas in achieving leadership roles.

Much of the literature on the rise of women to leadership positions has focused on the experience of White females, with limited study on the specific experience of Latinas. In a broader vein, Goldberger (1996) stated:

The claim by researchers of difficulties in access to ethnic minority. . . communities has resulted in samples of convenience; as a result, white middle-class researchers have tended to stick with white middle-class informants, who are closer at hand and certainly more familiar to them” (p. 339).

Therefore, a second purpose of this study was to expand on previous research that focused on female leaders located primarily in one geographic region, California (Cipres, 2000; Flores, 2000; Hansen, 1997; Knowlton, 1993; Reza, 1996), or studies of other women of color, or individual female college presidents. A 1995 study conducted by

Reza was confined to Latinas in California, whereas Hansen limited research to vice presidents and presidents in California. Rodriguez (2006) studied a small number of community college presidents in California, but included both Latinos and Latinas.

Knowlton (1993) conducted an ethnographic study of Judith Valles, a community college president in California, which compared the findings to those drawn from interviews with eight other Latina community college presidents in the United States. Knowlton's findings revealed similarities across the presidents' experiences in higher education related to the influence of culture and language, as well as stereotypes related to racism and sexism.

Flores (2000) proposed to expand on the work of Knowlton (1993) and conducted a case study on former chancellor Ruth Burgos-Sasscer of Texas. Flores reported Knowlton had noted the "potential for disaster to the organizational mission of community colleges" if leadership was not responsive to the changing student demographics (p. vi). Both the Flores and Knowlton studies examined individual Latina CEOs in depth. Cipres (2000) emphasized, "With the exception of Knowlton (1992), the virtual absence of research...proves that the Hispanic American female has been all but completely ignored primarily because so few have ascended to the position of chief executive officer" (p.10).

Petterson (2003) conducted a more recent study focused on community college presidents from across the United States. The two major themes that emerged from this study of eight female presidents were professional preparation and personal consideration. According to Petterson, "Adams (1999), Green (1995), Griffin (1995),

Hartnett (1994), Matt (1997), McKinnon (2000), Sperling (1994), and Taylor (2000) each addressed leadership characteristics of selected females presidential groups” (p.59).

Further, Petterson reviewed the findings of Buddemeir (1998), Curry (1995), DeVaux (1999), Lash (2000), as well as Sanders (1989), who examined career paths of female community college presidents. Petterson noted that previous studies: Ballentine (2000), Blevins (2001), and Viltz (1998) employed “life story and life history approaches in their research” (p. 64). Although each of the aforementioned studies contributed to the research of female community college presidents, research was not specific to the experience of Latinas.

Therefore, a third purpose of this study was to determine areas for further research and provide recommendations to promote organizational transformation that will enhance access to Latinas striving for executive positions in community colleges. Change in institutional climate may be facilitated by internal organizational priorities, or driven by broader public policy initiatives.

Fowler (2004) defined public policy as:

a response to a specific social setting that includes a wide range of phenomena studied by the social sciences: economic forces, demographic trends, ideological belief systems, deeply held values, the structure and traditions of the political system, and the culture of the broader society. (p. 54)

Therefore, by extending the current body of knowledge, the potential for influencing public policy is strengthened by research data which can serve to illustrate the disparity in diversity at the top leadership ranks of community college administration thus providing impetus for change.

## Research Questions

The following four research questions guided this study:

1. What influences do Latina community college presidents identify as having the greatest impact on their career success?
2. How did Latinas overcome barriers and challenges in their path to the presidency?
3. What organizational best practices can support Latinas striving to achieve executive positions in community colleges?
4. How have key issues in higher education administration changed in the last 10 years for Latinas?

## Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this study:

*Assimilation* – According to Cox (1993),

A one-way adaptation in which an organization's culture becomes the standard of behavior for all other cultures merging into the organization. The goal of assimilation is to eliminate cultural differences, or at least the expression of the different (nondominant) cultures, at work. To accomplish this, entering members who are culturally different from the organization's culture must reject or at least repress the norms, values, and practices of the socioculture from which they come. (p. 166)

*Assumption of sameness* – “Presumed uniformity between people of like races, ethnicity, gender, or any group” (Hankins, 2000, p. 193).

*Board of trustees* – “Community college boards of trustees are responsible for ensuring that their colleges are integral parts of their communities and serve ever-

changing needs. They are accountable to the community for the performance and welfare of the institutions they govern” (Association of Community College Trustees, 2007).

*Biculturalism* – The ability of individuals to function in two sociocultural environments while balancing “their primary culture and that of the dominant mainstream culture of the society in which they live” (Darder, as cited in Hansen, 1997, p. 12).

*Chicana (o)* – A term rooted in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and characterized as a political, ideological term describing a group of people with shared cultural characteristics and political interpretations of their experience (Garcia, 1997). Furthermore, the term *Chicana* is used specifically to refer to “women of Mexican origin” (Cuádriz, 2005, p. 229). This term reflects both a social identity and ethnicity.

*Ethnicity* – “Refers to social characteristics that groups of people may have in common—language, religion, regional background, culture. ...Race and ethnicity can overlap or they can diverge” (Lawrence, Sutton, Kubisch, Susi, & Fulbright-Anderson, 2004, p. 44).

*Ethnocentrism* – A preference for one’s own group (Cox, 1993).

*Hispanic* – Is a term imposed by the federal government to define a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. Thus, Hispanics may be of any race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The terms *Latino(a)* and *Hispanic* are often used interchangeably. It also includes people who indicate that they are “other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

*Institutional culture* – “Persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus” (Kuh & Whitt 1998, p. 98).

*Latina(o)* – A term used to describe people from Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas. Latina/o is an overarching term intended to include many aspects of cultural and linguistic identity. A Latina may be an immigrant or someone born in the United States; may have fair or dark skin; may be a professional or a day laborer; and may speak Spanish, English, or both or not speak Spanish at all. This is a unifying term meant to include all people who share a common Latin American ancestry (Carr-Ruffino, 1996). For the purpose of this paper, this researcher used the term *Latina* unless direct citations specify another term such as *Hispanic* or *Chicana*. As noted earlier, *Hispanic* is the identified term for race or ethnicity as reported in government records.

*Organizational culture* – A work environment created by an organization’s principles, norms, policies, practices, and relationship between people (Hankins, 2000).

*President* – Identifies a “chancellor, provost, or other official with overall responsibility for the district, college, or campus” (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002, p. 2). For the purpose of this study, this researcher referred to all participants as president.

*Statistics* – “refers to a set of mathematical procedures for organizing, summarizing, and interpreting information” (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007, p. 4).

*Succession planning* –The establishment of “a process for conducting executive searches before positions become vacant” (Campbell, 2002, p. 93).

## Significance of the Study

The U.S. Census Bureau data reflected that demographics in the United States have shifted rapidly to reflect a more diverse racial population. The Pew Research Center further (2005) reported that the 2000 census “marked the Hispanic population at 35.3 million people,” which was “an increase of 58% over 1990” (p. 2). The Pew Research Center report continued on to state that the increase of the Hispanic population in 2004 marked “a jump of more than 14% in just four years; meanwhile, the non-Hispanic population was up by barely 2%” (p. 2). The National Center for Education Statistics (2003) has projected the Hispanic population to reach 98 million by 2050. Thus, this population will represent 25% of the total U.S. population. In spite of these dramatic population changes, the demographics of community college leadership have not mirrored the increased diversity of students. “These new directions will challenge leaders to think creatively concerning what is essential to serve the emerging needs of a more diverse student body” (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005, p. 236).

In light of these factors and the projected retirements of senior leadership, an opportunity exists for boards of trustees to engage more vigorously in succession planning to meet the needs of the emerging population of students. George R. Boggs, president of AACC, asserted, “This impending turnover in community college leadership is an obvious challenge to institutions, but it is also an opportunity to bring greater diversity and new ideas into these positions” (as cited in Campbell, 2002, p. vii). Succession planning has been described by Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) as “a concept within the community college that is valued. ...If community colleges are to

prepare the leadership needed for 2010 and beyond, it is important that leaders implement effective succession planning processes” (p. 242).

#### Limitations

Although this study offers an opportunity for participants, educators, researchers, and interested learners alike to more fully understand the influence that helped shaped the perspectives of Latina community college presidents, the following limitations of this study have been identified:

1. The study focuses specifically on the Latina community college president and may not be generalizable to her male counterpart.
2. The study is limited to Latinas in leadership positions in the community college and may not be generalizable to other post-secondary institutions.
3. The sample participants in this study included only Latinas and generalizations to other racial-ethnic groups cannot be claimed.
4. Lastly, the sample size for this study is too small for generalizations to be made to a larger population.

#### Assumptions

The following six assumptions guided this study, which the researcher believed to be valid, truthful, and accurate:

1. A surge in retirements of senior leadership of community colleges will occur during the next several years.
2. The current community college leadership does not adequately reflect the student population served.

3. The Latino population in the United States and the number of Latino students entering community colleges will continue to grow.

4. The small number of Latina presidents is especially alarming, as it is disproportionate to the number of Latina students.

5. Challenges to women seeking upward mobility have been identified and remain persistent. These barriers are even more significant for Latinas, who may have less access to role models, professional networks, and the influence of nontraditional cultural norms and familial expectations.

6. Latinas have demonstrated that they are fully capable of leading a college system effectively.

#### Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The study used a mixed-method research design following The University of Texas at Austin dissertation guidelines. The study is organized into the following framework: Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the study by identifying the statement of the problem as well as the purpose and significance of the study. Limitations, assumptions, and definitions clarify the parameters of the study. Research questions are introduced in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of trends affecting community colleges, including the changing population in the United States, student demographics, anticipated retirements of current leadership, and the requisite skills for emerging leaders. Attention is focused on the current context of female representation in leadership positions, with an emphasis on Latinas. Finally, the pathway to the presidency is examined. A review of

related studies explores the findings of past research. The intent of this study is to add to the existing body of knowledge regarding Latina presidents in community colleges.

Chapter 3 provides an explanation of the methodology and research protocol of the study. A description of the critical qualitative research study approach is provided. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study based on coding and analysis of the data collected. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the findings of the research as well as any unanticipated outcomes and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

Leadership is never a destination. It is a life-long journey—one of constantly seeking self-knowledge. Only through a leader's taking that journey can she or he continue the journey of becoming the best self. Only through a leader's taking that journey can she or he help other leaders to grow in their leadership skills. (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005, p. 237)

Are the leaders of today's community colleges willing to step back, pause to reflect, and demonstrate a willingness to support the next generation of leaders who are different than those of the current generation? Do boards of trustees recognize that the landscape of community colleges has changed, therefore requiring a different map to searching for new leaders? In order to address these questions, it is imperative to examine the past, assess the conditions of the present, and strategically view the future. This review of the literature traces the pivotal events in community college history and trends and describes the gaps in the pool of leaders required to meet increasingly diverse demands in this arena of higher education.

Latinas have not achieved upward mobility in higher education at the same rate as their White, female counterparts. This review supports the development of strategies to increase the number of Latinas in leadership roles. The potential benefits of this review include the generation of current data that may influence policymakers to advocate for supporting leadership development programs; a second outcome is the potential for motivating Latinas to consider leadership roles in higher education. This chapter is

organized in the following major topic areas: trends, emerging conditions, the pathway to the presidency, the Latina experience, theoretical framework, and summary.

### Trends

Community colleges are encountering a growing trend in the racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of learners. According to a report released by the Pew Research Center (2005), “The Hispanic population of the United States is growing fast and changing fast” (p. 71). The Pew Research Center report further noted, “The 2000 census marked the Hispanic population at 35.3 million people, an increase of 58% over 1990...meanwhile, the non-Hispanic population was up by barely 2%” (p. 72). As the Latino population increases, members of this group are entering higher education at a greater rate than in the past; primarily through the community college system. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2003), “Hispanic students...are disproportionately enrolled in 2-year colleges” (p. 96).

Table #1

*Distribution of Community College Enrollment by Race and Ethnicity, 1980 and 2000*

	1980	2000
American Indian/Alaska Native	1%	1%
Asian/Pacific-Islander	3%	7%
Black, non-Hispanic	10%	12%
Hispanic	6%	14%
White, non-Hispanic	79%	65%
Nonresident Alien	1%	1%
Total	100%	100%

*Table 1.* Distribution of community college enrollment by race and ethnicity: 2000. Source: *Status and Trends in the Education of Hispanics* (NECS 2003-008), by the National Center for Education Statistics, 2003, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

The change in enrollment according to race and ethnicity from 1980–2000 is reflected in Table 1. The majority of students enrolled at community colleges remain predominately White, non-Hispanic. However, the enrollment of White, non-Hispanics decreased by 14 percentage points. Further, the data on Table 1 shows that in 1980, Hispanics represented 6% of the total enrollment in community colleges and in 2000 represented 14% of the total enrollment in community colleges. This is an increase of eight percentage points or a 75% increase.

Notably, although Hispanic student enrollments are dramatically increasing at community colleges, the Pew Research Center (2005) reports, “Despite the rise in the percentage of Hispanics enrolling in college, their enrollment rates remain lower than those of their White peers” (p. 94). Moreover, the graduation rates for this population lag behind that of White undergraduate students (Pew Research Center).

### *Access to Higher Education*

McCabe (2003) declared, “Community colleges are the most American of institutions. They are agents of democratization, with a core mission to provide opportunity to all” (p. 13). As such, community colleges serve as a first point of entry for many students and fulfill a myriad of purposes; as comprehensive organizations, community colleges provide transfer programs to 4-year colleges, developmental and adult basic education, and specialized occupational certificates.

“Because of their great number, openness to nontraditional students, and key role in vocational training, community colleges occupy a central place in higher education and are vitally relevant to many areas of social life” (Dougherty, 2001, p. 3). Community colleges are viewed as a resource to their communities because of their mission to provide entry to postsecondary education to many who otherwise might not have access. Affordability has been an important component of access to the community college; the cost of tuition historically has been far less than that of 4-year colleges and universities. This access is especially critical for students who otherwise might not participate in postsecondary education, particularly Latino students.

### *Latinos in the Workforce*

Latinos comprise a large portion of the labor force, second only to Whites. However, a majority are concentrated in jobs that provide low wages and require minimal skills. Correspondingly, according to Waldron, Robert, and Reamer (2004), “Education and training can provide the skills, knowledge and confidence many low-wage workers need to move up in the working world” (p. 7).

A report released by the U.S. Department of Education (2006) charged, “Colleges and universities must be the major route for new generations of Americans to achieve social mobility” (p. 1). However, this same report revealed,

A troubling and persistent gap between college attendance and graduation rates of low-income Americans and their more affluent peers. Similar gaps characterize the college attendance rates—and especially the college completion rates—of the nation’s growing population of racial and ethnic minorities. (U.S. Department of Education, 2006, p. 1)

Table 2 displays the gains made by Hispanics in completing a doctorate degree during a 10-year period in all disciplines and in the field of education. As a first point of entry to post-secondary education, community colleges are positioned to not only retain students, but to also encourage underrepresented students to seek advanced degrees.

Table 2

*Number of Doctoral Recipients by Field and Race/Ethnicity: 1996 and 2006*

	1996	2006
All Fields		
American Indian	185	118
Asian/Pacific-Islander	1,066	1,560
Black	1,305	1,659
Hispanic	957	1,370
White	23,846	21,280
Other	85	504
Total	27,444	26,491
Education		
American Indian	60	35
Asian/Pacific-Islander	87	125
Black	580	606
Hispanic	205	279
White	4,879	3,797
Other	21	65
Total	5,832	4,907

*Note.* Source: Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities Summary Report 2006. Conducted by NSF/NIH/USED/NEH/USDA/NASA

As a first point of entry, the community college plays a critical role in moving students through the educational pipeline to degree attainment. Price (2004) commented, “The community college remains the institution of choice for students of color and students from less affluent family backgrounds” (p. 35). However, community colleges grapple with the challenge of providing support to a vulnerable population of students. Valverde and Rodriguez (2002) asserted that support includes mentorship and emotional elements. Cultural role models can strengthen persistence and retention of minority students. Therefore, the presence of faculty who reflect student demographics is a support. Hispanic students who make it to community colleges and persist beyond may

bring with them “academic and sociocultural needs” (Villalpando, 2004, p. 41).

Therefore, supports for Hispanic students are critical if they continue in higher education.

### The Emerging Conditions of Community Colleges

While the demographics of the student population are rapidly changing, “the demographic profile of the typical college or university president is slowly changing, but continues to be primarily white (86 percent) and male (77 percent)” (ACE, 2007a, p. 9). Although these findings apply to colleges that offer beyond an associate’s degree, the findings are consistent for 2-year institutions (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). See Table 2.

The ACE (2007a) proclaimed, “The most sobering conclusion to be drawn from the data reported here is that the demographic make-up of higher education leaders has changed very slowly during the last 20 years” (p. 57). Furthermore, current leadership is aging; the presidents in 2006 were older than those surveyed in 1986. According to Gonzales, as cited in Leon (2005, p. ix), the intersection of “leadership, the country’s changing demographics and the continued growth of underrepresented groups, and the current state of higher education” are immediate concerns.

#### *Female Leaders*

Ashburn (2006) reported on a study of community college presidents that revealed the majority of presidents (71.0%) who participated in the study survey were male, and 87.5% identified themselves as Caucasian American. In comparison, the same report stated that the number of female, community college, chief executive leaders had only grown slightly, whereas the percentage of presidents identified as minority—male or female—actually had dropped.

Findings from the AACC (2005) are significant because they illustrated that although women constitute 27% of community college presidents, an even smaller percentage of all community college presidents are Latina. Another view of this dilemma is that women comprise 58% of the student population, and Hispanics represent 10% of all students. This trend may be especially problematic for Hispanic students seeking role models, as the growing gap between student demographics and leadership will continue to widen unless action is taken.

### *External Forces*

Critical events have influenced community colleges throughout their more than 100-year history. Political, policy, and societal factors have included the nation at war, the economy, the civil rights movement, women's entrance to the workforce, technology, and greater access to education for women and other minorities (Vaughn, 2000).

Upheavals continue as community colleges are in the midst of major transitions, partially due to the influences of evolving technology, globalization of the economy, decreased state funding, changing accreditation processes, and an increasingly diverse student population (Roueche & Jones, 2005). In addition to these pressures, community colleges are grappling with greater scrutiny on accountability as well as competition from new, nontraditional providers of education and training (Alfred, Ewell, Hudgins, & McClenney, 1999).

According to the ACE (2007a), "The challenges and complexities of leading a higher education institution have changed radically and multiplied dramatically from what they were only twenty years ago" (p. xi). Industry has increased expectations that

colleges prepare employees who possess technological skills as well as knowledge of foreign cultures (AACC, 2000). Community colleges must be prepared to respond to a plethora of expected deliverables to their customers in the global economy. These forces have created a major shift in the role of incoming college presidents. In addition, the retirements of current leaders that occur over the next several years will rob institutions of a rich history and pool of experienced individuals.

### *The Impact of Retirements*

“The leaders who were instrumental in the development of community college in the 70s are leaving their colleges at an increasing rate” (Wallin, 2006, p. 513). This drain on leadership presents a challenge to colleges that must struggle to identify the next generation of senior-level executives. In addition to retirements, vacancies occur as a result of movement to another position or institution, death, nonrenewal, unanticipated circumstances such as personal or family illness, and internal political pressures (Polonio, Golder, & Daniel, 2007). Wallin reported, “The turnover in leadership community colleges will be unprecedented in the next decade as baby boomers retire” (p. 513). Wallin further asserted, “There is genuine concern about the quality, the experience, and the preparation of those who will follow” (p. 513). The dwindling pool of candidates will magnify competition for qualified individuals to fill vacancies. “Campuses are becoming aware that creating an inclusive leadership environment and avoiding organizational fit is a serious problem facing the academy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Kezar, 2001, p. 86). Further, hiring the right presidential candidate is expensive and time consuming. The commitment of resources for funding a presidential search can include “several thousand dollars...for

advertising and travel costs: in addition, there would be personnel cost associated with service on the selection committee” (Campbell, 2002, p. 17). In light of this investment, a successful first-time search is particularly imperative.

Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) suggested that assessment of institutional culture is tantamount in preparing for a presidential search; thus, questions should include the following: “What is the present culture? What cultural elements are openly recognized and discussed by the people within...? What are the unspoken elements of the culture? What is required to succeed in the organization? What assures failure with the organization?” (p. 242).

According to Dembicki (2006), there is a dearth of minorities positioned to assume leadership positions in the community college, and the percentage of minority presidents has fallen. Trustees themselves may serve as an impediment to minorities’ entering the pipeline by demonstrating majority preference. These factors present barriers in the challenge to diversify leadership.

