THE ROLES OF THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT DURING AN ERA OF ACCOUNTABILITY

A Dissertation in Educational Leadership

by

Hector L. Sambolin, Jr.

© 2010 Hector L. Sambolin, Jr.

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2010
The dissertation of Hector L. Sambolin, Jr. was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Jacqueline Stefkovich  
Professor of Education  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Paul Begley  
Professor of Education

Robert Hendrickson  
Professor of Education

Nancy Tuana  
Professor of Philosophy

Gerald LeTendre  
Head of Education Policy Studies

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

Using the Roles of the University President During an Era of Accountability model which integrates multiple perspective approaches to presidential leadership as well as role theory with an underlying foundation of ethical constructs this research focuses on four university presidents with at least five years of experience at four-year, Research I, land-grant institutions in the United States. This study utilizes a comparative case study design via in-depth document review analysis as well as individual interviews to explore the lived experiences and role(s) of university presidents based on several internal and external variables of context such as state governance structure, university structure, university organization, and the interplay of relationships that exist among them. Personal and ethical constructs of the university presidency informed by the presidents themselves are also considered. Much of the current literature informing practice has been a-theoretical; thus, this research uses theory to inform practice. Informing practice can provide university presidents with insight and additional information on the roles they fill or perhaps lead to the creation of new roles. This study will provide a snapshot of organizational theory to explain the nexus between increased demands for accountability and the role of the university president while concomitantly analyzing how presidents internalize and navigate through such a nexus using both professional and personal value systems to guide the process of effective decision-making within their institutions- all of which is critically important given the environment of American higher education today.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES........................................................................................................vii
LIST OF TABLES........................................................................................................viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..............................................................................................ix

Chapter I Introduction.................................................................................................1
Background................................................................................................................1
Increasing Demands for Accountability.................................................................3
Problem Statement and Research Questions..................................................4

Chapter II Review of the Literature..........................................................................6
The Modern Structure of the American Research University......................6
The Organizational Context of the American Research University..............8
The Roles of the University President in the United States.........................12
The Accountability Movement.............................................................................16
Understanding Presidential Leadership.........................................................19
Cognitive Frames of Presidential Leadership.................................................21
Presidential Leadership in the Context of Organizational Perception...........25
Socialization, Role Theory and the Influence of Internal
and External Variables
of Context on Decision-Making.................................................................30
The Influence of Values and Ethics on the University Presidency
and Decision-Making...................................................................................32

Chapter III Methodology.........................................................................................38
Conceptual Framework.........................................................................................38
Justification for Qualitative and Multi-Case Studies....................................46
Research Design..................................................................................................48

Chapter IV Results................................................................................................53
Case Study I: East Longview State University..............................................56
Results of President A Interview.................................................................62
Expectations for the Roles of the University Presidency...........................62
Leadership..........................................................................................................65
Impact of Personal Values on Professional Decision-Making....................68
Case Study II: Forest Hills State University...................................................72
Results of President B Interview………………………………………86
Expectations for the Roles of the University Presidency………………86
Leadership………………………………………………………………88
Impact of Personal Values on Professional Decision-Making………90

Case Study III: Riverside State University……………………………………93

Results of President C Interview……………………………………….98
Expectations for the Roles of the University Presidency………………98
Leadership………………………………………………………………100
Impact of Personal Values on Professional Decision-Making…………102

Case Study IV: Rolling Ridges University……………………………………105

Results of President D Interview…………………………………………112
Expectations for the Roles of the University Presidency………………112
Leadership………………………………………………………………113
Impact of Personal Values on Professional Decision-Making…………114

Conclusion……………………………………………………………………………..117

Chapter V Findings and Analysis of Data……………………………………………...118

Purpose and Design of Study………………………………………………118
Findings……………………………………………………………………………120

Chapter VI Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion…………………155

How have greater demands for accountability impacted your professional practice
as a university president?.............................................................155
The Impact of Internal and External Variables on Presidential Decision-
Making…………………………………………………………………158
Implications for Practice………………………………………………163
Implications for Future Research……………………………………164
Implications for Theory………………………………………………165

Conclusion……………………………………………………………………………166

References………………………………………………………………………168

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions………………………………………………175
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1A: Linear Model of the University (Alpert, 1986) .........................10

Figure 1B: Matrix Model of the University with External Agents (Alpert, 1986) ................................................................. 11

Figure 2: The Accountability Triangle (Burke, 2005) ...............................40

Figure 3: Areas of Influence (Begley, 2004) .............................................43