### *The Changing Role of the President*

As the context of the community college environment has changed, what skills, knowledge, and attributes are necessary to be an effective leader? Pope and Miller (2005) noted that presidents must possess skills different than those of past generations. Competencies include a greater appreciation of diversity, technology skills, and the ability to envision the role of higher education in a global economy. Roueche and Jones (2005) described the role of the new community college president as an entrepreneur who must be creative by serving as a fundraiser and an agent in facilitating creative

collaborations. The role of today's president "combines, in effect, at least two full-time jobs, each of which requires significantly different approaches, skills, talents, and knowledge" (ACE, 2007a, p. 6). The president must establish and maintain relationships through business and community partnerships. This is "in addition to the complexities and difficulty inherent in managing primarily on-campus constituencies" (ACE, 2007a, p. 6). Edwards (2004) noted that effective leaders have developed "intercultural competence" (Leadership Abstract). The president must serve as a collaborator, maintaining visibility in the community through service on boards. As the figurehead for the institution, the president carries the added responsibility of being visible in the media. Cotton (2003) expressed that news media can be of great assistance to a college president. Positive coverage can help build the president's reputation; assist in the fundraising process; and help attract top students, professors, and administrators. The media have the ability to highlight new programs and to help a college president communicate with the community.

An external presence provides an opportunity for the president to tell the story of the college, a crucial connection in becoming a "friendraiser," a prerequisite to being a fundraiser (Milliron, de los Santos, & Browning, 2003, p. 6). In the face of diminishing resources, the role of the president has expanded to include responsibility for securing external funds to support the institution.

Private college presidents have long been charged with fund raising...but over the 20 years public institution presidents have seen that role grow from not even appearing in the job description to commanding between one-third and one-half their time. (ACE, 2007a, p. 7)

Although fundraising has been a function for presidents of 4-year institutions for some time, this is a recent phenomenon for presidents of 2-year colleges.

### Pathway to the Presidency

Most college presidents achieved their role through a traditional path of dean of instruction or chief academic officer (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; McFarlin, 2000; Vaughn, 1986). The ACE (2007a) affirmed, “Sixty-nine percent of presidents had experience as a faculty member, spending an average of eight years in this role” (p. 10). In contrast are “concerns over the recruitment, retention, and promotion of Latino/a higher education faculty” (Delgado-Romero, E. A., Manlove, A. N., Manlove, J.D., & Hernandez, C.A., 2007, p. 35). McFarlin further concluded that placement in an internal position provided access to upward movement within the institution. The highest levels in administration are likely to possess a doctorate (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002, Weisman & Vaughn, 2007). These factors have implications for professional preparation programs and individual career mapping for Latinas. As Leon (2005) suggested, “The future for Latino CEOs in higher education does not look bright, given the low Latino college graduation rates” (p. 14).

Another source of potential future leaders is the management ranks; however, the pool of prepared mid-level managers dwindles when individuals do not self identify as candidates for growth and promotion. Ethnic minorities at midlevel management positions in higher education are less likely to see themselves as contributors to the purpose of the organization (Rosser, 2004), thus the opportunity to develop talented employees is missed. Instead, “community college leaders seem caught in the currency of

leadership succession pattern, still assuming the traditional paths to senior level positions” (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002, p. 573). Unless the majority culture supports change, the faces of leadership will remain the same.

McFarlin’s (1999) study identified commonalities in the backgrounds of outstanding community college presidents. This research was conducted in response to literature that addressed an impending shortage of leaders at the top administrative levels of community colleges in the United States. In this study, the differences between dynamic leaders and those less likely to effectively advance institutions were investigated. A variety of factors were examined to determine which strategies were most effective in preparing leaders. McFarlin proposed that exemplary leaders were developed through specific preparation. As a result of a peer-review selection process, 96 of the 718 presidents included in the sample were identified as outstanding leaders. Most of the subjects in McFarlin’s study were married, White males, which is consistent with the demographic composition of community college presidents.

Factors associated with exemplary leaders included acquisition of a doctoral degree, academic preparation specific to community college leadership, research and publication, the ability to be a change agent, and a position in upper levels of community college (McFarlin, 1999). Subjects who had mentors, engaged in networking, and participated in leadership development activities apart from academic training were among those in the exemplary group. Expanded knowledge of technology was also a common theme in career success.

In 2005, following a 2-year development process, the AACC board of directors approved a set of competencies for community college leaders. This framework of competencies included organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism. These competencies were intended to assist emerging leaders determine a plan for professional development.

Academic preparation is available through formal educational studies such as the oldest Community College Leadership Program (CCLP), established in 1944, at The University of Texas at Austin. Other academic programs include the North Carolina State University College of Education, Higher Education Administration in Raleigh, North Carolina, and the Community College Leadership Program at Iowa State University in Ames. A comprehensive list of leadership preparation options is available through an online resource supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, the Leading Forward (2004) project web site.

Established in 1964, the ACE Fellows Program was “designed to identify and prepare senior faculty and administrators for the highest level positions and the lack of prepared professionals to assume leadership roles” (G. A. Smith & Ross, 2005, p. 110). The AACC facilitates the Future Leaders Institute, as well as a Presidents Academy focused on new CEOs. An affiliate council of AACC, the National Community College Hispanic Council (2006) supports a Leadership Fellows program that provides advanced professional development opportunities to emerging Latino leaders.

Pettersen (2003) reported, “One of the earliest national programs specifically focused at community college women was a joint project of the League for Innovation in

the Community College and the American Association of Women in Community and Junior Colleges” (p. 13). This initiative was the beginning of the National Institute for Leadership Development (2003). The League for Innovation in the Community College also offers an Executive Leadership Institute for potential presidents or those in transition.

Leadership training opportunities increase the odds that minorities are prepared to move into senior-level positions. However, those administering preparation programs must be mindful of the changing landscape of the stakeholders they serve. Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) argued, “Preparing leaders for a diverse society demands that educational-leadership faculty move beyond rhetoric and engage graduate students in a level of discourse that allow for significant growth and understanding concerning equity issues” (p. 242). Townsend and Twombly (1998) charged, “In the works specifically addressing community college leadership, the authors typically do not speak of paradigmatic shifts to advance a multicultural, gender inclusion organization” (p. 81). Moreover, Lee (2002) noted, “The transition from a homogeneous educational community to a diverse one has been a long process filled with passionate debate” (p. 360).

### The Latina Experience in Higher Education

What is the experience of Latinas as they negotiate their career paths? The challenges encountered by women in academia are not new, as noted by Chamberlain (1988): “While minority women in the professions have the same problems as other

women, their needs are more acute. Because of their small numbers in most disciplines, they face conditions of great isolation and lack of influence” (p. 283).

The picture is bleak for Latinas; this group has not entered the pipeline to higher education in substantial numbers. Cuádriz (2005) noted, “Chicanas are severely underrepresented in institutions of higher education at the undergraduate, masters, and doctoral levels” (p. 215). If Latinas lack advanced degrees, there is no access to the leadership pipeline.

In reference to the progress made since the 1970s, Gutierrez et al. (2002) argued,

What hasn't changed regarding Latinos in U.S. higher education, however, is the poor pipeline of Hispanic talent, starting from elementary and secondary education and moving onward. ...Although progress has been made, much more remains to be done to expand the pool of appropriately credentialed and experientially prepared Latinos for leadership positions in community colleges. (p. 299)

What can be done to support Latinas in attaining doctoral degrees? Examination of academic practices leads to attention to institutional climate and practices. González (2006) stated, “There exists vast literature on how and why Latinas fail in graduate education—it is important to address institutional structures that hinder Latina graduate educational attainment” (p. 349). Calafell, (2007) recalled her entrance to the university setting as a student:

Upon entering the campus and for the first time in my life being overwhelmed by the whiteness of the space, I sought refuge in classes that spoke to marginalized experiences—intercultural communication and Chicano studies... I took these courses as a survival strategy. (p.14)

Jackson and Phelps (2004) maintained, “Because many academic leaders in two-year colleges are selected or recruited from faculty ranks, a diverse faculty is essential for

advancing institutional efforts to achieve equitable and successful outcomes for faculty” (p. 80). As noted earlier by McFarlin (1999), many community college presidents are drawn from the academic ranks; however, an underrepresentation of minority faculty further dwindles the pool of employees to draw from for leadership roles (Gerdes, 2003; Lujan, Gallegos, & Harbour, 2003; Opp & Gosetti, 2002). Table 3 illustrates the gap in employment placement at higher levels of executive positions and in faculty ranks as compared to White, non-Hispanic employees.

Table 3

*Employees in Degree-Granting Institutions, by Race/Ethnicity and Primary Occupation:  
Fall 2003*

Primary Occupation	Total	Race/Ethnicity				
		White, non-Hispanic	Black, non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native
Total, all Institutions	3,194,169	2,298,239	312,902	166,035	156,436	18,920
Professional Staff	2,272,583	1,686,746	152,888	83,656	121,592	11,393
Executive/Administrative/Managerial	186,505	152,630	17,601	7,195	5,008	1,089
Faculty (Instruction and Research)	1,174,831	922,657	65,999	40,003	59,712	5,572
Instruction and Research Assistants	293,047	150,378	10,317	8,624	20,382	1,188
Other Professional	618,200	461,081	58,971	27,834	36,490	3,549
Nonprofessional Staff	921,586	611,493	160,014	82,379	34,844	7,522

*Note.* Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2006). Digest of Education Statistics, 2005.

Mentorship is correlated with career enhancement in higher education and is potentially highly influential in career advancement, unfortunately the pool of potential female mentors is also limited (Brown, 2005; Macias, 1995). Although mentoring has been identified as a positive factor in supporting career development, obstacles present

themselves. A graduate student lamented her realization of the minority faculty experience:

Chicano and Latino faculty are trying their best to mentor Chicano and Latino bachelor's, master's, and doctorate students in addition to mentoring the other students. But they themselves need support from above and below to gain tenure and thus job security. (as quoted in Reyes & Rios, 2005, p. 382)

Thus, developing a mentoring relationship requires an investment of time and competing demands for faculty. Another challenge to protégés is that the small number of women in leadership roles shrinks the available pool of mentors who can serve as role models.

Carozza (2002) emphasized that if minority mentoring is not a priority initiative of higher education, “there will be a dearth of qualified individuals in the ranks of mature senior faculty and, likely, corresponding trickle-down effects with the potential to undermine the entire educational system” (p. 351).

Mondragón, a faculty member at Howard University reflected, “It’s very hard for young people starting academic careers because the concept of tenure tracking is changing” (as quoted in Martinez & Martinez, 2006, p. 13). Turner (2002) captured the stories of faculty member experiences as they negotiate their professional environments: “Although faculty women of color have obtained academic positions, even when tenured they often confront situations that limit their authority and, as they address these situations, drain their energy” (p. 74).

### *Marginalization*

Cuádriz (2005) proclaimed, “Since the 1960s, Chicana students, activists, and scholars have asserted the need to study Chicanas and their status in institutions of higher education in the United States” (p. 216). Contrary to this call for action, most of the

research conducted on community college presidents has focused on the experience of White men. As women slowly attained presidencies, the area of study expanded.

Although women are now included in research studies, data on race and ethnicity are scarce, thus not fully telling the story of Latinas. Opp and Gosetti (2002) reported, “The research literature consistently mentions that the increase in the number of women administrators has been particularly pronounced in two year institutions. Yet the status of women administrators of color at 2-year institutions is less clear” (p. 592). Thus, it is difficult to compare data; the variables are not consistent and perhaps are unknown.

The small number of Latinas in leadership roles places additional burdens on these individuals to represent or speak for an entire population. Further, the absence of representation by Latinas in presidencies sadly translates to too few role models for other Latinas attempting to enter the pipeline to the presidency.

Latinas and other women of color “experience multiple marginality” and are often presented with additional layers of complexity in their day-to-day professional lives (Turner, 2002, p. 76). According to Turner, women of color function in a contextual space that encompasses being more visible and on display, feeling more pressure to conform and to make few mistakes, becoming socially invisible. Moreover, being in a state of isolation carries a greater likelihood of exclusion from informal networks, limited sources of power through alliances, as well as few opportunities for sponsorship. Therefore, women of color face misperceptions of their identity and role in the organization, being stereotyped, and encounter greater personal stress.

Further, “Situations in which a woman of color might experience marginality are multiplied. ...Often it is difficult to tell whether race or gender stereotyping is operating” (Turner, 2002, p. 77). Hankins (2000) referred to this concept as “ethnic double consciousness” (p. 193). Therefore, this marginalization does little to promote Latinas who aspire to leadership positions in higher education. These challenges can actually dissuade Latinas from pursuing a career in higher education.

Anzaldúa (1999) described *borderlands* as emotional and physical spaces that “are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line...a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (p. 25). Bicultural women must negotiate these borders as they strive for success as a minority in a majority culture. González (2006) alleged, “The multidimensionality of oppressive structures such as class, gender, race, and ethnicity that exist for Latinas encapsulate nuances that give way to a complex Latina consciousness that is simultaneously informed by the hegemonic power structure” (p. 353).

Alienation and exclusion from the “good ol’ boy network” contribute to marginalization (Gillett-Karam et al., 1991, p. 14). Confusion and feelings of exclusion are powerful, as described in a narrative of a young Latina faculty member (2007):

I am part of this system, I am part of this space but the rules were not made for me. How long can I survive in it? I am embarrassed by all my inadequacies that must be apparent to just about everyone around me. (p. 427)

Bensimon (1989) proposed that a reason women’s voices are silenced may be “fear of marginalization” (p. 155). González (2006) described practices within institutions of

higher education: “It is within these academic socialization processes that the academy works to systematically and covertly challenge the cultural foundations that Latinas bring with them to the institution” (p. 348). The experiences described at best could be tolerated as a means of survival within an organizational structure and culture.

### *Institutional Culture*

Morgan (1998) stated, “When we talk about culture we are usually referring to the pattern of development reflected in a society’s system of knowledge, ideology, values, laws, and day-to-day ritual” (p.112). Issues of diversity and culture are deeply rooted in higher education. Kuh and Whitt (1998) stated:

As a process, culture shapes and is shaped by, the ongoing interactions of people on and off campus. As a product, culture reflects interactions among history, traditions, organizational structures, and the behavior of current students, faculty, and staff. (p. 98)

The accepted traditions and norms were defined by the majority population in power, who historically had little incentive to be more inclusive. “Reflections of culture and institutional climate are a natural progression of thought in discussion regarding diversity in higher education” (Lee, 2002, p. 360). United States demographics and student populations set the stage for difficult conversations regarding culture and diversity. Townsend (2006) reflected, “Organizational culture is different from institutional climate in that culture is more deeply embedded and more difficult to change” (p. 819).

Bias against certain groups, whether based on gender, race, ability, or other identity, challenges the notion of inclusion. Gender stereotyping can occur as a result of perception, experiences, or socialization. Women are traditionally expected to behave differently than men by exhibiting nurturing behavior and engaging in service-oriented

roles. Society has encouraged men to be oriented to achievement and to forceful, independent, and decisive characteristics (Heilman, 2001). Thus, gender coupled with ethnicity potentially create an additional bind for Latinas and other women of color who are encouraged to demonstrate unfamiliar characteristics in order to achieve success.

Within the larger institutional culture are distinct subcultures that bring together groups who share common values, norms, and beliefs based on commonalities such as gender, academic discipline, ethnicity, student's roles, or a variety of similar goals. Power may be exerted by a group to further a sense of importance and influence as well as to promote the goals of the group (Fowler, 2004). Institutions of higher education often promote a traditionalistic culture that is exemplified by the belief that leadership should be relegated to an established elite group. According to Fowler, "It may consist of the local 'good ole boys' in one place...membership in it achieved through family or other social ties" (p. 95). Membership of this elite group is resistant to the inclusion of others, since the connection is one of perceived entitlement. Women tend to be excluded because "traditional forms of organization are often dominated by and shaped by male value systems" (Morgan, 1998 p. 129).

According to Gillett-Karam, et al. (1991), "A culture of conformity refers to the practices of honoring and emulating only the traits of previous leaders, or to institutionalize rules that exclude and diminish the importance of exception or diversity" (p. 12). This institutional climate maintains the comfort level for those in power, according to Lee (2002). While organizational hierarchies change by becoming flatter and more group oriented, a reluctance to modify behavior remains (Evans, 2001). Moore

(2005) referred to the hierarchy as a pecking order that is concerned with status within the community college, especially as it relates to minority groups. Pettitt and Ayers (2002) stated, “If newcomers remain with an organization and make sense of it through the eyes of coworkers, then a cycle of socializing newcomers into a job group using dysfunctional conflict communication behaviors is highly possible,” thus perpetuating biased behaviors and attitudes (p. 115).

Castillo (1995) asserted, “There remains a tenacious insistence that all peoples residing in the United States must eventually assimilate into dominant society” (p. 2). Adapting to the accepted norms of the larger society is expected by those in positions of power. Castillo continued, “Assimilation may have worked in the past and continues to work for white people regardless of their ethnic background, but people of color in the U.S. have not successfully blended into the infamous melting pot” (p. 2).

A dimension of power is bias based on race or gender (Fowler, 2004), a perspective echoed by Moore (2005). Moore (2005) argued that racism is very much a part of institutional and faculty culture. Further, noted in “Structural Racism and Community Building,” Lawrence et al. (2004) described modern culture and perspectives as based on “cues, which consist of bits of information about racial, ethnic, gender, immigrant, and other groups, accumulate and become stereotypes that are reinforced in multiple aspects of the mass culture” (p. 20). Lawrence et al. continued, “Cultural representations have become integral parts of the societal crucible in which public policies and institutional practices are fashioned and refined” (p. 20). While the message describes larger systems within society, the same practices occur in higher education.

Institutional culture is far from inclusive in this traditionally male-dominated environment.

### *Challenges*

The “glass ceiling” concept represents the multiple barriers that women encounter in the workplace (Cox, 1993, p. 20) as well as challenges in the attitudes and values that people in positions of power bring to the work environment. Carli and Eagly (2001) noted, “The glass ceiling is a metaphor for prejudice and discrimination” (p. 631). Female community college presidents have experienced challenges in coping with personal and institutional hindrances during their ascension to the college presidency (Moore, 2000; Kampel, 2006). Barriers to women striving for success exist in the attitudes and values that people in positions of power bring to the work environment.

A tendency to hire others like ourselves is a common pattern that contributes to maintaining the status quo, further restricting women from being considered for positions that historically have been held by men. According to Flannigan, Jones, and Moore (2004), hiring practices are very similar to the time when faculty were first hired in the 1960s. Table 4 demonstrates the minimal changes in hiring practices over a 20-year span.

Table 4

*Characteristics of College Presidents, 1986 and 2006*

Characteristic	1986 (% of total)	2006 (% of total)
Sex		
Male	90.5	77.0
Female	9.5	23.0
Race and ethnicity		
White	91.9	86.4
African American	5.0	5.9
Hispanic	2.2	4.6
Asian American	0.4	0.9
American Indian	0.5	0.7
Other	0.0	1.5
Age		
31–40	4.6	0.6
41–50	37.0	7.5
51–60	44.4	42.6
61–70	13.5	42.6
71 or older	0.4	6.7
Average age	52 years	60 years

*Note.* Source: *Facts and Figures: A Profile of College Presidents*, by the American Council on Education, 2007b, retrieved February 13, 2007, from <http://chronicle.com/stats/acesurvey/data.htm>

Traditional hiring practices perpetuate maintenance of the status quo. The culture of an organization begins with the leadership priorities and values (Baker, 1992). As such, a commitment to change must be championed by top administration and the board of trustees responsible for the hiring of the president (Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, & Tucker, 1999). Vaughan (2004) emphasized,

There is a vast pool of individuals—women and minorities, as well as white—on the nation’s community college campuses just waiting to be invited to sit at the leadership table. It behooves trustees and presidents, knowing that a vast number

of presidential vacancies will occur, to have well-qualified replacements waiting in the wings. (p.56)

Women, minority or White, who have achieved leadership positions continue to struggle with challenges that differ from those of their male counterparts. “As women leaders entering a new century, we are at a very difficult crossroads, a crossroads where public expectations, the demands of diverse populations, governmental scrutiny, and hard financial realities intersect” (Stephenson, 2001, p. 193). In addition to the public demands of the presidential role, female presidents and their spouses must cope with territory that has in the past been largely uncharted. An early study conducted in 1986 indicated that the wives of male presidents assumed most of the responsibility for the household, whereas female presidents spent almost as much time involved in household chores as their husbands (Vaughan, 1986). A pressure that influences women in making career decisions is family. Women may question whether or not they will be effective in the roles of mother and that of college president (Brown, 2005). R. M. Smith (2001) quoted a female president as disclosing, “[My] divorce was largely caused by my becoming president. My ex-husband had difficulty being, as he described it, a ‘consort’” (p. 230). In both studies, a lack of privacy served as a point of frustration for spouses. These tensions may be exacerbated for Latinas who negotiate cultural norms that are traditionally more gender role specific than the dominant non-Hispanic culture.

### *The Influence of Culture*

L. A. Valverde (2003) proclaimed, “Women of color are pressured to give up their cultural identity” (p. 103). In her novel, *Almost a Woman*, Santiago (1999) captured the essence of living in a bicultural environment. The lead character reacts to direction

given by the teacher in a drama class with an internal dialogue: “I refused to venture into my deepest self, to reveal my feelings, to examine my true emotions publicly” (Santiago, p. 74). The struggle continues: “It was humiliating enough not to be a good enough actress to fool my teachers and fellow students. . . .I didn’t have the skills to act while acting” (Santiago, p. 74). This short passage illustrates the misgivings that some Latinas engage in every day in their interactions with others, both professionally and in their personal lives. Suarez-McCrink (2002) wrote, “A minority women must walk between two worlds—the one framed by the stereotypical traditions of the White-dominant culture and the one in which her ethnicity is rooted as part of an all-encompassing ethos” (p. 240). Latinas are confronted with perceptions based on images of gender and race (Calafell, 2006; L. A. Valverde, 2003).

Suarez-McCrink (2002) cited the work of Gil and Vasquez in framing the cultural expectations for Latinas. The highest value is placed on tradition, marriage, and understanding and accepting one’s script in life to uphold these pillars of the culture. Rincon (1997) stated, “Mexican culture has been male-oriented and dominated. . . . The father wields almost unlimited power within the home. . . . Traditionally, the role of the Mexican woman is one of subordination” (p. 25).

Villalpando (2004) examined the various forms of identities and noted, “For Latinos, each of these dimensions of their identity can potentially elicit multiple forms of subordination, and each dimension can also be subjected to different forms of oppression” (p. 43). For Latinas, gender adds another layer of complexity. The lack of role models in higher education administration poses another challenge for Hispanic

women. Although opportunities for women and minority administrators in higher education have increased, they have not brought women the acceptance they seek (Macias, 1995).

The challenges associated with being minority in a majority setting are not exclusive to Latinas. Rodriguez (2006) acknowledged the added responsibilities of a Latino president, which “also creates an unwritten and necessary burden— and I would add obligation—to serve with distinction so that the career pathways to the presidency for Latinos, and other ethnic minorities and women, remain open” (p. 3). Rodriguez further explained, “I recognize that my margin for error is far less than my majority counterparts and that my approach to leadership, my body of work, and my decisions will be heavily scrutinized” (p. 3).

Cultural barriers include negative interpretations of the same behavior in minorities that is encouraged in majorities. For example, self-confidence, energy, tenacity, risk taking, and a sense of humor are seen as leadership qualities. The same qualities exhibited by minorities are often misconstrued as arrogance, aggressiveness, and nonconformist. Cuádriz (2005) reported on the stereotypes encountered by Chicanas: “The field of Chicanas and higher education found itself on the defensive, largely in response to prevailing cultural deficit notions. Much of the early literature refuted concepts and myths that faced researchers in the subfield of Chicanos and education” (p. 228). Cuádriz continued, “Studies were conducted to dispel stereotypic notions of Chicanas as passive and lacking in ambition or as deriving from families where education was not valued” (p. 228). Thus Chicanas, whether students or staff, are burdened with

preconceived notions and are placed in a position of educating others about values and beliefs. Gutierrez et al. (2002) declared “a need for research on differences experienced by Latinos and Latinas as they move up the administrative ladder” (p. 299).

### *The Role of the Board*

The board of trustees serves as the representative of the community and is charged with a myriad of responsibilities. Kezar (2006) describes the role of the board of trustees and the complexity of their charge:

Although there are variations among states about how public higher education governing boards are structured, they maintain the same role—to supervise higher education institutions for the public good—and have similar responsibilities, such as hiring and evaluating the president, establishing and terminating programs, maintaining fiduciary responsibility, and ensuring the institution fulfills its mission. The future of higher education is entrusted to governing boards and the stakes are currently very high. Boards will need to consider and take action on a host of complex issues in the coming years.  
(p. 969)

The role of selecting a president is “the board’s most important job” (Jensen, Giles, & Kirklin, 2000, p. 70). Traditionally though, trustees are similar in composition to those they hire (Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel, and Coyan 2000, Vaughan, 2004). Ebbers et al stated that women in leadership development programs reported that “the biggest hurdle to advancement was the mind-set of community college boards of trustees” (p. 380). Therefore, it is imperative that the board of trustees understand the needs of the institution and the direction for the future of the college.

For community college trustees, the confluence of dynamics can provide opportunity to add diversity to community college leadership and enhance the educational experience of all students. Trustees, in partnership with the president, share

responsibility for preparing emerging leaders that include strategically planned, experiential learning opportunities (Vaughan, 2004). It is imperative that boards of trustees address succession planning while determining the future needs of the institutions they serve.

### Summary

Whereas community colleges long have been regarded as innovative, responsive organizations, the composition of senior executives and faculty fails to reflect student demographics. In spite of the benefits of a diverse faculty, most college faculty are predominately White. The route to securing a faculty position is challenging for Latinas and other minorities; consequently, the pool of potential future leaders is small. Moody (as quoted in Carriuolo, 2003, p. 18) stated, “A mono-cultural faculty diminishes learning and denies students (in particular, minorities and women) a variety of role models and mentors who could inspire them and fuel their ambitions.” Moody also noted, “Women and minorities bring new perspectives and new approaches to research, scholarship, and teaching. Higher education and the larger society need that intellectual richness” (as quoted in Carriuolo, p. 18). McCabe (2003) asserted, “Faculty who reflect the demographics of the student population not only contribute to diversity initiatives on campus, but also serve as role models for underprepared students and contribute to building their efficacy and success,” (p. 112). Jackson and Phelps (2004) identified several outcomes that occur when students and those who work in a college environment with “higher levels of racial or ethnic diversity” (p. 80), including positive interactions and enhanced teaching and learning experiences in and outside of the classroom.

Mondragón, faculty member of Howard University, noted, “Experience of other cultures makes you strong. You realize that concepts are relative” (as quoted in Martinez & Martinez, 2006, p. 13). Evidence suggests the benefits of inclusion at all levels of the institutions.

Although community colleges promote a commitment to diversity (Roueche et al., 2001), the current number of female presidents of color is small, especially Latinas. The path to acceptance for women continues to be challenging; sexist or biased attitudes toward women persist. According to Gardner (1990),

No doubt male attitudes are changing, and one could argue that if we would only be patient, women will eventually reach a point of fair-minded acceptance. My guess is that this would take us well into the later years of the twenty-first century. (p. 181)

Mixed messages regarding the community college values of commitment to diversity, equity, and cultural competence are not congruent with hiring practices, as evidenced by the current administrative composition. Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) observed, “Often a chasm exists between organizational values that appear in printed documents and the day-to-day living of these values within the organization” (p. 237). Townsend (2006) posed the question, “What would be a positive organizational climate for women and minorities and how could it be achieved?” (p. 814). According to Townsend, three considerations to standard benchmarks for the work environment would be

(a) representation of women and minorities proportionate to their percentage in the populations served by the institution, (b) equal pay for equal work, and (c) equal opportunity for promotion as demonstrated by the percentage of women and minorities in the presidential ranks. (p. 815)

In a similar vein, Opp and Gosetti (2002) wrote, “Policy makers must seek out data that provide information specifically on institutional practices that are purposefully and successfully thawing the chilly climate for women administrators of color” (p. 606).

“Latinos aspiring to and holding faculty and administrative positions continue to feel that there is considerable bias toward them in hiring and promotion policies and procedures” (Santiago, 1996, p. 28). Gutierrez et al. (2002) noted, “It is also possible that, like their student counterparts, community colleges are the primary vehicle for Latino administrators to achieve the American Dream” (p. 310). However, this dream may not come to fruition, as a gap exists between stated community colleges’ values and actual practices, as evidenced by the small number of Latinas in high levels of administration.

Without strategic intervention, the challenge of reflecting diversity and providing role models for students of color at all levels of community colleges will grow in complexity and magnitude, robbing all students of opportunities to experience a more bicultural learning environment. It is imperative that community college leaders and professors of higher education work together to prepare prospective leaders (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2004). Townsend and Twombly (1998) reflected, “Our review of the current, high-profile organizational change and leadership literature suggests two major rationales for organizational change: change makes community colleges more efficient and effective organizations, and changes for democracy and critical multiculturalism” (p. 84).

Vaughan addressed an overlooked aspect of a leadership crisis (2004) bluntly as,

The crisis has two aspects: First, community-college leaders have failed to fill presidential vacancies with members of minority groups at anywhere near the

level that reflects the general population of the nation, and second, there is far too much inbreeding at the presidential level. Without diversity at the top, institutions face stagnation and loss of the fresh ideas new perspectives that will keep them vibrant, responsive, and intellectually challenging. (p. B14).

Community colleges stand to seize an opportunity for dramatic change in the composition of future leadership.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to identify characteristics and influences as indicated by Latina community college presidents that had the most impact on their career success as well as strategies employed to overcome barriers on their pathway to the presidency. In other words, how did these Latina presidents ascend to a leadership role? Another purpose of this research was to identify institutional practices and culture that either support or hinder Latina persistence in higher education.

This chapter presents the statement of the problem, research questions, and the conceptual framework that served as the foundation for this study. Further, a mixed-methodology approach was used for this study, thus a rationale for both quantitative and qualitative research is explained. The procedures for selecting and recruiting participants as well as data collection and analysis methods are fully outlined.

### Theoretical Framework

Since their inception, community colleges have been led primarily by an extremely homogeneous group: white males. Academic institutions are proud of their rich histories and traditions, and have maintained a rigid resistance to change. As such, one of the questions before this researcher is, are current systems and processes maintaining the status quo?

According to Anafara and Mertz (2006), a theoretical framework supports the researcher in remaining focused throughout the study (p.192). To that end, this particular

researcher drew on Critical theory to provide the lens to “investigate how the social and political aspects of the situation shape reality” (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). To examine these phenomena, critical inquiry calls into question issues of social justice and equity.

“Researchers find themselves interrogating commonly held values and assumptions, challenging conventional social structures, and engaging in social action” (Crotty, 2004, p. 157).

Phenomenology not only focuses on the experience of the individual, but also “seeks to understand the essence or structure of a phenomena” (Merriam, 2002, p. 93). This description of the phenomena, as told by the participants, adds to the understanding of the systems in place that created the environment in which individuals navigated their careers.

Whereas critical theory investigates larger societal structures that address power, this researcher sought to further understand the experience of Latina community college presidents who have succeeded within the confines of these systems. Thus, an interpretive research design was appropriate for this study of individuals who have assigned meaning to their experiences in their ascent to president and in their roles of CEO of institutions of higher education. This approach allowed the voices of the participants to be heard as they shared their stories (Merriam, 2002). The outcome was the generation of richly descriptive data from the compilation and analysis of numerous accounts of experiences. The study of minority women in higher education leadership roles has largely been ignored, therefore the findings of this study adds to a limited body of knowledge.

According to Patton (1987), “A grounded theory approach to evaluation research is inductive” (p. 39). As such, the role of this researcher was to gather and use data to form theory based on a “naturalistic inquiry” (Patton, 1987, p. 39). Patton (1987) further advised, “Grounded theory can provide relevant information to make informed decisions” (p. 40). As such, pertinent findings can support the development of public policy that promotes an agenda for greater accountability in the efforts of institutions to diversify the top ranks of administration.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study is the underrepresentation of Latinas in community college leadership roles. This is important because a disparity exists between student demographics and community college presidents, specifically an absence of Latinas in leadership roles. Although the number of women in the role of college president increased over the last two decades, most are white (ACE, 2007). Brown (2005) affirmed, “There is a paucity of female college presidents who are Women of Color” (p. 664). This issue is critical since the majority of community college students are female, and the racial and ethnic diversity in enrollment is increasing. Thus, current leadership is not representative of the student population. Further, a more balanced representation of diversity offers exposure to differing perspectives and styles of leadership. This type of diversity can add value to the organizational climate and benefit all students. The gap between student and leadership demographics is already acute, moreover, the potential exists for this chasm to grow unless efforts are made to identify, prepare, and support emergent leaders, specifically Latinas. “Informal contacts are strongly associated with

continued academic persistence. For Latina/o students, the importance of role models and mentors cannot be underestimated” (Castellanos & Jones, 2003, p.7).

### Research Questions

The following four research questions guided this mixed method study:

1. What variables do Latina community college presidents identify as having the most impact on their career success?
2. How do Latinas overcome barriers (if any) and challenges in their path to the presidency?
3. What practices or policies would be most beneficial in transforming community college culture to be more inclusive?
4. How have key conditions in higher education administration changed in the last ten years for Latinas?

### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research was to learn from Latina community college presidents about the conditions that influenced their ascension to the presidency. The three conditions and experiences examined were (a) influences that Latina community college presidents identified as having the most impact on personal career success, (b) strategies Latinas have employed to overcome barriers or challenges on the pathway to the presidency, and (c) the organizational climate and practices within community college systems that either hinder or support Latinas. The convergence of these conditions was analyzed to determine how to develop effective strategies to support Latinas in achieving leadership roles, as well as inform trustees of changing demographics of the

constituencies they serve. These data can serve as a planning resource to trustees as they consider long range institutional leadership development and succession planning.

#### Significance of the Study

Demographics in the United States have shifted to reflect a more diverse racial population (McCabe, 2000). The Pew Research Center (2005) reported that the 2000 census “marked the Hispanic population at 35.3 million people,” which was “an increase of 58% over 1990” (p. 2). The Pew Research Center report added that the increase of the Hispanic population in 2004 jumped over 14% in 4 years; meanwhile, the non-Hispanic population was up by barely 2%. The National Center for Education Statistics (2003) projected the Hispanic population will reach 98 million by 2050. Thus, this growing population will represent fully one quarter of the total U.S. population.

An increase in student diversity is also evident in community colleges. However, the demographics of community college leadership have not changed much, in spite of the increased diversity of students. “These new directions will challenge leaders to think creatively concerning what is essential to serve the emerging needs of a more diverse student body” (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005, p. 236).

Although the number of women presidents is increasing, “women’s representation in administrative positions, however, is still not proportionate to their presence in the classroom or in the ranks of community college faculty” (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002, p. 7). The goal to prepare a greater number of women presidents is not only to close the gender gap, but also fully to utilize the unique skills, perspectives, and leadership styles that women possess (Evans, 2001). Achieving a more balanced representation of

leadership serves to benefit all students. Lee (2002) noted, “The transition from a homogeneous educational community to a diverse one has been a long process filled with passionate debate” (p. 360). This resistance persists although women of color have proven their ability to lead complex organizations.

With impending retirements of community college presidents hired during the rapid growth of the 1960s, it is imperative that consideration be given to how leadership vacancies will be filled (Shults, 2001). The turnover in leadership occurs at a time of increasing diversity in student enrollments; this gap is in contrast to the primarily homogeneous composition of the current leadership. Although women comprise the majority of students and Latino enrollment is growing, the representation of Latinas in community college presidencies is woefully small.

Retirements of current Latina presidents may further shrink representation of this elite group. A study conducted by Hansen (1997) identified Latina presidents and vice presidents of the California community college system in 1996–1997. Hansen’s study included 17 participants, of which six were identified as presidents for the purpose of that research study. Revisiting this study was important, as several of the original participants were contemplating retirements and were identified as members of the pool for this current research. Kampel (2006) studied female university presidents and concluded that that study “be extended to included women presidents from community colleges” (p. 198). For the purpose of this study, this researcher identified Latina community college presidents from among the 1,186 postsecondary institutions as reported on the AACC (2006) web site.

## Assumptions

The researcher believed certain assumptions to be valid, truthful, and accurate.

The following six assumptions guided this study:

1. A surge in retirements of senior leadership of community colleges will occur during the next several years.

2. The current community college leadership is not adequately balanced to reflect the student population served.

3. The Latino population in the United States and the number of Latino students entering community colleges will continue to grow.

4. The small number of Latina presidents is especially alarming as it is disproportionate to the number of Latinas and other students of color.

5. Challenges to women seeking upward mobility have been identified and remain persistent. These barriers are even more significant for Latinas who may have less access to role models, professional networks, as well as the influence of nontraditional cultural norms and familial expectations.

6. Latinas have demonstrated that they are fully capable of leading a college system effectively.

## Mixed Methodology

This study utilized mixed methods for data collection, both qualitative and quantitative. Crotty (2004) proclaimed, “Research can be qualitative or quantitative, or both qualitative and quantitative, without this being problematic in anyway” (p. 15). In this study, both methods complemented each other and provided a more comprehensive

view of the subject (Custer, 1996). Whereas Patton (1987) reports an increase in the use of both methods, he notes that the two approaches “are not mutually exclusive, strategies for research” (1990, p.14).

### *Qualitative Research*

In order to thoroughly address the research questions, it was necessary to understand the experiences of Latinas who negotiated the path to the presidency. Consideration of the institutional context was crucial to arrive at a picture of the influences that formed the subjects’ personal narratives. The use of qualitative research was appropriate for this study because the voices and stories of Latina presidents are critical to gaining insight into their experiences (Kvale, 1996; Merriam, 2002).

Merriam (2002) stated,

The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. ...Learning how individuals experience and interact with their social world, the meaning it has for them, is considered an *interpretive* qualitative approach. (p. 3)

Data were collected from the personal narratives of the participants telling their stories. According to Kvale (1996), “An interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose. It goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in every conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge” (p. 6). The hermeneutical approach of listening and interpretation allowed this researcher to construct meaning from the interviews (Crotty, 2003; Kvale, 1996).

In comparing quantitative research to qualitative methods, Patton (1990) concluded, “Qualitative findings are long, more detailed, and variable in content; analysis

is difficult because responses are neither systematic nor standardized. Yet, the open ended responses permit one to understand the world as seen by the respondents” (p. 24).

### *Quantitative Research*

Survey data provided the “opportunity to strengthen the findings...introduced in the face-to-face interviews (Mata, 1997, p. 97). Statistics were used to organize the survey data in a meaningful context and provide a tool to reference the findings of other research studies.

### *Data Sources*

Data sources included face-to-face interviews with each of the participants. Each narrative was taped and transcribed for later coding. The researcher also scribed notes during each of the interviews to augment and validate the transcripts. The collection of the oral narratives provided abundant data. In addition, demographic questionnaires provided information on the participant’s educational background, mentoring opportunities, leadership development, family of origin, language acquisition, and other personal characteristics.

### *Participants*

The population for the study was Latina community college Chief Executive Officers (CEO) of *individually* accredited public institutions as defined by The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (2001).

Community, junior, and technical colleges and similar postsecondary institutions which offer an associate degree and are accredited by a regional accrediting association recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA); to the colleges and campuses of multicollege and multicampus institutions eligible for institutional membership; and to state administrative offices of state systems of community, technical, and junior colleges.

AACC (2006) reported 1,186 postsecondary institutions met these criteria. The researcher utilized this list and the *Institutes of Higher Education, Higher Education Directory 2006* to identify Latina community college presidents and chancellors. As a result, 10 possible participants were identified. However, to strengthen and add richer data to the study, the researcher expanded the list to include campus presidents. Campus presidents are individuals who are responsible for a branch campus and who report to a system chancellor. Therefore, the number of potential participants increased to 31 Latinas.

Next, the researcher searched on community college websites and communicated with colleagues in higher education associations and community college leadership positions to seek the contact information of each possible participant. Consequently, the number of Latina presidents identified decreased from 31 to 27 individuals since four Latinas no longer held this position. The 27 Latina presidents included two new retirees; these 27 presidents were then invited to complete a questionnaire. Further, 22 accepted the request and signed a consent form approved by The University of Texas Institutional Review Board for Research for the Protection of Human subjects. Of the five who did not participate in the study, three did not respond to communication attempts by this researcher. The remaining two declined participation and offered the following reasons: One had health issues and time constraints, while second voiced concern regarding the ability to remain anonymous.

Further, a total of 13 Latina chancellors, community college presidents, and campus presidents took part in an in-depth interview. This pool reflected as much

diversity in geographic regions of the country with representation from ten different states (California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania).

Research tools for this study included face-to-face interviews, interviewer notes, review of documents, and demographic questionnaires. The triangulation process of using multiple methods of data collection supported reliability of the study (Merriam & Associates, 2002). The naturalistic setting of the interview process required the researcher to act as a human instrument to collect data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2002; Patton, 1990). “At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” wrote Seidman (2006, p. 9).

Interviews were conducted face to face, in a neutral site such as a professional conference or a location the president designated or by conference call. Due to geographic dispersion, half the interviews were conducted by telephone. The researcher traveled to the site where the interview took place whenever possible and used an interview protocol for each session. An interview guide was provided to the subjects prior to the interview for review. According to Patton (1990), “The advantage of an interview guide is that it makes sure that the interviewer/evaluator has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation” (p. 283). However, questions were worded in an open-ended fashion to encourage participants to fully share their stories.

In addition, the researcher took field notes for later reference. Interviews were taped and later transcribed. All digital audio tapes were kept in a safe, locked area and destroyed once transcriptions were completed. Subjects were encouraged to review the transcripts to further ensure validity of the transcripts. The data were then coded and analyzed for themes.

### *Purposeful Sampling*

Patton (1990) stated, “The power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth...those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central purpose of the evaluation, thus the term ‘purposeful sampling’” (p. 52). In addition, Patton (1990) described homogeneous sampling as “the strategy of picking a small homogeneous sample. The purpose is to describe some particular subgroup in depth” (p. 54). For purposes of this study the sample was limited to Latina community college presidents or chancellors.

### *Reliability*

The researcher conducted a pilot interview with a Latina who was not included in the study analysis, but who had previously served as a community college president. As a result the interview process was refined prior to the actual participant interviews. This practice provided opportunity for this researcher to prepare for the interviews used for data collection (Merriam, 2002).

### *Validity*

According to Merriam (2002), “Reality in qualitative inquiry assumes that there are multiple, changing realities and that individuals have their own unique construction of

reality” (p. 25). Thus, the interviews would tell the story of the subject’s interpretation of her experiences and recollections. A measure to ensure validity of subject responses included member checking by providing the transcripts to the subject for review. Follow-up phone calls or electronic communication with participants provided additional clarification. The quantitative survey data were used to complement the results of the interview data.