Figure 4: The Roles of the University President

   During an Era of Accountability ..................................................47
# LIST OF TABLES

Table **4-1**: Interview Participants ................................................................. 55

Table **5**: The Roles and Responsibilities of the University Presidents .............. 123

Table **6A**: Internal Variables Influencing Presidential Roles and Decision-Making ................................................................. 158

Table **6B**: External Variables Influencing Presidential Roles and Decision-Making ................................................................. 161

Table **6C**: Presidential Identification of Common Values Associated with Ethics and Decision-Making ................................................................. 162
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to extend my deepest love and appreciation to my family. Hector Sr., Casey and Christy; there are no words that could even begin to describe how grateful I am for all of your love, guidance, support, and encouragement as I worked toward becoming the first in our family with a doctorate. This journey was full of moments of joy, anger, sadness, self-doubt, and fear but all of you were with me every step of the way. As I prepare to take this next step, I hope that I have made each of you proud.

To my extended family here at Penn State: Drs. Stefkovich, Begley, Hendrickson, and Tuana; a thank you is hardly enough nor is it a suitable starting point to convey how grateful I am to each and every one of you. I never would have reached this milestone had it not been for your honesty, expertise, empathy, and guidance. I am truly honored to have worked so closely with each of you throughout my years here at Penn State and look forward to collaborations in the future.

Dr. Stefkovich, you were the one that taught me to fly. I stood at the edge of the cliff for so long and it was you that pushed me knowing that I would land on my feet. When I was lost you found me and showed me the way. You are and always will be far more than a mentor and far more than a friend. You are my living angel.

Dr. Begley, we both arrived at Penn State in 2003 and during your short tenure here you shaped my mind intellectually, spiritually, and morally. The man that I am today is not the same man that first walked into your office so many years ago. All of my experiences and development as a scholar are attributed to you and the doors that you opened for me. You opened...
my mind to the vast world of ethics; a world I never would have thought to explore until I met you. You have changed my life for the better. You never cease to amaze and inspire me.

Dr. Hendrickson, this study would not have been possible had it not been for your mentorship and experiences regarding higher education administration. Our conversations have been some of the most intellectual I have ever had and the guidance you provided during this process was critical. Your passion and commitment to the profession of education is extraordinary.

Dr. Tuana, there are no limits to your knowledge and commitment to students. I hope that one day I might be able to inspire students the way that you inspired me. You were the wind beneath my wings during this process. For that and so much more, I will be eternally grateful.

I would also like to thank the four presidents that took time out of their busy schedules to be contributors of this study. I have the utmost respect for each of you and what I have learned from all of you was invaluable.

To my professional colleagues at the College Assistance Migrant Program- Dr. Dayze Florencio and Melissa Landrau-Rodriguez; you both have taught me that administration and student affairs need not be separate. “Doc”, your friendship and motherly instincts have meant more to me than you will ever know.

Melissa, you have provided me with many opportunities and experiences that have further developed my skills. You have cultivated my mind and my heart both academically and culturally. You also pushed me to become better and your unwavering commitment to students and your staff in and out of the office does not go unnoticed. Thank you for always listening to me when I needed someone to talk to and for making me laugh. Not many people can say that they feel like they are home when they are at work but you have made it feel that way.
To my friends both in the program and out- you have been the best support team I could have ever asked for. When life got in the way of my progress you were there to help me pave a new road. The experiences and memories that you have given me throughout the years have been some of the best of my life. Thank you for being the best “transition-team” any future president could ever ask for.
Chapter I

Introduction

The work of contemporary university presidents is shrouded in misinformation and mystery. As Bowen & Shapiro (1998) state, “the position of a university president has certain prism-like qualities in the sense that a change in one’s perspective or position yields somewhat different colors” (p.65). The changing demographics of the student population as well as the changing relative importance of various revenue streams in higher education have an impact on the power, authority, and influence of today’s university president while confounding efforts to define who they are and what they actually do. “Are they giants of intellectual vision, full-time fundraisers, unprincipled propagandists, or “merely” thoughtful managers of some of society’s most important and successful institutions?” (p.67). Some observers have noted that the work of today’s university presidents consists primarily of reacting to their internal and external environments- most of which the president has little control over. Thus, their jobs are considered largely symbolic with little, if any influence (p.65). Still, as illustrated in the research of Tierney (1987), the symbolic nature of the presidency should not be underestimated. As the college environment provides rationales for change the president’s roles must be reflective of this change. Furthermore, these roles must be reflective of the university’s values and goals.