### *Triangulation*

The strategy of triangulation in conducting research supports the quality of the research; therefore, multiple methods were employed for data collection (Patton, 1987). Methods included compilation of initial demographic information, interviews, review of documents, and comparison of outcomes to the few previous studies that focused on Latinas.

### Limitations of the Study

1. A limitation of this study is the small pool of participants (27) who are Latina community college presidents. Further, participation in this research project was voluntary, which shrunk the size of the original study group.
2. The study is limited to Latinas in leadership positions in the community college and may not be generalizable to other post-secondary institutions.
3. The sample participants in this study included only Latinas and generalizations to other racial-ethnic groups cannot be claimed.
4. Lastly, the sample size for this study is too small for generalizations to be made to a larger population.

## Analysis of Data

The researcher utilized inductive methods to explain the meaning of the data sources. The goal was to further understand the larger context of the community college system as it operates to serve the needs of stakeholders, including the community, students, staff, faculty, and external partners. Lincoln and Guba, (1985) explained inductive data analysis as “more likely to identify the multiple realities to be found in those data. . . .Such analysis is more likely to make the investigator-respondent (or object) interaction explicit, recognizable, and accountable” (p. 40). Lincoln and Guba, (1985) noted an additional consideration: “This process is more likely to fully describe the setting and to make decisions about transferability to other settings easier” (p. 40).

## Reducing Bias in Research

It was important that this researcher acknowledged the potential for bias in this study due to perceived similarities in self and the subjects in gender, ethnicity, and culture. However, since the possibility of bias was recognized, this researcher made a concerted effort to “identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of the data” (Merriam, 2002, p. 5). Additionally, this researcher followed the guidelines and requirements mandated by The University of Texas Institutional Review Board (IRB) for conducting research involving human subjects and received approval for the study. Further, the researcher worked closely with her committee chair and committee on the proposal and during the data collection phase of the study.

## Summary

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized for data collection in this study through the use of a survey, review of documents, and interviews with the participants. The conceptual framework of critical theory served to guide the intended outcome of determining influences, supports, and processes that the participants experienced in their journey to achieving the community college presidency.

Participants were encouraged to provide feedback on transcriptions to arrive at a thick description of the narratives. Data sources were coded for themes and categories for further analysis to determine connections for later interpretation. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study based on coding and analysis of the data collected. Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the findings of the research as well as any unanticipated outcomes and recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to identify characteristics and influences that Latina community college presidents indicated had the most impact on their career success as well as strategies employed to overcome perceived barriers on their pathway to the presidency or role as chief executive officer. In short, how did these Latina presidents ascend to a leadership role? Another purpose of this research was to identify institutional practices and culture that either support or hinder Latina presidents' persistence in higher education. The implications of systemic practices are examined in Chapter 5.

This chapter presents the statement of the problem, research questions, and the conceptual framework that served as the foundation for this study. A mixed-methodology approach was used, thus both quantitative and qualitative research are explained. The procedures for selecting and recruiting participants as well as data collection and analysis methods are fully described.

#### Theoretical Framework

According to Anafara and Mertz (2006), a theoretical framework supports the researcher in remaining focused throughout the study. This researcher drew on critical theory to provide the lens to “investigate how the social and political aspects of the situation shape reality” (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). To examine these phenomena, critical inquiry calls into question issues of social justice and equity. Since their inception,

community colleges have been primarily led by an extremely homogeneous group: white males. Academic institutions are proud of their rich histories and traditions, and have maintained a rigid resistance to change. According to Crotty (2004) “Researchers find themselves interrogating commonly held values and assumptions, challenging conventional social structures, and engaging in social action” (p. 157). As such, one of the questions before this researcher is, are current systems and processes maintaining the status quo?

Whereas critical theory investigates broader social structures that address power, this researcher sought to further understand the experience of Latina community college presidents who have succeeded within the confines of these academic systems. Thus, an interpretive research design using phenomenology was appropriate for this study of individuals who have assigned meaning in their ascension to the presidency and in their roles of CEO of institutions of higher education. This approach allowed the voices of the participants to be heard as they shared their stories (Merriam, 2002). The outcome was the generation of richly descriptive data from the compilation and analysis of numerous accounts of experiences.

Phenomenology not only focuses on the experience of the individual, but also “seeks to understand the essence or structure of a phenomena” (Merriam, 2002, p. 93). This description of the phenomena, as told by the participants, adds to the understanding of existing systems that create the environment in which individuals navigated their careers.

According to Patton (1987), “A grounded theory approach to evaluation research is inductive” (p. 39). As such, the role of this researcher was to gather and use data to form theory based on a “naturalistic inquiry” (Patton, 1987, p. 39). Patton further advised, “Grounded theory can provide relevant information to make informed decisions” (p. 40). As such, pertinent findings can support the development of public policy that promotes an agenda for greater accountability in the efforts of institutions to diversify the top ranks of administration.

### Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this study is the underrepresentation of Latinas in community college leadership roles. This is of particular importance because a disparity exists between the demographics of students as compared to community college presidents, specifically an absence of Latinas in leadership roles. Although the number of women in the role of college president increased over the last two decades, most are white (ACE, 2007). Brown (2005) affirmed, “There is a paucity of female college presidents who are Women of Color” (p. 664). This issue is critical since the majority of community college students are female, and the racial and ethnic diversity in enrollment is increasing. Thus, current leadership is not representative of the student population. Further, a more balanced representation of diversity offers exposure to differing perspectives and styles of leadership. This type of diversity can add value to the organizational climate and benefit all students. The gap between student and leadership demographics is already acute, and the potential exists for this chasm to grow unless efforts are made to identify, prepare, and support emergent leaders. “Informal contacts

are strongly associated with continued academic persistence. For Latina/o students, the importance of role models and mentors cannot be underestimated” (Castellanos & Jones, 2003, p.7).

### Research Questions

The following four research questions guided this mixed method study:

1. What variables do Latina community college presidents identify as having the most impact on their career success?
2. How do Latinas overcome barriers and challenges in their path to the presidency?
3. What practices or policies would be most beneficial in transforming community college culture to be more inclusive?
4. How have key conditions in higher education administration changed in the last ten years for Latinas?

### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research was to learn from Latina community college presidents and CEOs to learn about the conditions that influenced their ascension to the presidency. The three conditions and experiences examined were (a) influences that Latina community college presidents identified as having the most impact on personal career success, (b) strategies Latinas have employed to overcome perceived barriers or challenges on the pathway to the presidency, and (c) the organizational climate and practices within community college systems that either hinder or support Latinas. The convergence of these conditions was analyzed to determine how to develop effective

strategies to support Latinas in achieving leadership roles, as well as inform community college trustees of changing demographics of the constituencies they serve. These data can serve as a planning resource to trustees as they consider long-range institutional leadership development and succession planning.

### Survey Findings

The survey findings are organized into the following categories: demographic characteristics, professional preparation, professional affiliations, mentors, presidential search information, institutional type, characteristics of their predecessors, and trustees.

#### *Demographic Characteristics*

Participants in this study shared information on age, self-identification of ethnicity, and relationship status as outlined in the demographic questionnaire. Table 5 presents these findings.

Table 5

*Demographic Characteristics of Latina Presidents*

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage of total
Age Range		
41 - 45	2	9.1%
46 - 50	0	0.0%
51 - 55	7	31.8%
56 - 60	8	36.4%
61 >	5	22.7%
Ethnicity (self reported)		
Latina	4	25.0%
Hispanic	4	25.0%
Mexican American	3	18.8%
Puerto Rican	1	6.3%
Chicana	1	6.3%
Cuban	1	6.3%
Dominican	0	0.0%
Nicaraguan	1	6.3%
Multi-ethnic	1	6.3%
Relationship Status		
Single/never married	1	4.5%
First marriage	10	45.5%
Second or subsequent marriage	7	31.8%
Separated or divorced	3	13.6%
Committed relationship	1	4.5%

In this study the average age of the participants was 49.5 years at the time of their first presidency; seventeen are currently married. One person reported being in a committed relationship, while one had never been married. Three participants were separated or divorced. Of those who were married or in a committed relationship, the majority of their spouses were employed outside the home as noted in 6.

Table 6

*Employment Status of Latina President's Spouse*

Employment Status	Frequency	Percentage of total
Employed outside the home	13	59.1%
Retired	5	22.7%
No response	4	18.2%

Nearly 73% of the participants in this study reported that they had grown up in the western region of the United States (California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Texas) for the majority of their first 18 years of life.

Table 7

*Latina President's Primary Place of Childhood Residence*

Location	Frequency	Percentage of total
California	7	31.8%
Texas	6	27.3%
New Mexico	2	9.1%
New York	2	9.1%
Arizona	1	4.5%
Illinois	1	4.5%
Wisconsin	1	4.5%
Florida / Cuba	1	4.5%
Nicaragua	1	4.5%

Additionally, four participants immigrated from other countries (Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Nicaragua) or territories outside the United States early in their life.

*Professional Preparation*

All the presidents who responded to the survey have an earned doctorate with the

exception of one who expects to complete the doctorate in 2008. This is consistent with the findings reported by ACE in the *American College President*, “Women presidents were more likely than their male counterparts to have earned a doctorate” (2007, p. 16).

In addition to academic preparation, 20 of the 22 respondents reported participation in one or more leadership development program prior to being appointed president. Table 8 lists the programs that were identified by the participants in this study. The National Community College Hispanic Council Fellows Program was recognized as having the greatest participation rate.

Table 8

*Leadership Development Programs Attended by Latina Presidents Prior to First Presidency*

Leadership Program	Frequency	Percentage of total
National Community College Hispanic Council Fellows	10	26%
National Institute for Leadership Development	6	16%
League for Innovation in the Community College	4	11%
Harvard	4	11%
American Association of Community Colleges Presidents Academy	2	5%
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities	2	5%
Kellogg Fellow	2	5%
None	2	5%
American Association of Community Colleges Future Leaders Institute	1	3%
Leadership America	1	3%
State Leadership Program	3	8%
No response	1	3%

Leadership development programs have been linked to characteristics of outstanding presidents (McFarlin, 1999). Table 9 indicates the number of programs the

subjects participated in prior to their presidential appointment.

Table 9

*Number of Leadership Development Programs Attended by Latina Presidents Prior to First Presidency*

Number of Programs	Frequency	Percentage of total
Zero	2	9%
One	8	36%
Two	7	32%
Three or more	4	18%
No response	1	5%

*Professional Service*

Twenty of the participants in this study reported membership in at least one professional organization. In addition 95% reported service on numerous boards as reported in Table 10.

Table 10

*Latina Presidents Committee-based or Nonprofit Board Membership*

Organization	Frequency	Percentage of total
Educational Organization	14	25.9%
Community Service	13	24.1%
Non Profit	9	16.7%
Gov. Board or Commission	8	14.8%
K-12	5	9.3%
College or University	2	3.7%
Corporate	2	3.7%
Hospital	1	1.9%

This finding is consistent with those findings reported by Weisman and Vaughan

(2007), “As was reported in 2001, the overwhelming majority (93%) of all presidents serve on the boards of community-based or nonprofit organizations without receiving compensation” (p. 9).

*Mentors*

Seventy-seven percent of the participants in this study reported having a mentor prior to their presidency. Further, having a mentor was linked to characteristics of outstanding presidents (McFarlin, 1999).

Table 11

*Latina Presidents with Mentor(s) Prior to First Presidency*

Mentor	Frequency	Percentage of total
No	5	22.7%
Yes	17	77.3%

*Presidential Search Information*

The majority of those who responded to the survey, 68%, noted that this is a first presidency and are relatively new to their current position. One president was appointed in 2007 as an interim; 2 of the respondents are retired.

Table 12

*Characteristics of Current Latina Presidents*

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage of total
First presidency		
No	7	31.8%
Yes	15	68.2%
Years in position		
Less than 2	8	36.4%
2 - 5	10	45.5%
6 +	4	18.2%
Status when applying		
Internal	9	40.9%
External	13	59.1%

Whereas, Weisman and Vaughan (2007) reported that “The 2006 respondents have been in their current positions on the average of 7 years, almost the same as in 2001 and in 1996” (p. 5).

*Institutional Type*

All of the participants in this study served at public institutions. Additionally, 68% reported that the college was a designated Institution by the U.S. Department of Education as Hispanic Serving (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). ACE (2007) reported that, “Because many HSIs are associate’s colleges—and many of these are headed by minorities—they raise the overall percentage of minority leaders at this institution type” (p. 33).

Furthermore, prior to being appointed to the presidency, the most common position was in an academic role. The titles as reported by the participants are listed in

Table 13.

Table 13

*Latina Presidents Position Prior to Current Presidency*

Position	Frequency	Percentage of total
President	6	27.3%
Chief Academic Officer	1	4.5%
Vice President for Instruction	2	9.1%
Vice President of Academic Services	1	4.5%
Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA)	1	4.5%
Executive Vice President for Instruction	1	4.5%
Associate Provost	1	4.5%
Vice President & Chief Academic Officer (State)	1	4.5%
VPAA & Student Services	1	4.5%
Vice President for Student Learning	1	4.5%
Vice President of Student Services	1	4.5%
Dean	1	4.5%
Dean of Science	1	4.5%
Dean of Planning and Special Projects	1	4.5%
Professor	1	4.5%
Executive	1	4.5%

According to Weisman and Vaughan (2007), “The most traveled pathway to the presidency is through the academic pipeline. In 2006, 55% of the respondents were in academic positions prior to assuming their first presidency. The percentage has changed little since 1984” (p.5).

According to Weisman and Vaughan, “In 1996 and 2001, approximately one third of the presidents were internal candidates when they accepted their first presidency. In 2006, this figure was 35%, a slight increase in board preference for internal candidates” (p. 6). In comparison the participants in this study, 4.5% were internal candidates.

Table 14

*Latina Presidents Current Presidency Search Type*

Search Type	Frequency	Percentage of total
National	16	72.7%
Regional	1	4.5%
Local	0	0.0%
Internal	1	4.5%
Other	4	18.2%

Table 15 identifies the types of search process the participants in this study utilized to secure their current presidency.

Table 15

*Current Presidency Search Process*

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage of total
Contacted by a search firm	3	13.0%
Applied without nomination	3	13.0%
Nominated and accepted the nomination	3	13.0%
Served first as “acting”	4	17.4%
Encouraged by the institution	6	26.1%
Contacted by the search committee chair	1	4.3%
Contacted by a search committee member	1	4.3%
Appointed directly	1	4.3%
Other (Interim Appointment)	1	4.3%

In *The Community College Presidency: 2006 Executive Summary*, Weisman and Vaughan (2007) reported, “Of the 2006 respondents, 31% stated that a search firm or individuals who conduct presidential searches aided them in obtaining the presidency” (p.6). Further, “Forty-two percent of the 166 presidents who used a search entity stated

that they made the initial contact with the search entity; 49% stated that the search firm made the first contact” (p. 6). In this study, only 13% of the participants reported having been contacted by a search firm. Forty-three percent were either encouraged by the institution or were serving in an “acting” role. Further, another 26% either applied without a nomination or were nominated for the position.

The total number of presidential searches in which participants in this study engaged in is reported in Table 16.

Table 16

*Number of Search Process Candidacies*

Candidacies	Frequency	Percentage of total
1	8	36%
2 - 3	9	41%
4 - 5	3	14%
6 - 7	1	4.5%
8 +	1	4.5%

Weisman and Vaughan (2007) noted, “The 2006 respondents stated that their names were submitted by the search entity an average of five times before they were selected. In addition, they were interviewed for an average of three presidencies before they were selected” (p.6). In this study, fully 41% of the participants were presidential candidates in more than one search prior to their first presidency.

Table 17 identifies the number of participants in this study who relocated as a result of their presidential appointment.

Table 17

*Did Current Presidency Require Relocation*

Relocation	Frequency	Percentage of total
No	13	59.1%
Yes	9	40.9%

Table 18 identifies whether other presidential appointments were declined.

Table 18

*Were You Offered Presidencies That You Turned Down*

Presidencies turned down	Frequency	Percentage of total
No	18	85.7%
Yes	3	14.3%

Characteristics of the Predecessor

Six of the participants in this study reported that the previous CEO was female; while 16 followed a male president. For purposes of this study, it is important to note that 64% of the participants reported that the previous president was not a member of a racial/ethnic minority group as shown in Table 19.

Table 19

*Characteristics of Predecessor to Current Presidency*

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage of total
Gender		
Female	6	27.3%
Male	16	72.7%
Racial / ethnic minority		
No	14	63.6%
Yes	8	36.4%

*Board of Trustees*

The participants in this study discussed the characteristics of the trustees who hired them for their current presidency position as shown in Table 20.

Table 20

*Characteristics of Trustees Who Hired Current Presidents*

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage of total
Method of selection to board		
Elected	14	63.6%
Appointed	8	36.4%
Gender		
Female	53	40.2%
Male	79	59.8%
Racial / ethnic minority		
No	33	25.0%
Yes	99	75.0%

*Survey Data Summary*

The survey data are intended to provide quantitative information about the

demographics and other factors related to the study. Survey findings for this study were reported in categories that included: demographic characteristics of the participants, professional preparation, affiliations, mentors, presidential search information, institutional context including designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), characteristics of the previous president, and composition of the board of trustees at the time of hire. Survey findings further serve to support the validity of the study.

### Interviews

I don't think that the challenges that I've encountered are different than anybody else. It's just life in an organization. It's a great journey. It's not one event. It's not about applying for a job; it's really a leadership journey. There's a lot of opportunity out there, so I'm really hoping that more people will jump on the bandwagon. (President #13)

As noted earlier in this chapter, in addition to the initial pilot, 13 participants were recruited for follow-up interviews. The preferred method of conducting interviews was through face-to-face meetings; however, some interviews were conducted via telephone. In spite of their busy schedules, each of the participants worked with this researcher to schedule an unobstructed block of time for the interviews. Situations did arise that required rescheduling or shortening interviews due to personnel issues, unanticipated meetings or previous commitments that ran late. These occurrences themselves revealed a glimpse into the unpredictable nature of the daily activities in the life of a president. Eight interviews, including the pilot, were conducted face-to-face, in a neutral site such as professional conferences, at the president's institution or a location the president determined by the president. Six of the interviews were arranged in conjunction with other events including conferences or lectures, which placed limitations on time or

meeting space due to travel or schedule. The remaining interviews were conducted by conference call; these interviews were affected by similar events, as a result a consistent time frame was impossible to employ. Therefore, notes and the recordings and follow-up member checks were a critical piece of the data gathering process.

Questions were provided to the subjects prior to the interview for review in the form of an interview guide. The guide provided a starting point for the conversation with each participant and allowed the interviewee to contemplate the most relevant experiences to share. Unlike the survey results which rigidly encouraged a response from a selection, the interviews elicited the participants' fluid perception of events and life histories. Common phrases, viewpoints, and examples of work life situations arose during the discourses which were then captured as meaningful themes.

Four major themes emerged from interviews with the Latina presidents in this study: personal context, professional preparation, professional context, and challenges and the leadership pipeline. Personal context included cultural and familial influences, career and family, and beliefs. Professional preparation encompassed academic attainment, professional development opportunities, mentors and role models. Professional context included leadership competencies and the role of trustees in the governance of the organization. The last theme detailed challenges encountered on the path to the presidency and once in a leadership role. A discussion regarding the pipeline for Latinas as well as initiatives to address the gap is contained within the last theme. These subsets are detailed later in this chapter.

Figure 1 illustrates the themes that emerged from the interviews. The experiences that influenced the professional pathway of the Latina presidents in this study are personal context, professional preparation, professional context and challenges and the leadership pipeline. Each cluster represents experiences which profoundly impacted and prepared the participants on their leadership journey. Personal context comprised cultural and familial influences, career and family, and beliefs and values. Professional preparation encompassed academic attainment, professional development opportunities, mentors and role models. Professional context included leadership competencies, and the role of trustees. Finally, the theme of challenges and the status of the leadership pipeline were discussed.

*Figure 1.* Professional Pathway



It is important to note that the findings reported are a compilation of the conversations with participants, unless specifically attributed to an individual. Quotes that convey the essence of the groups' views are intended to represent a collective voice; conversely opinions that differed from the majority reflect a divergent style or outlook.

### *Personal Context*

For participants in this study culture and early familial influences shaped their value systems and informed their later decision making. As emerging leaders, choices regarding family and career were rooted in beliefs established in childhood. Internal rewards and motivation were reflected in the personal gratification that the participants expressed when they spoke of student success. The impact of the community college on the lives of others was also a salient topic.

### *Cultural/Familial Influences*

Approximately half of those interviewed in this study shared that one or both parents had not completed a high school education. Several of the presidents noted the progress achieved with each generation and proudly shared accomplishments of their own children.

My grandmother was married at twelve, fifth grade education. My mother went to the ninth grade, and I managed to go to college and get an Ed. D. and I now have two daughters who are professionals, so we have to pass it [educational aspirations] down. (President #3)

Some of the presidents recalled extraordinarily difficult circumstances that their parents overcame.

My parents didn't go to college. My mother only went through third grade; she was pulled out of school because her mother died. She had to be the mother; it's incredible how those things used to happen. My father finished high school.

Now I have a son who is in medical school. I am so proud, he is in his second year; he's going to survive. (President #11)

More than one president identified the circumstances that surrounded their move to the United States as transformational experiences that shaped their outlook and persistence. "The immigrant experience taught me about perseverance...I am grounded with family and values" (President #5).

Although participants were not asked about their first language, approximately one-third of those interviewed disclosed that English was not their first language. The following description of an early introduction to public elementary school illustrates the impact of language and immigration:

There was nothing available per se for immigrants, children, or people who did not speak English as a first language. So I say six, seven months into school I knew enough to do my own homework, and participate in classroom discussions. I found another immigrant, from Brazil. I remember we played together, and it was wonderful, she spoke to me in Portuguese; I spoke to her in Spanish, and we were both trying to learn to speak English. A third girl joined the group. I remember her father was in the military and she was new to the area as well. She took a liking to us and this threesome learned to adapt. We taught her Spanish and Portuguese and she taught us to speak English. So that was the start; it sounds like a long time to begin my discussion about the start of my future academic career, but it truly the genesis of my desire to focus on the role of language acquisition. (President #1)

Several of the participants remembered early experiences which motivated them to speak out, be visible, and serve as advocates for equity. These scenarios included serving as the "voice" for the family at a young age, representing the Latino community, or seeking support for underserved populations of students. Being Latina was viewed as strength, and pride in culture was clearly voiced during the interviews.

### *Career and Family*

The majority of those interviewed were parents who described decisions that were influenced by the needs of children and extended family members (la familia). Family often included parents, adult siblings, as well as nieces and nephews. One president described the circumstances surrounding a career decision which required a lateral move in order to balance family and work in this way:

I get so involved in the surrounding community to wherever I work, and the community for Nassau Community College was an hour and half away. I was doing things on Saturdays and evenings in that the community and that took away from my family. So when a position of vice president opened in my neighborhood college, my county community college, I was encouraged to apply and I did so. It was a lateral move, the money was less, but I was ten minutes away from my house. It was worth it because of the time it afforded me with my children.  
(President #4)

Presidents in this study were sometimes sought after and presented with opportunities were that they had not actively pursued; these required sacrifice and difficult choices as described below:

If you ask my kids what was the worst job mommy's ever had, they'll say deputy chancellor because I never saw them. I would kiss my daughter in the morning and make sure I left lipstick on her cheek so she would know mommy said goodbye and she would be sleeping when I came home. She was twelve. So it was a real difficult time. (President #9)

Achieving balance between family and work was sometimes attainable through the support of an employer or as the result of career decisions as described in the following excerpt:

I have always felt that it was necessary to integrate my work and my personal life as my life as a whole. I have always seen my working hours as being somewhat flexible and my home life hours as being flexible. Obviously, when kids are young and you want to be involved in their activities and support them; one needs to work around that. I've always had supervisors that understood that. So taking

kids to soccer practice during the week at 3:30 or 4:00 was not a problem, but everyone knew that I was going to get my work done, and that if there was a weekend activity I was going to be at the weekend activity to get the work done. (President #8)

The majority of those married described a supportive spouse who in some instances changed his own career path to support the professional journey of his spouse.

### *Embracing Community Colleges*

An overwhelming commitment to the mission of community colleges emerged throughout the interviews conducted as part of this study. As participants spoke of their roles, the intonation in their voices reflected a sincere belief in the value of providing access to education, and helping a diverse student population. A collective voice spoke of “serving the community,” “serving students,” and, “making a difference in people’s lives.”

Participants were eager to share success stories of students and expressed appreciation for students who maintained contact as they advanced their education or careers. Several of the participants referred to GED graduation as a favorite event as described in the following excerpt:

The way I get energized is that I believe we really do what we say. For example, we had a woman coming in who is in her forties, she didn’t have her GED; she got her GED; she’s finishing her nursing degree in December. That’s what it’s about. (President #11)

Noteworthy was discussion on the value of the comprehensiveness of the community and the vital role that the organization plays in the community. One president summed up her sentiments like this:

In order to be effective you have to really have a passion for what you do. You have to love community colleges. You have to understand that community

colleges are part of the community. If you are in a community college you have to be part of it. It takes a lot of energy and a lot of time, but I know what I do makes a difference in people's lives. (President #3)

### *Professional Preparation*

Participants in this study described components of their preparation for assuming a leadership position as: formal academic programs; participation in professional development institutes; fellowships; and for some, guidance from a coach or mentor. Salient events that took place during youth also emerged as a foundation for subsequent actions in life. Participants recounted taking advantage of occasions to learn from others either directly or through observation, and spoke candidly about their professional journey.

Academic preparation was a presupposition to advancement. Having a doctorate resounded as a requirement for advancement. "Education is critical; a doctorate is essential, it's the number one step...if you want to be a president, chancellor, vice-chancellor you have to have a doctorate" (President #7). The majority of the presidents pursued their advanced degrees while working full time or in addition to raising a family as one president observed:

When I was working on my doctorate, my daughters were quite young. In fact one of them was just two, I just juggled my schedule. I would work on my doctorate from 10:00 p.m. – 2:00 a.m. and that's how I got through school, because I didn't want to take anything away from them in terms of quality time. (President #7)

Professional development programs outside of formal academic programs were noted as not only valuable in developing skills, but also as an avenue to determine areas for additional training. One participant described it as follows:

The Fellows program helped me with what I was lacking in, where my weaknesses were. It also helped me become confident enough to reach out to others and say, “you know I lack this information, can you help me get it? I need this kind of experience, how can I get it”? I was also lucky enough to have a president who saw what I could do and allowed me to blossom. He gave me the opportunity to try new projects in my career. (President #4)

Supervisors, whether male, female, and non-Latino, were frequently described as mentors who provided professional development opportunities, or encouragement to take on new challenges. While most participants identified access to mentors early in their career, at least two did not specify a particular individual, rather described informal learning opportunities. For example, President #3 stated, “What I’ve learned is that you may not have a formal mentor, but you can take little things from different people and put them together. And I also learned how not to manage people.”

One president spoke with deep respect of a former supervisor who had a great impact on her own leadership style. She shared:

When you talk about mentoring, just watching him and learning from him, his administrative style, his belief in letting people have enough freedom to do what they need to do as professionals. If you have hired them for a position and they have skills then you need to let them do their thing. It was a great experience for me. .. I don’t know if he saw himself [as a mentor]. I know that many people had mentored him and he mentioned that. You can’t work with someone at that level without watching what they do and really internalizing behavior; it could be negative behavior as well, but in this case it wasn’t. It was a very positive behavior and a behavior around management style that I really appreciated. (President #9)

Another participant recalled a mentor, an African American male, who recognized her leadership potential and “pushed” her to pursue a doctorate. He had stressed that she would not be accepted or recognized as an equal until she had earned the academic credentials.

Developing new leadership involved risks for the mentor, as one president illustrated in recounting a conversation she had with her mentor:

I want you to be a president one day. I'm going to coach you. I'm going to give you this job, but you got to look me in the eyes and tell me that you understand that you don't know what you're doing because you are green. You have to learn and be willing to learn from me. I'm the first black president here. I'm hiring. If you mess up, it's going to reflect on me. Do you understand that?' I was like, 'Yes, sir.' That man coached me for seven years. He was just not a mentor, he was a coach. He challenged me. He gave me tough assignments. He would throw me out there. He would meet with me regularly when I would make mistakes. He never shamed me publicly. (President #2)

Another individual related an especially powerful combination of working with a mentor and participation in a fellowship program:

I spent one year in a Fellows Program. My assignment was at a Cal State University ... I was assigned to the mentorship of the president at Cal State Fullerton for a portion of my year-long assignment. She is an African American woman, who was one of the first African American female presidents in the CSU system. So as a woman and as a woman of color, I considered her a wonderful role model. She was a role model in terms of how she conducted meetings, how she worked with her executive team. The fact that she was very much engaged in serving on boards nationally, as well as very much interested in serving the local community. It was a wonderful opportunity. Furthermore, while I was on that fellowship, she sponsored me for another fellowship through the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington D.C. So during that year ... I had the opportunity to be engaged in two leadership developments [programs]. One that focused on CSU, California higher education and statewide policy leadership, and the other that focused on higher education and national policy issues. So that really was the point in time that I decided to pursue a leadership position in higher education. (President #8)

Furthermore, participation in community-based organizations and college student groups provided relevant training for future leadership roles. Community involvement served as an early impetus to pursue education by one president:

I remember a teacher union leader who was a Latina in the [city] public schools who was the chair of the education committee in our community, looking at the failures of education with our youth. She dragged me in there. I was like 16. She

says, 'You're going to be a co-chair.' She says, "No, you sit with me." I would sit there at the head of the table with her. She taught how to run a meeting. (President #2)

President #8 commented on community involvement as, "I think that's how you meet people and how you learn the breadth of information in order to be an effective leader."

### *Professional Context*

Participants in this study reflected on the evolving role of the president and the necessary skills required fulfilling their responsibilities. Positive relationships with trustees were considered integral to their ability to successfully lead the organization.

### *Leadership Competencies*

When queried about the competencies required to lead an organization, the participants expanded beyond the confines of academia to emphasize knowledge of business operations, political acumen, and communication skills. One president recommended, "I would encourage them [emerging leaders] to take professional development or coursework that's outside of education. More business orientation, fundraising, there's not a single pathway. I think you can get to the presidency any number of ways" (President #13).

In reference to politics, one president noted, "Sometimes people will tell me, 'How come you're so political? How come you're so politically connected? So politically involved?' Because everything is political!" (President #11).

One president described the complexity of issues that leaders must be informed of and take action on is deep and potentially emotionally charged this way:

At the highest levels, affirmative action created a sense of obligation. The elimination of affirmative action allowed emotional back lashing, and national resentment of what was a perceived [as a] loss of opportunity for white people. I really sense that. There is a horrible racist backlash coupled with the uncomfortable anti-immigration sentiments. People don't want to be pro-immigrant, pro-undocumented students. They really don't. The boards that do are precious for us. (President #2)

Several of the participants reiterated that in order to be perceived as a strong leader, preparedness in citing specific sources of information and providing accurate data was tantamount. "You have to be better than everyone else;" "You have to prove yourself over and over again" were common refrains. One president stressed, "You have to master the skills. You have to understand finance, organizational structure, professional development, evaluation, those types of things, but in addition to the skills, you have to be able to work with people" (President #3). Orchestrating the "right" administrative team was a high priority; this was accompanied by empowering individuals to "do their job." President #9 reflected on a lesson learned from a mentor, "I'm hiring you because you're an expert in something. I'm not going to be the expert in the area. You're the expert in your area. If I need something, I'm going to turn to you."

Decision making was based on a personal belief system or philosophy that set the tone for leadership. "Leadership begins with your beliefs, always deliver; be prepared to make tough choices" President #6, personal communication, November 10, 2007).

President #2 shared the following theoretical framework as a foundation to establish focus around difficult issues:

Good leadership is understanding and, being strategic about change and being ready...Critical race theory today gives us an understanding of conversions when things start to slip back when the discomfort around pushes a dominate culture. The leader has to know in that moment how to move forward. (President #2)

Additionally, strong verbal communication and presentation skills were identified as a requirement for effective leadership both one on one and in front of large groups. President #3 stated, “In order to move into a position of leadership, you have to demonstrate that confidence to get up in front of a board or a crowd of 200 people and you have to be able to address them.” Another president illustrated the crucial necessity of communication skills as a tool. “You need to get people to buy in, to believe in your vision, to believe in the goals of the things we need to do” (President #11). Listening skills were imperative for dealing with difficult personnel issues during one-on-one sessions.

Also, promoting visibility for the college and engaging with leaders in the community were clearly delineated as functions of the president. One president highlighted multi-faceted benefits of community engagement as follows:

I actually have found that I believe it’s important that I be engaged with our community in various organizations, both with an ethnic focus and without because it is through personal interaction that individuals are then exposed to working with diversity, such as working with women and Latinas. Additionally, through community involvement younger people learn that we [Latinas] bring value to the table as well. (President #8)

Rotary was one organization mentioned by several participants as an important avenue for becoming known and active in the community. Fostering external relationships to form partnerships was viewed as a component of the community college mission.

### *The Role of Trustees*

The size of the board and selection process for trustees varied depending upon the state. However, the importance of the relationship with trustees was a recurring theme for participants. Particularly noteworthy was the role of trustees as they were the group responsible for hiring the president and for setting policy. One long-term president candidly described the controversy associated with her hiring. She recalled the courage of two female board members who supported her appointment:

I think champions matter. I would love to say that I can make it on my own. Certainly, I can say to this day ... that I'm extremely well qualified for my position. Had it not been for two Latino trustees on my board at that time that fought like hell, I probably would have not done my job. Although, I was positive that I was the best qualified candidate, there is always for us a consciousness at the board level or the senior administrative level for someone has to want to make a difference. (President #2)

President #11 reiterated the influence of the board of trustees:

They're [trustees] key, they're key. Our elected officials are so key. Your board of trustees, and board of regents are elected ... and they really hold the key so if you want to change the composition of presidents at universities and colleges you have to make sure you elect people of color, people who are sensitive to diversity, who embrace it and who promote it. Really they are the policy makers who decide; their one job is to hire the president. That's their job right there, and to approve policy; that's it in a nutshell. They're the ones with the power. They decide who comes and who doesn't.

On more than one occasion, boards took actions that were viewed as contentious by faculty, including foregoing a formal search for a new president and instead making an internal appointment. The credibility of the president in working through tumultuous periods requires a united and supportive board. A faculty vote of no confidence for one president was partially weathered by the commitment of the board to support the president. This show of confidence was critical to recovering focus and moving forward.

### *Challenges and the Leadership Pipeline*

Obstacles persist for women, particularly women of color who desire expanded career opportunities in higher education. Most participants viewed challenges to Latinas as systemic; however, being cognizant of the barriers, they were quick to determine the methods that worked to overcome these confines. Moreover, this group of presidents reported active engagement to ensuring fair access not only for students, but also to those who will follow in their footsteps.

#### *Challenges*

Isolation was mentioned as a reality of the leadership role, often attributed to the small numbers of Latinas in similar positions. President #8 reflected, “I will say that except for the president that I spent the fellowship year with, there has typically not been a woman in a position higher than the one I’ve held.” Another commented, “In my [state] I was the first woman, not just the first Latina, but the first woman president.” (President #3)

Participants described stereotypical perceptions of Latinas in a matter-of-fact manner. For one president, several stereotypes were apparent:

When I was first moving into higher education, I do think there were two challenges at least in my mind that needed to be overcome. Those two challenges initially, well I guess there were three [laughter] my youth, my gender, and my ethnicity. . . I do believe that those were challenges I had to overcome. (President #8)

Several participants bemused the accepted norm of what a president should look like; namely, a white male. A hurdle to overcome in enhancing diversity was sometimes cited as the composition and mind set of hiring committees, who were described as

exhibiting a tendency to favor candidate who are similar to themselves. One president noted:

I know from serving on search committees that people are looking for people who are like them. They are most comfortable with people that look them, and talk like them. Therefore, anyone who is different has to have more to outshine and overcome that or people are not going to look to them. Not only racially, but even in terms of strengths and weaknesses. I don't see people on search committees who are looking for people that are stronger than them, that work toward improving their weaknesses. Because they're afraid, they see it as a threat instead of 'Wow, we would be a great team'!  
(President #4)

President #1 reflected:

It is important to question the mistaken notion that hiring committees are now at a level of sophistication where we can assume clear understanding and acceptance of diversity. In fact, hiring committees may be the most insidious, ingrown, incestuous bodies in higher education. It is for this reason that the real power to block or to grant entry really lies there. As I sign off on hiring packets, one of the best things that I do as a college president is to look at the composition of hiring committees. I always raise questions when I receive a hiring committee whose make up lacks diversity, particularly when the reason for sending me such a committee are statements like, "there's only one minority person that was eligible to serve and that individual cannot serve;" at this point, I am always ready to provide alternatives and I request them to back out and reconsider. This is an important thing to do because the power of having a couple of divergent voices on our hiring committees can make all the difference on the make-up of the list of individuals that are advanced to the final hiring process where I, as the president can make the final selection.

Persistence, self efficacy, and willingness to take risks were characteristics evident among the participants.

I applied for four presidencies before I got one. I allowed myself to cry for half-an-hour [(pause), in private. You have to be willing to take that risk and you have to be willing to say, Okay, this one didn't work out, but let me try again. And you have to be able to learn from every experience. (President #3)

Noted was the absence of a networking system for women comparable to the supports for males. The "good ole' boy network" was referred to as an opportunity for

men to develop networks and obtain mentors. This support has afforded access to role models who shared common characteristics. This type of network was viewed as a valuable resource to those who sought entrance to circles of influence; a counterpart for women, particularly women of color who desired mentoring and guidance is largely lacking.

Even when a leadership position has been attained, stereotypical perceptions persist that placed added duty on women to clarify boundaries, expectations, and “educate” others, including Latinos. Reference was made to taking part in both formal and informal meetings, then being introduced by first name or by a Spanish term of endearment, while men were introduced as Dr. or Mr. The presidents pointed out that it was necessary to establish protocol early on directly and firmly with this deferential treatment. One participant in particular noted that as a female president it was important to establish credible relationships with male peers and their spouses, which she refers to as “branding”:

For Latina women it’s a branding issue. Let’s be clear; it’s where they [Latinas] fail. It’s not enough that you’re working hard to get your credentials, it’s not enough, but if you don’t have this branding issue settled in our own mind, you’re not going to be successful. Because people will tear you down. (President #10)

Professional development was viewed as an on-going process that was vital throughout the president’s career. President #12 noted that while budget constraints or salary negotiations might make it difficult for the board to grant a salary increase, professional development opportunities were perhaps more valuable. Institutes or intensive training provide renewal and access to colleagues from other areas of the country.

Regardless of gender or ethnicity, the role of president or chancellor is all encompassing.

It's a lot of work, there are a lot of personnel issues; there are a lot of hard decisions. The fun stuff is the accreditation and all the showy stuff that you get to do in your programs, but then there's that other side that really defines who we are. That's dealing with those hard issues, personnel, and not everybody gets mentorship on that and again there's no roadmap that says this is how you deal with these things. It's a lifelong learning kind of thing. Think of all your previous experiences, how do you resolve matters, how do you deal with conflict? How do you deal with stress? This job is very physically demanding; long hours, travel, coming back and forth, always being "on." Do you know what I mean by that? ... [People] are expecting you to say something, do something. Or be something. It's constant, constant, so you're always "on." So it's physically as well as emotionally demanding and not everybody realizes that. You have to balance that with the rest of your life, your spiritual life, your family, your home life and just your recreational time. It's very demanding. (President #11)

### *Leadership Pipeline*

We really don't talk about career options in administration. We don't talk about it early enough. It's a difficult system to navigate. We need to be more visible among different peer groups. I even think of when you are a freshman in college, you make a lot of decisions based on your major. When you say I want to be a college administrator, people think of a principal. They think of the more traditional K-12 role; so there's really a point in time that freshman year in college. (President #13)

Early intervention in the identification, recruitment, and preparation of future leaders was voiced as a significant priority. The majority of participants spoke of an individual and systemic obligation to proactively determine solutions to establish a diverse pool of candidates in anticipation of "a changing of the guard." One individual asserted that a crisis in filling leadership positions has already influenced her state.

Also, a sense of personal responsibility and urgency to address the preparation of emerging leaders was common throughout these conversations. Presidents described their own actions to support emerging leaders and how to improve strategies.

I have concluded that I need to serve as a mentor in the formal sense versus the informal sense. I shouldn't be just asking them or nominating them to serve on different boards, but instead meeting with them so they understand why I'm encouraging their involvement and the importance of expanding one's network. I'm sitting here thinking whether there is a policy we can initiate. Yet, even as leaders in those policy-making positions to establish policy we often don't understand the comprehensive role we should be playing. (President #8)

Two examples of strategic interventions include the establishment of an internal professional development program at two Texas colleges, and a leadership academy at a California community college district. President #4 stated, "Number one is helping them, [Latinas] into graduate programs, helping them apply and actually get through graduate programs."