To others, the work of a university president is an ethical endeavor in which the president is expected to provide leadership to their institution that deals with matters that
society believes to be important. “An ethical enterprise based on the belief that the future is of ethical significance” (Bowen & Shapiro, 1998, p.65).

**Background**

Considering the history of the presidency in higher education, it is understandable why there remains no standard definition of the presidency nor descriptions or indicators of effective performance. Currently, there are numerous ways to examine the varying components of the presidential role. Whether such examination is general or analytical, both acknowledge the interplay of roles and responsibilities that exist inside and outside of the institution. Although, “there may be agreement on the components of the role, but there is no model of the presidency that identifies priorities between them” (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005). Such priorities and assumptions of roles are contingent on factors such as: the characteristics of their institutions, the demands of the academic calendar, the emerging exigencies of the environment, and their own personal values, beliefs, and interests.

Today’s university president possess little power but ever greater responsibility. This paradox has led some to deem the academic presidency as an impossible job. A university president must operate within numerous realities and spheres of influence that are found within and outside of the walls of their institutions. The president is charged with providing and/or creating an environment of intellectual and social interaction that properly prepares students to become active members of society, however, within the context of higher education, such responsibility does not rest solely with the president. Internally, the university presidency is dichotomous in that it functions between two layers- the faculty and the trustees, and is accountable to both (Payton, 1997; Birnbaum
& Eckel, 2005). Thus, the concept of presidential leadership in institutions of higher education is very complex. As Birnbaum & Eckel (2005) note:

The administration of colleges and universities presents a unique dualism in organizational structure, with two structures existing in parallel. One is the conventional bureaucratic hierarchy responsive to the will of trustees; the other is the structure through which faculty make decisions regarding those aspects of the institution over which they have professional jurisdiction (p.348).

Additionally, Birnbaum & Eckel (2005) reference this dualism to outline several factors that limit presidential leadership in American higher education today. These include: constraints on presidential discretion, the unique characteristics of academic organizations and problems of assessing effectiveness (p.346). Externally, constraints on presidential discretion are the result of interactions with other organizations, environmental constraints such as federal and state controls, layers of governance and oversight, concerns about cost, issues of accountability and academic quality, and questions about the mission and purpose of higher education. While internally, constraints on presidential leadership are due to increased involvement by faculty in decision-making, goal ambiguity, collective bargaining, and fractionation of the campus into interest groups (p.347).

**Increasing Demands for Accountability**

Perhaps the greatest limitation of presidential leadership is the increased demand for accountability through the establishment of accepted and valid indicators of institutional effectiveness. Until recently, such demands consisted of recommendations from state governments with implementation strategies and policies left to the discretion of the president and governing boards of their respective institutions. However, the
Spelling’s Commission report, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (2006) is representative of an attempt at federal legislation similar in scope to the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), which is concerned with performance of the nation’s public schools, but with the focus on our institutions of higher education. The report calls for “the creation of a more robust culture of accountability and transparency throughout higher education” (p.20). Such a culture includes new and innovative means to assess student performance through measurable outcomes and cost control strategies to improve productivity while requiring consistent collaboration among institutional leaders, consumers, and policy makers in order to develop new pedagogies, curricula, and technologies to improve student learning (p.24). Thus, the call for greater accountability, although noble, will ultimately redefine how university presidents make decisions, set policy and perceive their roles inside and outside of the academe.

**Problem Statement and Research Questions**

This study will focus on the changing role of the university president during the era of accountability in which there exists greater demands for decision-making, policy and practice.

The central questions guiding this research are:

- In what ways have expectations for the role of university presidents changed in the last decade?
- Are there particular leadership styles evident in their personal/professional roles?
- How do university presidents decide which leadership approach they would use?
- Specifically, what internal and external variables of context impact university president’s decision-making?
What is the impact of their personal values on their professional decision-making?

It is my contention that despite the abundance of literature that attempts to define or categorize the role(s) of the university president, there is a need to understand how presidents themselves internalize these prescribed roles and balance them within the expectations imposed upon them by their internal and external environments in order to effectively articulate vision through the decision-making process and policy actualization.
Chapter II

Review of the Literature

This chapter presents an overview of the literature on the roles of the university president and its evolution over time, how these roles have come to be defined in contemporary contexts, the waves of accountability in higher education, the theoretical and pragmatic approaches to presidential leadership, and the process of socialization, role theory, values, and ethics as they influence internal and external variables of context on presidential decision-making.