Furthermore, ancillary to the identification of emerging leaders, one president provided practical experiential opportunities:

As a leader, I can provide opportunities for people to go before the board so the board sees that they're competent and capable of doing these things. I set up a luncheon for the board at 11:30 a.m. and their meeting is at 12:30 p.m. At 12:00 I bring in someone from the college for fifteen to twenty minutes to talk about their program. So, not only is the board educated about different areas of the college, but I was giving people [employees] an opportunity to go before the board. It's a more relaxed environment, then the formal meeting. I think you can help people to develop their confidence by giving them small opportunities to do things like that. (President #3)

The changing landscape of higher education requires exploring non-traditional approaches to developing leadership including looking at practices in other fields. One president suggested exploring a "career ladder" model that has been successful in the field of nursing:

I think that most of us in education believe that we need to provide support systems, but in the business world they provide systems that help people shine and perform well in their jobs. And our systems aren't structured that way. Therefore, I call when I need to talk to somebody, which is good, but it doesn't

really help someone become a star, in my opinion. We need to look at things differently. (President #13)

President #6 stressed the importance of “providing opportunities to other people to move, always look to develop the next generation” (personal communication, October 10, 2007). This sentiment was echoed by others as a need to provide encouragement to those who might not view themselves as potential leaders. Frustration exists among these presidents that there is a gap in the pipeline for Latinas in spite of a small number of formal and informal networking groups. One president noted that the fear of failure or reluctance to convey interest in promotion within the organization was problematic in identifying future potential leaders:

I do much [public] speaking. There are maybe three people of color (in the audience) and when I see a Latina/o it is rare. They are not being identified. We are not being encouraged as faculty to becoming deans. There are very few. Even when I come to conferences like this, when I see so much talent, and I'll tell people that they need to become a president. They look at you with gratitude and also with a discomfort level. (President #2, personal communication, September 22, 2007)

Additionally, the Latinas stressed that they were not encouraged or “pushed out of their comfort zone.” One president spoke of the context of emerging leaders in her state:

We don't have a lot of Latino people in the pipeline for leadership positions, yet we have this community college Latina Leadership Network, not to mention a number of other organizations which provide opportunities for professional development. However, I continue to ask myself why more Latinos aren't becoming directors, and then deans, and then vice-presidents and then CEOs? (President #8)

Further exacerbating this gap was the recent retirements of Latina presidents and the apprehension regarding replacements. Tokenism was described as veiled and made acceptable with the justification that “We have already hired one” by some boards.

Therefore, the participants felt it was imperative to educate boards on the changing needs of the populations they serve, encourage succession planning, and to invest in internal employee development programs.

### Summary

The purpose of this study was not to determine individual leadership styles, but to explore characteristics of these women within the parameters of a traditionally male-dominated arena. Divergent leadership approaches emerged as these presidents described their personal vision, approach to decision making, and interactions with others. However, this researcher determined that each president, acted as a change agent and strategic thinker.

Furthermore, both qualitative and quantitative approaches were utilized for data collection in this study of Latina presidents through the use of a survey, review of documents, and interviews with the participants. The conceptual framework of critical theory served to guide the intended outcome of determining influences, supports, and processes that these participants experienced in their journey for achieving the community college presidency.

Also, interviews were recorded and transcribed to arrive at a rich narrative. The following themes emerged from the data sources: personal contexts, professional preparation, professional context, and challenges, as well as the status of the leadership pipeline. Personal context included cultural and familial influences, career and family, and values and beliefs. Professional preparation encompassed academic attainment, professional development opportunities, mentors and role models. Professional context

included leadership competencies, and the role of trustees. Finally, challenges and the status of the leadership pipeline were presented.

Additionally, there are numerous pathways to the presidency. However, there are no “roadmaps” to attaining a leadership position. Interestingly, none of the presidents decided early in their careers to pursue a leadership role, instead their talents and skills were recognized and nurtured by others. These presidents were open to taking on new challenges, furthering their education and professed a commitment to serve. Finally, these presidents were deeply invested in the identification and development of the next generation of leaders.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The primary purpose of this research was to learn from Latina community college presidents and chief executive officers about the conditions that influenced their ascension to the presidency. The three conditions and experiences examined were (a) influences that Latina community college presidents identified as having the most impact on personal career success, (b) strategies Latinas have employed to overcome perceived barriers or challenges on the pathway to the presidency, and (c) the organizational climate and practices within community college systems that either hinder or support Latinas. The convergence of these conditions were analyzed to determine how to develop effective strategies to support Latinas seeking leadership roles, as well as to inform community college trustees of the changing demographics of the constituencies they serve. These data can serve as a planning resource to trustees as they consider long-range institutional leadership development and succession planning.

This study coincided with two major publications related to leadership in higher education. The first study, *The American College President: 2007 Edition*, describes “the backgrounds, career paths, and experiences of college and university presidents” (American Council on Education, 2007a, p. vii). This research was conducted in 2006 and used the term president to “refer to all college and university chief executive officers, regardless of whether their official title is president, chancellor, or some other designation” (p. vii). Included in the study are “doctorate-universities, baccalaureate

colleges, associate's colleges and special focus institutions" (p. vii).

The second study, (Weisman & Vaughan) was entitled *The Community College Presidency 2006* (2007). The original study was conducted in 1984 and every five years thereafter to identify trends. As with previous studies, valuable information was provided on women and minorities in leadership positions; however, data on women of color is not definitively reported. This researcher used the findings from these two reports as the basis to draw comparisons to the data collected in this study. Professional preparation, degree attainment, demographic, and institution type are examples of variables that were analyzed.

### Methodology

This study utilized mixed methods for data collection, both qualitative and quantitative. As noted earlier by Crotty (2004) noted, "Research can be qualitative or quantitative, or both qualitative and quantitative, without this being problematic in anyway" (p. 15). Both methods complemented each other and provided a more comprehensive view of the subject (Custer, 1996).

### *Data Sources*

Data sources included face-to-face interviews with each of the participants. Each narrative was taped and transcribed for later coding. This researcher also scribed notes during each of the interviews to augment and validate the transcripts. The collection of the oral narratives provided abundant data. Demographic questionnaires provided information on the participant's educational background, mentoring opportunities, leadership development, family of origin, language acquisition, and other personal

characteristics. All participants signed and returned a consent form approved by The University of Texas Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects prior to data collection.

### Theoretical Framework

According to Anafara and Mertz (2006), a theoretical framework supports the researcher in remaining focused throughout the study (p.192). This particular researcher drew on critical theory to provide the lens to “investigate how the social and political aspects of the situation shape reality” (Merriam, 2002, p. 4). To examine these phenomena, critical inquiry calls into question issues of social justice and equity. “Researchers find themselves interrogating commonly held values and assumptions, challenging conventional social structures, and engaging in social action” (Crotty, 2004, p. 157). Evidence that reflected barriers to advancement or inclusion, as well as supports were identified as themes in the framework of critical theory. Recurrent findings included systemic practices and institutional climate indicators that served to deter inclusion of Latinas in the leadership pipeline.

Whereas critical theory investigates larger societal structures that address power, this researcher sought to further understand the experience of Latina community college presidents who have succeeded within the confines of these systems. Thus, an interpretive research design that included phenomenology was appropriate for this study of individuals who have assigned meaning to their experiences in the roles of presidents of community colleges. “Meaning is constructed, understood, and expressed in story form. Thus, stories and storytelling are pervasive in human communication, and symbolic

activity” (Clark & Caffarella, 1999, p. 78). This oral tradition allowed the voices of the participants to be heard as they shared their stories (Merriam, 2002). The outcome was the generation of richly descriptive data from the compilation and analysis of numerous accounts of experiences.

Phenomenology not only focuses on the experience of the individual, but also “seeks to understand the essence or structure of a phenomena” (Merriam, 2002, p. 93). This description of the phenomena, as told by the participants, adds to the understanding of the systems in place that created the environment in which individuals navigated their careers.

According to Patton (1987), “A grounded theory approach to evaluation research is inductive” (p. 39). As such, the role of this researcher was to gather and use data to form theory based on a “naturalistic inquiry” (Patton, 1987, p. 39). Patton (1987) further advised, “Grounded theory can provide relevant information to make informed decisions” (p. 40). These findings coupled with quantitative data were analyzed to present a more comprehensive view to support the development of public policy. Moreover, the study of Latinas in higher education leadership roles has largely been ignored; therefore, the findings of this study expand the limited body of knowledge.

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms were used in this study:

*Assimilation* – According to Cox (1993),

A one-way adaptation in which an organization’s culture becomes the standard of behavior for all other cultures merging into the organization. The goal of assimilation is to eliminate cultural differences, or at least the expression of the different (nondominant) cultures, at work. To accomplish this, entering members

who are culturally different from the organization's culture must reject or at least repress the norms, values, and practices of the socioculture from which they come. (p. 166)

*Assumption of sameness* – “Presumed uniformity between people of like races, ethnicity, gender, or any group” (Hankins, 2000, p. 193).

*Board of trustees* – “Community college boards of trustees are responsible for ensuring that their colleges are integral parts of their communities and serve ever-changing needs. They are accountable to the community for the performance and welfare of the institutions they govern” (Association of Community College Trustees, 2007).

*Biculturalism* – The ability of individuals to function in two sociocultural environments while balancing “their primary culture and that of the dominant mainstream culture of the society in which they live” (Darder, as cited in Hansen, 1997, p. 12).

*Chicana (o)* – A term rooted in the Chicano movement of the 1960s and a political, ideological term describing a group of people with shared cultural characteristics and political interpretations of their experience (Garcia, 1997). Furthermore, the term *Chicana* is used specifically to refer to “women of Mexican origin” (Cuádriz, 2005, p. 229). This term reflects both a social identity and ethnicity.

*Ethnicity* – “Refers to social characteristics that groups of people may have in common—language, religion, regional background, culture. ...Race and ethnicity can overlap or they can diverge” (Lawrence, Sutton, Kubisch, Susi, & Fulbright-Anderson, 2004, p. 44).

*Ethnocentrism* – A preference for one's own group (Cox, 1993).

*Hispanic* – An older term imposed by the federal government to define a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. Thus, Hispanics may be of any race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). The terms *Latino(a)* and *Hispanic* are often used interchangeably. *Hispanic* is a term imposed by those outside the culture to define those within the culture. It also includes people who indicate that they are “other Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006).

*Institutional culture* – according to Kuh & Whitt (1998),

Persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus.” (p. 98)

*Latina(o)* – A term used to describe people from Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas. *Latina/o* is an overarching term intended to include many aspects of cultural and linguistic identity. A *Latina* may be an immigrant or someone born in the United States; may have fair or dark skin; may be a professional or a day laborer; and may speak Spanish, English, or both or not speak Spanish at all. For the purpose of this paper, the author uses the term *Latina* unless direct citations specify another term such as *Hispanic* or *Chicana*. As noted above, *Hispanic* is the identified term for race or ethnicity as reported in government records.

*Organizational culture* – A work environment created by an organization’s principles, norms, policies, practices, and relationship between people (Hankins, 2000).

*President* – Identifies a “chancellor, provost, or other official with overall responsibility for the district, college, or campus” (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002, p. 2).

*Succession planning* –The establishment of “a process for conducting executive searches before positions become vacant” (Campbell, 2002, p. 93).

### Research Questions

The following four research questions guided this study:

1. What variables do Latina community college presidents identify as having the most impact on their career success?
2. How do Latinas overcome barriers and challenges in their path to the presidency?
3. What practices or policies would be most beneficial in transforming community college culture to be more inclusive?
4. How have key conditions in higher education administration changed in the last 10 years for Latinas?

### Participants

The population for this study was Latina community college Chief Executive Officers (CEO) of individually accredited public institutions. This researcher utilized web searches of the 1,186 American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) 2006 member institutions, as well as the *Institutes of Higher Education, Higher Education Directory 2006*, from which to identify Latina community college presidents and chancellors. Institutions eligible to become members of The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (2001) are identified as:

Community, junior, and technical colleges and similar postsecondary institutions which offer an associate degree and are accredited by a regional accrediting association recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA); to the colleges and campuses of multicollege and multicampus

institutions eligible for institutional membership; and to state administrative offices of state systems of community, technical, and junior colleges.

As a result of these searches 10 possible participants were identified. However, to strengthen and add richer data to the study, this researcher expanded the list to include campus presidents. Campus presidents are individuals who are responsible for a branch campus and who report to a system chancellor. Therefore, the number of potential participants increased to 31 Latinas.

Next, the researcher combed through community college websites and communicated with colleagues in higher education associations and community college leadership positions to obtain the contact information for this sample. Of these, the number of Latina presidents decreased from 31 to 25 individuals since six Latinas no longer held the role of CEO. Of these six Latinas, two chose to participate in this research study since they were newly retired, bringing the total sample size to 27 potential participants. Of the 27 Latina presidents invited to complete the questionnaire, 22 elected to participate resulting in a return rate of 81.5%. Of the five who did not participate in the study, three did not respond to communication attempts by this researcher. The remaining two declined participation and offered the following reasons: One had health issues and time constraints, while second voiced concern regarding the ability to remain anonymous.

From this sample size of 22, 13 or % Latina chancellors, community college presidents, and campus presidents also took part in an in-depth interview. This pool reflected much diversity in geographic regions of the country with representation from

ten different states (California, Texas, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Michigan, New York, and Pennsylvania).

### Limitations

Although this study offers an opportunity for participants, educators, researchers, and interested learners alike to more fully understand the influence that helped shaped the perspectives of Latina community college presidents, the following limitations of this study have been identified:

1. The study focuses specifically on the Latina community college president and may not be generalizable to her male counterpart.
2. The study is limited to Latinas in leadership positions in the community college and may not be generalizable to other post-secondary institutions.
3. The sample participants in this study included only Latinas and generalizations to other racial-ethnic groups cannot be claimed.
4. Lastly, the sample size for this study is too small for generalizations to be made to a larger population.

### Analysis of Survey Data

The survey findings were organized into the following categories: demographic characteristics, professional preparation, presidential search information, and institutional context. These sections are discussed throughout this chapter.

#### *Demographic Characteristics*

The first category in the survey findings focused on demographic characteristics. In the survey, the 22 participants self identified their ethnicity as Latina, Hispanic,

Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Chicana, Cuban, Nicaraguan, and multi-ethnic. These categories expose the multiple dimensions of ethnicity, including the vast diversity within the participant group. Most of the participants reported that they had grown up in the western region of the United States for the majority of their first 18 years of life. Four of the participants immigrated from other countries or territories outside the United States. This included Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Nicaragua early in their life. The participants disclosed their ages ranging from 40-to-61-years-old. Weisman and Vaughan (2007) reported that only 4% of the presidents who responded to the Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS) were Hispanic or Latino (p. 3). This 4 % includes both female and Latino presidents and reflected a decline from the 2001 survey. Additionally, Weisman and Vaughn stated that “over a 15-year span of time, the percentage of female presidents has increased by 18 percentage points, although there has been a noticeable leveling off in the past 5 years” (p. 3). This percentage did not identify ethnicity; therefore, it is unknown how Latinas fared.

Additionally, 17 participants (77 %) were currently married; one reported being in a committed relationship, while one had never been married. Three participants were separated or divorced. Of those who were married or in a committed relationship, the majority of their spouses were employed outside the home. The ACE (2007) reported that “more than 83 percent of presidents are currently married” (p. 10).

Furthermore, “the demographic profile of the typical college or university president is slowly changing, but continues to be primarily white (86 percent) and male (77 percent)” (ACE, 2007a, p. 9). Although these findings apply to colleges that offer

beyond an associate's degree, the findings are consistent for 2-year institutions.

According to Weisman and Vaughan, 545 community college presidents who completed the 2006 Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS), "were primarily white (88%), male (71%), and older than in previous surveys 57% were 58 years or older and they had been community college presidents for more than 5 years (62%)" (2007, p. 1).

### *Professional Preparation*

The second category in the survey findings focused on professional preparation. Professional preparation includes professional development programs, professional affiliations, and mentors.

All the presidents who responded to the survey have an earned doctorate with the exception of one who expects to complete the degree in 2008. This is consistent with the findings reported by ACE in the *American College President* which stated, "Women presidents were more likely than their male counterparts to have earned a doctorate" (2007, p. 16). In addition to academic preparation, 20 of the 22 respondents reported participation in more than one leadership development program prior to being appointed president, as discussed in the next section.

### *Professional Development Programs*

Twenty of the 22 respondents reported participation in more than one leadership development program prior to being appointed president. Ten individuals, almost half of the participants, had engaged in the National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCCHC) Leadership Fellow Program. This program was established in 1985 and is an affiliated council of the American Association of Community Colleges. NCCCHC was

identified as having the greatest participation rate as compared to other professional development programs, such as the National Institute for Leadership Development Program (six individuals).

### *Professional Affiliations*

Twenty of the participants in this study reported membership in at least one professional organization, as well as 95 % reported service on numerous boards. This finding is consistent with the findings reported by Weisman and Vaughan (2007) from the 2006 Career and Lifestyle Survey. They stated that, in 2001, “the overwhelming majority (93%) of all presidents serve on the boards of community-based or nonprofit organizations without receiving compensation” (p. 9).

### *Mentors*

Seventy-seven percent of the participants reported having a mentor prior to their presidency. Although both males and females served as mentors, the majority (64%) were male.

### *Presidential Search Information*

The third category in the survey findings focused on presidential search information. The majority of those who responded, 68 %, noted that this was their first presidency and were relatively new to their current position. One president was appointed in 2007 as an interim; two of the respondents are retired. Eighteen (82 %) had served in their current position for five or less years. Weisman and Vaughan (2007) reported that “the 2006 respondents have been in their current positions on the average of 7 years, almost the same as in 2001 and in 1996” (p. 5). The average age of the

participants in this study was 49.5 years at the time of their first presidency.

Additionally, in *The Community College Presidency: 2006 Executive Summary*, Weisman and Vaughan (2007) reported “Of the 2006 respondents, 31% stated that a search firm or individuals who conduct presidential searches aided them in obtaining the presidency” (p. 6). Further, “Forty-two percent of the 166 presidents who used a search entity stated that they made the initial contact with the search entity; 49% stated that the search firm made the first contact” (p. 6). This differs greatly from the 14% in this study who stated that they were contacted by a search firm. Weisman and Vaughan also noted, “The 2006 respondents stated that their names were submitted by the search entity an average of five times before they were selected. In addition, they were interviewed for an average of three presidencies before they were selected” (p. 6).

Furthermore, 41% of the participants reported they were internal candidates at the time of hire and eight individuals had engaged in a search only for their current position. According to Weisman and Vaughan, “In 1996 and 2001, approximately one third of the presidents were internal candidates when they accepted their first presidency. In 2006, this figure was 35%, a slight increase in board preference for internal candidates” (p. 6). In this study, nine participants reported that they had engaged in two or three searches.

Prior to being appointed to the presidency, the most common position held by participants in this study was in an academic role; furthermore, six participants had previously served as a president. Most college presidents achieve their role through a traditional path of dean of instruction or chief academic officer (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; McFarlin, 2000; Vaughn, 1986). The ACE (2007a) affirmed, “Sixty-nine percent

of presidents had experience as a faculty member, spending an average of eight years in this role” (p. 10).

This is consistent with findings reported by Weisman and Vaughan (2007). Weisman and Vaughn stated, “The most traveled pathway to the presidency is through the academic pipeline. In 2006, 55% of the respondents were in academic positions prior to assuming their first presidency. The percentage has changed little since 1984” (p.5).

#### *Institutional Context*

The fourth category in the survey findings focused on institutional context. This includes characteristics of the predecessor and trustees. Trustees in particular determine the future complexion of leadership.

Prior to being appointed to the presidency, the most common position held by participants in this study was in an academic role; furthermore, six participants had previously served as a president. All the participants in this study served at public institutions, another 68% reported that the college was designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) by the United States Department of Education (National Center for Education Statistics). ACE (2007) reported that, “because many HSIs are associate’s colleges--and many of these are headed by minorities--they raise the overall percentage of minority leaders at this institution type” (p. 33).

Additionally, 59% of the participants in this study reported that their presidential appointment did not require relocation. Although a willingness to move to another region can enhance opportunities for career advancement (Jensen, Giles, & Kirklin, 2000),

reluctance from potential presidents to leave extended family and support systems behind may be a factor that influenced employment options.

#### *Characteristics of the Predecessor*

Six of the participants in this study reported that the previous CEO was female; sixteen followed a male president. Further, 64% of the participants reported that the previous president was not a member of a minority racial/ethnic group.

#### *Characteristics of Trustees*

Seventy-five percent of these participants reported that at the time of hire there was a racial/minority member on the board of trustees. Additionally, an average of 40% of the board members were female at the time of hire.

#### Summary of Survey

The survey data were intended to provide quantitative information about the participants and other factors related to the study, and further serve to support the validity of the study. Survey findings were reported in the following categories: demographic characteristics of the participants, professional preparation, affiliations, mentors, presidential search information, institutional context including designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), characteristics of the previous president, and composition of board of trustees at the time of hire.

#### Analysis

Four major themes emerged from interviews with the Latina presidents in this study: personal context, professional preparation, professional context, and challenges and the leadership pipeline. Research question one was addressed by personal context

and included of cultural and familial influences, career and family, and beliefs. Research question two was addressed by professional preparation and encompassed academic attainment, professional development opportunities, mentors, role models, and trustees and by professional context which included leadership competencies. Research questions three and four were addressed by the challenges and the leadership pipeline as described by study participants. The strength of this analysis is drawn from the interviews and supported by the survey findings.

### Research Questions

This section addresses the findings for the four research questions.

#### *Research Question One*

What variables do Latina community college presidents identify as having the most impact on their career success?

#### *Introduction*

The majority of the presidents in this study identified circumstances in childhood that required them to take responsibility for others. Events occurred that motivated these women to act on behalf of social justice during their adolescence or young adulthood. Several participants recalled being drawn to leadership positions very early in their education through student clubs or groups.

Additionally, supervisors and mentors, who provided avenues to expand skills, encourage risk taking, and engage in very frank discussion regarding performance, were instrumental in the professional development of the participants. Participants learned management skills by observing supervisors.

The majority of the participants were encouraged and emotionally supported by their family members, who in many instances, had limited experience with secondary or post-secondary education. The motivation to persist was, at times, driven by the desire to improve conditions for the family or help underserved populations.

### *Personal Context*

For the participants in this study culture and early familial influences shaped their value systems and informed their later decision making. As emerging leaders, choices regarding family and career were rooted in beliefs established in childhood. Internal rewards and motivation were reflected in the personal gratification that the participants expressed when they spoke of student success. The impact of the community college in the lives of others was a salient topic for participants in this study.

*Cultural and familial influences.* Approximately half of those interviewed shared that one or both parents had not completed a high school education. Several of the presidents noted the progress achieved with each generation and proudly shared accomplishments of their own children. As one president commented:

My grandmother was married at twelve, with a fifth grade education. My mother went to the ninth grade, and I managed to go college and get an Ed. D. and I now have two daughters who are professionals, so we have to pass it down. (President #3)

Some of the presidents recalled extraordinarily difficult circumstances that their parents overcame as described by one president:

My parents didn't go to college. My mother only went through third grade; she was pulled out of school because her mother died. She had to be the mother; it's incredible how those things used to happen. My father finished high school. Now I have a son who is in medical school. I am so proud. He is in his second year; he's going to survive. (President #11)

More than one president specifically identified the circumstances that surrounded their move to the United States as transformational experiences that shaped their outlook and persistence. “The immigrant experience taught me about perseverance...I am grounded with family and values” (President #5).

Although the participants were not asked about their first language, approximately one-third of those interviewed disclosed that English was not their first language. Several of the participants remembered early experiences which motivated them to speak out, be visible, and serve as advocates for equity. These scenarios included serving as the “voice” for the family at a young age, representing the Latino community, or seeking support for underserved populations of students. A president described her role of spokesperson for the family this way:

I was born in Puerto Rico and came to New York when I was seven-and-a-half years old. None of us spoke any English... and it was a huge transition. I was the first to speak English in the family and consequently I became the translator for the family and the interpreter, and literally I mean I was the interpreter for what was happening in our little world in the Bronx. (President #4)

Rincón (1997) stated, “Mexican culture has been male-oriented and dominated. The father wields almost unlimited power within the home. . . . Traditionally, the role of the Mexican woman is one of subordination” (p. 25). The message of subordination did not reverberate in the interviews. Contrary to a rigid gender role assignment and familial expectations, most of the presidents in this study regarded their immediate family as supportive, although not always knowledgeable of the context of their role in higher education. President #11 illustrated this view by sharing her parent’s perspective:

And so for her [mother] what I do is so distant, so far from her understanding it’s

more like, “We’re so proud of you. We see you in the paper all the time. You’re here. You’re there.” But the depth and scope of what we do, I don’t think she understands. She was a homemaker, so for her it’s more like “Well, when are you going to get married again, mihija?” I have two siblings who finished college; one is in public school administration, so he gets it and greatly appreciates my work. I think my family supports me without really knowing what I do. My mom will say, “Aye, mihija cómo andas, cómo andas! por qué hacas tanto?” Or my father will tell me “Why don’t you delegate more? Why don’t you let other people do it?” That’s the style of a male; you’re at the top now and everybody else is at your beck and call. That’s not my style, I believe I have to be the role model, I believe that I have to do the work so that I can inspire people to work at least half as hard as I do. I think the family can play a major role, but in some cases we’re the first generation of leaders like ourselves; our parents didn’t go to college and my mom didn’t even go to high school. It can be kind of challenging.

Being Latina was viewed as a strength and pride in their culture, which was clearly voiced during the interviews.

*Career and family.* The majority of the participants described that their career decisions were influenced by the needs of their children and extended family members (la familia). Family often encompassed parents, adult siblings, as well as nieces and nephews. For one president, the circumstances surrounding a career decision required a lateral move in order to balance family and work:

I get so involved in the community and the community was an hour and half away. I was doing things on Saturdays in that the community and that took away from my family. So when a position of vice presidency opened in my neighborhood college, my county community college, I was encouraged to apply and I did. So it was a lateral move, the money was less, but I was ten minutes away from my house. It was worth it because of my time. (President #4)

Achieving balance between family and work was sometimes attainable through support of an employer or as the result of career decisions as described by one president:

I have always felt that it was necessary to integrate my work and my personal life as my life as a whole. I have always seen my working hours as being somewhat flexible and my home life hours as being flexible. Obviously, when kids are young and you want to be involved in their activities and support them; one needs

to work around that. I've always had supervisors that understood that. So taking kids to soccer practice during the week at 3:30 or 4:00 was not a problem, but everyone knew that I was going to get my work done, and that if there was a weekend activity I was going to be at the weekend activity to get the work done. (President #8)

The majority of those married described a supportive spouse, who in some instances, changed his own career path to support the professional journey of his wife. Moreover, postponing a relocation was most commonly a family decision. An earlier study conducted in 1986 indicated that the wives of male presidents assumed most of the responsibility for the household, whereas female presidents spent almost as much time involved in household chores as their husbands (Vaughan, 1986). A pressure that influences women in making career decisions is family. Women may question whether or not they will be effective in the roles of mother and that of college president (Brown, 2005). Smith (2001) quoted a female president as disclosing, “[My] divorce was largely caused by my becoming president. My ex-husband had difficulty being, as he described it, a ‘consort’” (p. 230). In both studies, a lack of privacy served as a point of frustration for spouses.

An overwhelming commitment to the mission of community colleges emerged throughout the interviews. As participants spoke of their roles, the intonation in their voices reflected a sincere belief in the value of providing access to education and helping a diverse student population. A collective voice spoke of “serving the community”; “serving students”; and, “making a difference in people’s lives.”

Participants were eager to share success stories of students and expressed appreciation for students who maintained contact as they advanced their education or

careers. Several of the participants referred to GED graduation as an inspiring event as described in the excerpt below:

The way I get energized is that I believe we really do what we say. For example, we had a woman coming in who is in her forties, she didn't have her GED; she got her GED; she's finishing her nursing degree in December. That's what it's about. (President #11)

Noteworthy was discussion on the value of the comprehensiveness of the community and the vital role that the organization plays in the community. One president summed up her sentiments as,

In order to be effective you have to really have a passion for what you do. You have to love community colleges. You have to understand that community colleges are part of the community. If you are in a community college you have to be part of it. It takes a lot of energy and a lot of time, but I know what I do make a difference in people's lives. (President #3)

### *Research Question Two*

How do Latinas overcome barriers (if any) and challenges in their path to the presidency?

#### *Introduction*

The women in this study cited preparedness, as well as earning academic credentials as a requirement to establish their credibility. These presidents viewed themselves as change agents who assessed potential challenges and then determined proactive behaviors. They developed strategies to successfully interact with subordinates, professional colleagues, trustees, and the variety of constituencies they served. Strategies included quickly becoming involved in the community, acting decisively, utilizing interpersonal skills to effectively communicate, and establishing clear expectations. Each leader took care to be consistent in their presentation, citing

“you are always on.”

### *Professional Preparation*

Participants described components of their preparation for assuming a leadership position as: formal academic programs; participation in professional development institutes; fellowships; and for some, guidance from a coach or mentor. Salient events that took place during youth also emerged as a foundation for subsequent actions in life. Participants recounted taking advantages of occasions to learn from others either directly or through observation, and spoke candidly about their professional journey.

*Academic Attainment.* Academic preparation was a presupposition to advancement. Having an earned doctorate resounded as a requirement for advancement. “Education is critical; a doctorate is essential, it’s the number one step ... if you want to be a president, chancellor, vice-chancellor you have to have a doctorate” (President #7). The majority of the presidents pursued their advanced degrees while working full-time or in addition to raising a family as one participant observed:

When I was working on my doctorate, my daughters were quite young. In fact one of them was just two, I just juggled my schedule. I would work on my doctorate from 10:00 p.m. – 2:00 a.m. and that’s how I got through school, because I didn’t want to take anything away from them in terms of quality time. (President #7)

The highest levels in administration are likely to possess a doctorate (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002, Weisman & Vaughn, 2007). This finding was validated by the participants in this study.

*Professional development opportunities.* Professional development programs outside of formal academic programs were noted as not only valuable in developing

skills, but also as an avenue to determine areas for additional training as one president remarked:

The Fellows program helped me with what I was lacking in, where my weaknesses were, and to become confident enough to reach out to others and say you know I lack this information, can you help me get it? I need this kind of experience, how can I get it? And I was lucky enough to have a president who saw that I could. (President #4)

For participants in this study engagement in community-based organizations and college student groups provided relevant training for future leadership roles. In addition, service to the community was recalled as an early impetus to pursue education as noted by one president:

I remember a teacher union leader who was a Latina in the [city] public schools who was the chair of the education committee in our community, looking at the failures of education with our youth. She dragged me in there. I was like 16. She says, 'You're going to be a co-chair.' She says, "No, you sit with me." I would sit there at the head of the table with her. She taught how to run a meeting. (President #2)

President #8 also commented on the importance of community involvement, "I think that's how you meet people and how you learn the breadth of information you really need to be an effective leader."

*Mentors and Role Models.* Developing a mentoring relationship requires an investment of time and competing demands for faculty of color and other leaders. A challenge to protégés is that the small number of women in leadership roles shrinks the available pool of mentors who can serve as role models. Supervisors, both male and female, and non-Latinos were frequently described as mentors who provided professional development opportunities, or encouragement to take on new challenges.

Phinney (1990) asserted "A far less studied aspect of diversity has been the

psychological relationship of ethnic and racial minority group members with their own group, a topic dealt with under the broad term *ethnic identity*” (p. 499). Interestingly, in this study, several presidents noted that Latino peers were less than supportive as colleagues, although they shared a common culture. As President #10 reflected,

I think the struggle is that in our culture we tend to be a little more informal. Okay, there’s a time and place for that. It’s confusing for the non-Hispanic people we work with, plus it doesn’t work with the Hispanic male either.

She went further to explain the necessity of establishing a professional *self* consistent with the behavioral norms of the traditional academic setting. These boundaries reinforced an expectation for interactions appropriate for a formal business environment, instead of a more casual communication style that could be misinterpreted.

While most participants identified access to mentors early in their career, at least two did not specify a particular individual, instead describing informal learning opportunities. “What I’ve learned is that you may not have a formal mentor, but you can take little things from different people and put them together. And I also learned how not to manage people” (President #3).

*The Role of Trustees.* Positive relationships with trustees were considered integral to the ability to successfully lead the organization. The size of the board and selection process for trustees varied depending upon the state. However, the importance of the relationship with trustees was voiced again and again. Particularly noteworthy was the role of trustees as the body responsible for hiring the president and for setting policy. One long-term president candidly described the controversy associated with her hiring. She emphasized the courage of two female board members who supported her

appointment.

I think champions matter. I would love to say that I can make it on my own. Certainly, I can say to this day ... that I'm extremely well qualified for my position. Had it not been for two Latino trustees on my board at that time that fought like hell, I probably would have not done my job. Although I was positive that I was the best qualified candidate, there is always for us a consciousness at the board level or the senior administrative level for someone has to want to make a difference. (President #2)

On more than one occasion, a board took actions viewed as contentious by faculty, including foregoing a formal search for a new president and instead moving forward to make an internal appointment. The credibility of the president in working through tumultuous periods required a united and supportive board. A faculty vote of no confidence for one president was partially weathered by the commitment of the board to support the president. This show of confidence was critical to recovering focus and moving forward.

### *Professional Context*

The community college context in the new millennia encompasses a wide range of constituencies, internal and external, thus the leader must be prepared to address competing and numerous demands. The president is the representative and “face” of the institution.

*Leadership Competencies.* Participants reflected on the evolving role of the president and the necessary skills required for fulfilling these responsibilities. As the context of the community college environment has changed, it is important to understand which skills, knowledge, and attributes are necessary to be an effective leader. Pope and Miller (2005) noted that presidents must possess skills different than those of past

generations. Competencies include a greater appreciation of diversity, technology skills, and the ability to envision the role of higher education in a global economy. Roueche and Jones (2005) described the role of the new community college president as an entrepreneur who must be creative in serving as a fundraiser and an agent in facilitating creative collaborations. The role of today's president "combines, in effect, at least two full-time jobs, each of which requires significantly different approaches, skills, talents, and knowledge" (ACE, 2007a, p. 6). The president must establish and maintain relationships through business as well as community partnerships. This is "in addition to the complexities and difficulty inherent in managing primarily on-campus constituencies" (ACE, 2007a, p. 6). Edwards (2004) noted that effective leaders have developed "intercultural competence."

When queried about the competencies required to lead an organization, participants expanded beyond the confines of academia to emphasize knowledge of business operations, political acumen, and communication skills. In reference to politics, one president noted, "Sometimes people will tell me, 'How come you're so political, how come you're so politically connected? So politically involved?' Because everything is political!" (President #11).

One participant noted that as a female president, it was important to establish credible relationships with male peers and their spouses, which she refers to as "branding."

For Latina women it's a branding issue. Let's be clear; it's where they [Latinas] fail. It's not enough that you're working hard to get your credentials, it's not enough, but if you don't have this branding issue settled in our own mind, you're not going to be successful. Because people will tear you down. (President #10)

The complexity of issues that leaders must be informed of and take action on is vast and potentially emotionally charged as described by one participant:

At the highest levels, affirmative action created a sense of obligation. The elimination of affirmative action allowed this certain emotional back lashing, and national resentment of what was a perceived loss of opportunity for white people. I really sense that. There is a horrible racist backlash coupled with the uncomfortable anti-immigration sentiments. People don't want to be pro-immigrant, pro-undocumented students. They really don't. The boards that do are precious for us. (President #2)

Several of the participants reiterated that in order to be perceived as a strong leader, preparedness in citing specific sources of information and providing accurate data were tantamount. "You have to be better than everyone else;" "You have to prove yourself over and over again" were common refrains. One president stressed, "You have to master the skills. You have to understand finance, organizational structure, professional development, evaluation, those types of things, but in addition to the skills you have to be able to work with people" (President #3). Orchestrating the "right" administrative team was a high priority; this was accompanied by empowering individuals to "do their job." President #9 reflected on a lesson learned from a mentor, "I'm hiring you because you're an expert in something. I'm not going to be the expert in the area. You're the expert in your area. If I need something, I'm going to turn to you."

Decision making was based on a personal belief system or philosophy that set the tone for leadership. "Leadership begins with your beliefs, always deliver; be prepared to make tough choices" (President #6). President #2 shared a theoretical framework that provides a foundation to establish focus around difficult issues:

Good leadership is understanding and being strategic about change and being ready...Those moments occur for a reason...Critical race theory today gives us an understanding of conversions when things start to slip back when the discomfort around pushes creates a dominate culture. The leader has to know in that moment how to move forward. (President #2)

Strong verbal communication and presentation skills were identified as a requirement for effective leadership both one-on-one and in front of large groups. “In order to move into a position of leadership, you have to demonstrate that confidence to get up in front of a board or a crowd of 200 people and you have to be able to address them” (President #3). Another president illustrated the crucial necessity of communication skills as a tool. “You need to get people to buy in, to believe in your vision, to believe in the goals of the things we need to do” (President #11). Listening skills were imperative for dealing with difficult personnel issues during one-on-one sessions.

An external presence provides an opportunity for the president to tell the story of the college, a crucial connection in becoming a “friendraiser,” which is a prerequisite to being a fundraiser (Milliron, de los Santos, & Browning, 2003, p. 6). In the face of diminishing resources, the role of the president includes responsibility for securing external funds to support the institution. One president recommended, “I would encourage them [emerging leaders] to take professional development or coursework that’s outside of education. More business orientation, fundraising, there’s not a single pathway.” (President #13)

Promoting visibility for the college and engagement with leaders in the community was clearly delineated as a function of the president. The multi-faceted

benefits of community engagement were highlighted by this president:

I actually have found that I believe it's important that I be engaged with our community in various organizations, both with an ethnic focus and without because it is through personal interaction that individuals are then exposed to working with diversity, such as working with women, and Latinas. Additional through community involvement younger people learn that we [Latinas] bring value to the table as well. (President #8)

Rotary was one organization mentioned by several participants as an important avenue for becoming known and active in the community. Fostering external relationships to form partnerships was also viewed as a component of the community college mission.

### *Research Question Three*

What practices or policies would be most beneficial in transforming community college culture to be more inclusive?

#### *Introduction*

A willingness to challenge long-held beliefs and practices must occur in order to Foster inclusive environments that promote diversity throughout all levels of the organizations.

Trustees and the president can affirm their commitment to diversity by identifying, cultivating, and educating members of underrepresented groups through the presidential leadership development program. If many colleges establish such programs, they can take major steps toward closing the gap that currently exists between the percentages of white and minority presidents and of male and female presidents. (Vaughan & Weisman, 2003, p.57)

Transformation will only occur if trustees are willing to move systems beyond cosmetic facades that claim to promote diversity, while the status quo is maintained.

#### *Diversity and the Leadership Pipeline*

A hurdle to overcome in enhancing diversity was sometimes cited as the composition and mind-set of hiring committees, who were described as exhibiting a tendency to favor candidates who were similar to themselves.

I know from serving on search committees that people are looking for people who are like them. They are most comfortable with people that look them, and talk like them. Therefore, anyone who is different has to have more to outshine and overcome that or people are not going to look to them. Not only racially, but even in terms of strengths and weaknesses. I don't see people who are looking for people that are stronger than them, that work toward their weaknesses. Because they're afraid, they see it as a threat instead of 'Wow, we would be a great team'! (President #4)

According to Gillett-Karam et al. (1991), "A culture of conformity refers to the practices of honoring and emulating only the traits of previous leaders, or to institutionalize rules that exclude and diminish the importance of exception or diversity" (p. 12). This institutional climate maintains the comfort level for those in power, according to Lee. While organizational hierarchies change by becoming flatter and more group oriented, a reluctance to modify behavior remains (Evans, 2001). Moore (2005) referred to the hierarchy as a pecking order that is concerned with status within the community college, especially as it relates to minority groups.

A tendency to hire others like ourselves is a common pattern that contributes to maintaining the status quo, further restricting women from being considered for positions that historically have been held by men. According to Flannigan, Jones, and Moore (2004), hiring practices are very similar to the time when faculty members were first hired in the 1960s. Traditional hiring practices perpetuate maintenance of the status quo. The culture of an organization begins with the leadership priorities and values (Baker, 1992). As such, a commitment to change must be championed by top administration and

the board of trustees responsible for the hiring of the president (Hecht, Higgerson, Gmelch, & Tucker, 1999).

“The anticipated turnover in college presidencies in the coming decade gives our institutions the opportunity to rectify that demographic gap by hiring institutional leaders who better mirror the gender and racial makeup of our students and our communities” (Spectrum, 2008, p. 15).

Early intervention in the identification, recruitment, and preparation of future leaders was voiced as a significant priority of the presidents. The majority of participants spoke of individual and systemic obligations to proactively determine solutions to establish a diverse pool of candidates in anticipation of “a changing of the guard.” This call for action is consistent with the findings from Weisman and Vaughan (2007) who reported “More than half of current presidents (54%) have a formal mentoring relationship with a potential future community college leader (p. 2).

A sense of personal responsibility and urgency to address preparation of emerging leaders was common throughout these conversations. Several presidents described their own actions to support emerging leaders and how to improve strategies. As one president remarked:

I need to serve as a mentor in the formal sense versus the informal sense. I shouldn't be just asking them or nominating them to serve on different boards, but probably meeting with them so they understand why I'm doing it and the importance of expanding one's network. I'm sitting here thinking are there policy things we can initiate? Yes, but probably even as leaders in those positions to establish policy we often don't understand the comprehensive role we should be playing. (President #8)

Two of the presidents described “grow your own” programs recently initiated in

their systems; the only regret being that this had not begun sooner. Ancillary to identification of emerging leaders, presidents provided practical experiential opportunities.

As a leader, I can provide opportunities for people to go before the board so the board sees that they're competent and capable of doing these things. I set up a luncheon for the board at 11:30 a.m. and their meeting is at 12:30 p.m. At 12:00 I bring in someone from the college for fifteen to twenty minutes to talk about their program. So, not only is the board educated about different areas of the college, but I was giving people an opportunity to go before the board. It's a more relaxed environment, not the formal meeting. I think you can help people to develop their confidence by giving them small opportunities to do things like that. (President #3)

The changing landscape of higher education requires exploring non-traditional approaches to developing leadership including looking at practices in other fields. One president suggested exploring a "career ladder" model that has been successful in the field of nursing.

The fear of failure or reluctance to express interest in promotion within the organization is very real. Several presidents conveyed that it was incumbent upon them to provide encouragement to those who might not view themselves as potential leaders and perhaps needed to be "pushed out of their comfort zone."

Presidents in this study expressed frustration over the gap in the pipeline for Latinas. One president noted that in spite of a small number of formal and informal networking groups that exist in her state, Latinas are not entering the pipeline. Further exacerbating this gap was the recent retirements of Latina presidents as well as apprehension regarding replacements. Tokenism was described as veiled and made acceptable with the justification that "we have already hired one" by some boards.

Therefore, participants felt it was imperative to educate boards on the changing needs of the populations they serve. Further, to elicit the interest of the board to engage in succession planning and internal employee development programs.

Given that a terminal degree is a requirement for advancement, what can be done to support Latinas in attaining doctoral degrees? Examination of academic practices leads to attention to institutional climate and practices. González (2006) stated, “There exists vast literature on how and why Latinas fail in graduate education it is--important to address institutional structures that hinder Latina graduate educational attainment” (p. 349).

Cuádriz (2005) noted, “Chicanas are severely underrepresented in institutions of higher education at the undergraduate, masters, and doctoral levels” (p. 215). In reference to the progress made since the 1970s, Gutierrez et al. (2002) argued,

What hasn't changed regarding Latinos in U.S. higher education, however, is the poor pipeline of Hispanic talent, starting from elementary and secondary education and moving onward. ...Although progress has been made, much more remained to be done to expand the pool of appropriately credentialed and experientially prepared Latinos for leadership positions in community colleges. (p. 299)

Jackson and Phelps (2004) maintained, “Because many academic leaders in two-year colleges are selected or recruited from faculty ranks, a diverse faculty is essential for advancing institutional efforts to achieve equitable and successful outcomes for faculty” (p. 80).

The small number of Latinas in leadership roles places additional burdens on these individuals to represent or speak for an entire population. Further, the absence of representation by Latinas in presidencies sadly translates to too few role models for other

Latinas attempting to enter the pipeline to the presidency. Turner (2002) captured the stories of faculty member experiences as they negotiate their professional environments: “Although faculty women of color have obtained academic positions, even when tenured they often confront situations that limit their authority and, as they address these situations, drain their energy” (p. 74).

According to the American Council on Education (ACE) (2007a), “The challenges and complexities of leading a higher education institution have changed radically and multiplied dramatically from what they were only twenty years ago” (p. xi). Industry has increased expectations that colleges prepare employees who possess technological skills as well as knowledge of foreign cultures (AACCC, 2000). Community colleges must be prepared to respond to a plethora of expected deliverables to their customers in the global economy. These forces have created a major shift in the role of incoming college presidents. In addition, the impending retirements of current leaders expected to occur over the next several years will rob institutions of a rich history and pool of experienced individuals.

The role of selecting a president is “the board’s most important job” (Jensen, Giles, & Kirklin, 2000, p. 70). Traditionally though, trustees are similar in composition to those they hire (Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel, & Coyan 2000, Vaughan, 2004). Ebbers et. al stated that women in leadership development programs reported that “the biggest hurdle to advancement was the mind-set of community college boards of trustees” (p. 380). Therefore, it is imperative that the board of trustees understand the needs of the

institution and the direction for the future of the college. President #11 reiterated the influence of the board of trustees:

They're [trustees] key, they're key. Our elected officials are so key. Your board of trustees, and board of regents are elected ... and they really hold the key so if you want to change the composite of presidents at universities and colleges you have to make sure you elect people of color, people who are sensitive to diversity, who embrace it and who promote it. Really they are the policy makers who decide; their one job is to hire the president. That's their job right there, and to approve policy; that's it in a nutshell. They're the ones with the power. They decide who comes and who doesn't.

For community college trustees, the confluence of dynamics can provide opportunity to add diversity to community college leadership and enhance the educational experience of all students. Trustees in partnership with the president share responsibility to prepare emerging leaders that include strategically planned, experiential learning opportunities (Vaughan, 2004). It is imperative that boards of trustees address succession planning while determining the future needs of the institutions they serve.

#### *Research Question Four*

How have key issues in higher education administration changed in the last ten years for Latinas?

#### *Introduction*

Although gains have been made in advancing women of color in academia, the results are not substantive enough to demonstrate equity in the leadership ranks of community colleges. The same holds true for representation of faculty of color in the classroom. In spite of increasing diversity in student enrollment, there are too few role models for minority students in the faculty or administrative ranks. Latinas who do become faculty are often given additional responsibilities in order to meet minority

quotas on committees and/or expected to speak as an expert representative for an entire diverse population.

Latinas continue to deal with stereotypical perceptions from peers and are challenged to “prove their ability” or take personal responsibility to dispel myths about their culture. These viewpoints may stem from a gender or ethnic bias, or both. Latinas continue to deal with innuendo regarding whether they achieved their rank based on fulfilling a quota or on actual merit. As President #9 explained,

I think the expectation was that we [Latino] weren't going to be able to do it. *I* wasn't going to be able to do it. I think I've lived with that all my life, in my professional career, even growing up. Being a Latino in this country, you have to do 150 %, instead of doing 100 %. It's there; it's part of my life.

Leadership development opportunities may fail to address the differing perspectives or conditions of minority women who must negotiate an older white, male dominated organization. In addition to cultural differences, generational values and beliefs can further create misunderstandings in the work environment. Organizational culture has continued to perpetuate a strict ethnocentric mode of operation despite an increasingly diverse minority population, thus operating on an “assumption of sameness.”

### *Challenges*

For participants in this study, isolation was mentioned as a reality of the leadership role, often times attributed to the small numbers of Latinas in similar positions. President #8 reflected, “I will say that except for the president that I spent the fellowship year with, there has typically not been a woman in a position higher than the one I've held.” Another commented, “In my [state] I was the first woman, not just the first Latina, but the first woman president.” (President #3)

Further, “Situations in which a woman of color might experience marginality are multiplied. ...Often it is difficult to tell whether race or gender stereotyping is operating” (Turner, 2002, p. 77). Hankins (2000) referred to this concept as “ethnic double consciousness” (p. 193), and this marginalization does little to promote Latinas to aspire to leadership positions in higher education.

When I was first moving into higher education, I do think there were two challenges at least in my mind that needed to be overcome. Those two challenges initially, well I guess there were three [laughter] my youth, my gender, and my ethnicity. . . I do believe that those were challenges I had to overcome. (President #8)

Several participants bemused the accepted norm of what a president should look like; namely, a white male. The “glass ceiling” concept represents the multiple barriers that women encounter in the workplace (Cox, 1993, p. 20) as well as challenges in the attitudes and values that people in positions of power bring to the work environment. Carli and Eagly (2001) noted, “The glass ceiling is a metaphor for prejudice and discrimination” (p. 631). Female community college presidents have experienced challenges in coping with personal and institutional hindrances during their ascension to the college presidency (Moore, 2000). Barriers to women striving for success exist in the attitudes and values that people in positions of power bring to the work environment.

Persistence, self efficacy, and willingness to take risks were characteristics evident among the participants as reflected in the following quote:

I applied for four presidencies before I got one. I allowed myself to cry for half-an-hour [pause], in private. You have to be willing to take that risk and you have to be willing to say, Okay, this one didn't work out, but let me try again. And you have to be able to learn from every experience. (President #3)

Noted was the absence of a networking system for women comparable to the

supports for males. The “good ole’ boy network” was referred to as an opportunity for men to develop networks and attain mentors. This support has afforded access to role models who shared common characteristics. This type of network was viewed as a valuable resource to those who sought entrance to circles of influence; a counterpart for women, particularly women of color who desired mentoring and guidance is largely a void. One president suggested that Latinas should engage in professional development at each stage of their career to not only learn the skills, but the expectation and nuances of leadership. However, such a infrastructure is not currently in place.

Even when a leadership position has been attained, stereotypical perceptions persist that placed added duty on women to clarify boundaries, expectations, and “educate” others including Latinos. A president shared that she was challenged by Latinas, for not being Latina enough, or challenged by non-Latinas that “I do too much for Latinas.” Reference was made to taking part in both formal and informal meetings, then being introduced by first name (e.g., Marianita), or by a Spanish term of endearment, while men were introduced as Dr. or Mr. The presidents pointed out that it was necessary to establish protocol early on directly and firmly with this deferential treatment.

Women, minority or White, who have achieved leadership positions, continue to struggle with challenges that differ from those of their male counterparts. Stephenson (2001) stated, “As women leaders entering a new century, we are at a very difficult crossroads, a crossroads where public expectations, the demands of diverse populations, governmental scrutiny, and hard financial realities intersect” (p. 193). The lack of role

models in higher education administration poses another challenge for Latinas.

Latinas and other women of color “experience multiple marginality” and are often presented with additional layers of complexity in their day-to-day professional lives (Turner, 2002, p. 76). According to Turner, women of color function in a contextual space that encompasses being more visible and on display, feeling more pressure to conform and to make few mistakes, becoming socially invisible, being more isolated and peripheral, being more likely to be excluded from informal networks, having limited sources of power through alliances, having few opportunities to be sponsored, facing misperceptions of their identity and role in the organization, being stereotyped, and facing more personal stress.

#### *Dispelling Myths*

Role models and mentors who provided positive influence to these women were representative of both genders; the majority of mentors were identified as white males. African Americans, both male and female, were also mentioned during the interviews. This finding may be reflective of the composition of the workforce.

The stereotype of the Latino spouse or father as a dominant, rigid figurehead of the family was dispelled by these participants. The married participants described their spouses as supportive partners who shared in decision making and encouraged career advancement. Further, although many of these presidents were first-generation college students whose families had limited knowledge of college, their parents encouraged pursuit of higher education.

Although the participants acknowledged their cognizance of being bi-cultural and adapting to majority norms, the *essence* of being Latina was a source of pride and strength. Identity was not compromised in order to achieve success, but instead drawn upon as a lens to offer a different perspective.

The women in this study were identified as “Latina” however within this group there is *much* internal diversity in ethnic identification. Although themes of shared values, commitment to equity, and access were voiced, each individual brought forth unique characteristics. “The constructs of race and ethnicity in the United States are complex and difficult to define and frame. Researchers are not consistent in their meaning, which makes these concepts particularly challenging to grasp” noted Chavez and Guido-DiBrito (2000, p. 40). Current literature and theoretical constructs have moved from defining race as a biological designation, but as one that is socially constructed (Chavez & Guido-DiBrito, 2000; Rendón, Castellanos & Jones, 2003). As such, women of color may be judged by the dominant culture through the lens of racial or ethnic stereotypes.

### Implications

The very roots of our diversity and inclusion efforts lie in the basic values of justice and equality that are the underpinnings of our society. We take steps to move our campuses—and our society—in this direction simply because it is the right thing to do. In addition, we face the demographic reality that our nation is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse at an impressive rate. (Spectrum, 2008, p. 8)

As the stewards and conscience of the institution, trustees must commit to be informed of changing student demographics and leadership competency requirements. Trustees have an obligation to support inclusiveness by setting policies that support and

fund meaningful diversity initiatives. Further, succession planning is critical to responsiveness to developing leadership for the future.

Administrators must support comprehensive and coordinated efforts to develop “grow your own” leadership programs and provide avenues for professional development activities to enhance career advancement. Creation of meaningful training programs is imperative to assist employees in achieving performance standards and determining areas for improvement. Avenues for leadership development that include experiential learning are career mapping, shadowing professionals, and the enhancement of skills by taking responsibility for new projects.

Targeting students in post-secondary and graduate programs to consider higher education as a profession is critical to raising awareness of career possibilities. Those students interested in K-12 teaching careers may be unaware of faculty positions at the community college, areas of student affairs, or administration in higher education and willing to consider this field. Studies of the career intentions of doctoral candidates of community college leadership programs can identify candidates for future placements.

The human resources areas of community college districts must be held accountable for developing strategic plans that include outcome measurements for adding diversity to the faculty and administrative ranks. The composition and attitudes of hiring committees merit careful consideration as well. A comprehensive action plan developed collaboratively by academic divisions, and other operating units to identify effective recruitment, hiring targets, and retention strategies provide a framework for determining successful outcomes. Using the analogy of enrollment management, the commitment to

diversity is everyone's responsibility, not solely regulated to a specific area such as student affairs.

#### Recommendation for Further Research

Additional research focused specifically on Latinas and other women of color is needed to examine variables such as ethnicity, age, and career path. Of particular significance is identification of who is in the pipeline at the levels of director, associate dean, and dean. For Latinas who have served in more than one presidency, it would be beneficial to learn the number of previous presidencies, as well as the tenure in those roles.

A second area for further research is to determine whether Latinos have fared more successfully than Latinas in their journey to the presidency. Have Latinos encountered the same challenges as Latinas? Do Latinos enjoy greater access to the traditional male networks that women are traditionally excluded from regardless of race or ethnicity?

Finally, additional insight to the perceptions and beliefs of trustees serve to provide a clearer picture of the career climate for emerging Latina leaders. Are trustees able to recognize potential gender or gender bias well enough to open the door to an inclusive environment? Are female trustees open to the consideration of a female leader? Do Latino/a trustees support Latino/a candidates? These issues merit further study in order to shape training for trustees embarking on the presidential search process.

## Summary

In spite of the gains made by women in higher education and the increase of Hispanic students finding entering post secondary education, equity in the representation of Latinas in higher education at the administrative ranks has not yet been achieved. Although, demographics have to reflect a more diverse student population, the highest levels of leadership continue to be occupied by white males. Systemic challenges that persist for women include stereotypical perceptions, gender and racial discrimination, limited role models, and exclusion from networking opportunities.

The presidents in this study were as academically prepared or more so than their male counterparts. The same was true for their participation level in community boards and service activities. It was significant that almost half of the presidents had participated in the National Community College Hispanic Council Fellows (NCCHC) program prior to their appointment. Given the success of NCCHC in influencing the placement of graduates in senior level positions, this has implications for other professional development programs. Additionally, several participants concluded that organizations with a focus on ethnic minority groups should collaborate further in order to promote greater inclusiveness by supporting efforts that reflect similar goals.

The findings from this study suggest that trustees played a critical role in promoting diversity as the majority of the boards that hired the presidents in this study included representation from women and other minority groups. Latinas appeared to have greater access to leadership opportunities at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI). Most of the participants were preceded by a white male in the role of president and

served in their current role for fewer than five years. Of the participants in this study, 68% noted that this is a first presidency. Participants voiced urgency in recruiting and cultivating future leaders that reflect a greater balance of representation of student and community populations.

The stereotypical perception of Latinas as subservient and passive is not reflective of the women in this study. Although institutional discrimination has persisted, the study participants refused to allow bias to prevent them from succeeding, and instead provided positive professional role models for others through demonstration of their competence. Community colleges stand to gain from opening their doors to Latinas and other minorities who bring different styles of leadership, insight and rich experiences to the organization. Given the pace at which higher education embraces change, an opportunity to improve organizational effectiveness, the learning environment, and enhance diversity could be lost unless action is taken now.

## APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

**IRB APPROVED ON:** 4/25/07

**IRB APPROVAL – IRB Protocol #2006-05-0089**

**Title:** Characteristics and Career Pathways of Latina Community College Presidents

**Conducted by:** Martha Muñoz, Doctoral Student

The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program, Department of Educational Leadership, 480-720-9057.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this research will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with UT Austin or participating site. To do so simply tell the research you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent for your records.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study is to gather the stories, characteristics, and career pathways of Latina community college presidents. This data will be analyzed for commonalities in the preparation, experiences, and characteristics of the study group.

Ten participants will be representative of various types of colleges; suburban, rural, predominately white, Hispanic Serving Institutions, both large and small schools.

The anticipated outcome is to determine successful strategies to identify, prepare Latinas to pursue leadership positions in higher education by identifying best practices.

If you agree to be in this study you will be asked to:

Complete a demographic form and be provided with the interview questions in advance. Participate in an interview. Interview questions will be provided in advance.

**Time:**

Two to three hours.

**Risks / Benefits:**

The benefits include the generation of data to influence policy makers to advocate for increasing the number of Latinas in the education pipeline; a second outcome is the potential for motivating Latinas to consider higher education leadership roles.

**Compensation:**

No compensation is provided for participation in this study.

**Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:**

All interviews will be audiotaped. The tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office. Tapes will be heard or viewed for research purposes by the investigator and faculty sponsor, Dr. Patricia Somers.

Given the small size of the group it is impossible to keep the identity of participants confidential. Participants will be identified by names, but the place of employment will not be disclosed.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, members of the Institutional Review Board, and (study sponsors, if any) have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject. Throughout the study, the researchers will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

If you have any questions about the study please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation call the researchers conducting the study. Their names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses are at the top of this page. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or questions about the research please contact Lisa Leiden, Ph.D., Chair of The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 471-8871 or email: [orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu](mailto:orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu).

*You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: Martha Muñoz

## APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

### LATINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

**DIRECTIONS:** Please provide the requested information or check ONE response to each question unless the directions indicate otherwise.

#### I. Presidential Search Information

1. Is this your first presidency?  
 No  
 Yes
2. In what year did you officially begin your current presidency?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What was your status when applying for this position?  
 internal candidate  
 external candidate
4. How did you become a candidate for this position (choose one)?  
 contacted by a search firm  
 applied without nomination  
 nominated and accepted the nomination  
 served first as "acting"  
 encouraged by the institution  
 contacted by the search committee chair  
 contacted by a search committee member  
 appointed directly  
 other (please state)
5. Was the search conducted?  
 nationally  
 regionally  
 locally  
 Internally  
 N/A
6. Was the previous CEO?  
 female  
 male
7. Was the previous CEO a member of a racial/ethnic minority group?  
 No  
 Yes
8. How many total presidential searches have you been a candidate in?  
 current position only  
 2-3 positions  
 4-5 positions  
 6-7 positions  
 Other (please state #)  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Were you offered other presidencies that you turned down?  
 No  
 Yes
10. Did accepting this presidency require you to relocate?  
 No  
 Yes
11. What was the title of the position you held immediately prior to the presidency?  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### II. Institution Information

1. At what type of institution are you president?  
 single campus  
 multi-campus
2. What is the control of your institution?  
 public  
 private

3. Is the institution a Hispanic Serving Institution?
- No  
 Yes
4. Is the Board of Trustees?
- elected  
 appointed  
 other (please explain)
5. At the time you were hired, how many Board members were?
- female \_\_\_\_\_  
male \_\_\_\_\_
6. At the time you were hired, were any Board members of a racial/ethnic minority group?
- No  
 Yes  
 If yes, how many were not Caucasian?
- 

7. What type of geographical area is the institution located in?
- rural  
 suburban  
 urban  
 inner city  
 other
- 
8. What was the number of FTE students during the fall 2006?
- 

### III. Professional Preparation

1. Prior to your presidency, which leadership development programs did you attend? (Check all that apply)
- AACC FLI  
 AACC Presidents Academy  
 ACE Fellows Program  
 League for Innovation

- National Institute for Leadership Development (NILD)  
 National Community College Hispanic Council Fellows (NCCHC)  
 Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU)  
 Other (please specify)
- 

2. What professional affiliations were you a member of at the time of your presidential candidacy?
- American Association for Women in Community Colleges  
 NCCHC  
 National Association of Student Personnel Administrators  
 National Council of Instructional Administrators  
 National Council for Workforce Education  
 Other (please specify)
- 

3. Prior to your presidency, which civic organizations(s) did you belong to? (check all that apply)
- Jaycees  
 Kiwanis  
 Lions  
 Rotary  
 Other (please specify)
- 

4. Prior to your presidency, which type of board(s) were you a member of? Check all that apply.
- corporate board  
 educational organization  
 community service board  
 college or university board  
 K-12 school board  
 government board or commission  
 non-profit agency  
 other professional organization
-

5. Prior to your first presidency, did you have a mentor(s)?
- no (Skip to question #IV. 1)
- yes
6. How many mentors have you had since beginning your community college career?
- 1 mentor
- 2 mentors
- 3 mentors
- 4 or more mentors
- \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many of the above mentors are female? Please identify ethnicity if known. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many of the above mentors are male? Please identify ethnicity if known. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- Hispanic
- Mexican American
- Puerto Rican
- Chicana
- Cuban
- Dominican
- Other
- \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your current relationship status?
- single, never married
- first marriage
- second or subsequent marriage
- separated
- divorced
- widowed
- committed partner
6. If currently married or in a committed relationship, is your spouse partner employed outside the home?
- no
- yes
- retired

#### IV. Personal Information

1. What is your current age?
- 35 years or younger
- 36-40 years
- 41-45 years
- 46-50 years
- 51-55 years
- 56-60 years
- 61 year or older
2. How old were you when you officially assumed your first presidency?
- \_\_\_\_\_
3. In what state(s) did you reside for the first eighteen years of your life?
- \_\_\_\_\_
4. How do you self identify your ethnicity?
- Latina

**THANK YOU!**

**Please return this survey in the enclosed envelope by July 27, 2007:**

Martha Muñoz  
 Central Arizona College  
 8470 N. Overfield Road  
 Coolidge, AZ 85228

Modified from:  
 Petterson, B. J. (2003). The decision by women to become community college presidents: Implications for career development and organizational policy. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 64(06), 1950. (UMI No. 3094988).

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about your history. (Either personal, professional, educational). When and how did you decide to pursue a leadership position in higher education?
2. What were the circumstances or experiences that helped you to become a community college president/chancellor?
3. Did you have a mentor (s)? Tell me about your mentor(s) background, and how this person supported you?
4. What do you believe are the reasons that so few Latinas advance to leadership positions in higher education?
5. What do you believe are the reasons that some Latinas do become presidents?
6. As a Latina college president/chancellor, how do you define leadership?
7. What has been your most significant challenge in your *journey* to the presidency? What has the most significant challenges in your *role* as president?
8. Is being Latina a plus or minus in your leadership role? Please explain.
9. What are the most important actions that must take place in order to increase the numbers of Latinas in leadership positions in higher education?
10. What do you find most rewarding in your role as president?

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## VITA

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Martha worked in the Maricopa County Community College District for ten years in various capacities. She then moved to Central Arizona College first as a Director and eventually assumed the role of Dean of Teacher Education. In 2005 she entered the Graduate School of the University of Texas.

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