The Modern Structure of the American Research University

American universities are very complex organizations. Although similarities exist among other organizations in terms of structure, goals, hierarchical systems, and modes of governance, there are some distinguishing features regarding the overall structure of the modern American research university that must be considered when evaluating a university president’s decision making process.

Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley (1974) posit that such features of academic universities that differentiate the institution from other organizations include goal ambiguity, a collective client (student) voice which demands a role in the decision making process, problematic technology that must be holistic and adaptable to individual needs, as well as professional organizations which attempt to provide employees with a say in the decision making process (p. 33). Moreover, as each of these aspects become more and more influential within the context of the university (through variables such as
structure, governance and hierarchical systems) they also make the university president more vulnerable within those particular environments.

However, to consider today’s research university a bureaucracy, is not entirely accurate. Although some aspects of bureaucracy can be used to describe certain aspects of the American research university (e.g. business, administration, financial management) there exists fundamental distinctions that simply cannot be categorized under such a term. “Bureaucracy carries the connotation of stability…. [and] implies distinct lines of authority and strict hierarchical command; academic organizations have blurred lines of authority” and this seem more fluid (Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley, 1974).

Cohen and March (1974) encapsulate these distinctions and notion of fluidity within the context of academic organizations through their concept of “organized anarchy.” They define this term as “a system with little central coordination or control: Thus, in a university anarchy each individual in the university (student, teacher, legislator) is seen as making autonomous decisions without any real sense of coordination and control. “The “decisions” of the system are a consequence produced by the system but intended by no one and decisively controlled by no one” (pp. 33-34). Thus, according to Baldrige, Curtis, Ecker and Riley (1974):

….organized anarchy differs radically from the well-organized bureaucracy…. It is an organization in which generous resources allow people to go in different directions without coordination by a central authority. Leaders are relatively weak and decisions are made by individual action. They [leaders] do not so much lead the institution as channel its activities in subtle ways. They do not command but negotiate….Decisions are not so much “made” as they “happen.” (p. 34).
The Organizational Context of the American Research University

Although examining the structure of the American research university through the context of retrenchment, Alpert (1985) manages to create two classifications. The first is a linear model which “portrays the university as a set of autonomous academic departments and professional schools” (p.79) and is a classic example of Weik’s (1956) concept of “loosely coupled” system (one in which the whole is identical to the sum of its departmental parts). However, such a linear model does have limitations. A closed, loosely coupled linear model fails to take into account any external variables of context with which the university must work. Within the context of institutional functionality the linear model fails to account for any external mechanisms that evaluate internal performance (e.g. financial support) and identify any weaknesses within the system as deemed by any external agent. Thus the linear model, “highlights internal barriers to change without providing insights to external constraints” (Alpert, 1986). Figure 1A is an illustration of Alpert’s linear model.

In contrast, the matrix model provided by Alpert (1985) expands on the linear model to depict the various roles of the institution and actors external to the institution and the effects such roles have on administration of governance. These external “actors” if you will, include state governments, students, private donors, alumni associations, university foundations and councils of American educators and universities. Thus, upon careful examination of this matrix model of the American research university, one can readily see the preliminary foundations of accountability a university president faces within the context of internal (e.g. students) and external (e.g. state governments) variables:
Most of the university presidents in office today are able, perceptive and articulate. They assume responsibility for a broad variety of tasks, they work painfully long hours, and they are concerned for the university and the integrity of its relationship to society….The contributions he makes can easily be swamped by outside events or the diffuse qualities of university decision making. The matrix model reveals the basic dilemma of university presidents: they are expected to carry the burden of leadership for institutions that are separately accountable to individual legislatures and boards of trustees but governed as part of an inseparable and interdependent nationwide system of institutions. The ambiguities associated with this situation are exacerbated by the differences in accountability to sponsors and clients of the president and of the intellectual leaders of the campus. The president feels directly accountable not only to federal sponsors but also to the state legislature, students, parents, donors, and all other constituencies who provide institutional support for the campus” (p.91).

Figure 1B is an illustration of the Alpert’s matrix model.
Figure 1A

Linear Model of the University (Alpert, 1986)

Structure
\[ U \cdot \begin{bmatrix} \theta_1 \\ \theta_2 \\ \theta_3 \\ \theta_4 \\ \theta_5 \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} a_1 \\ a_2 \\ a_3 \\ a_4 \\ a_5 \end{bmatrix} = \cdots + \begin{bmatrix} d_n \end{bmatrix} \]

Quality
\[ Q = \begin{bmatrix} q_1 \\ q_2 \\ q_3 \\ q_4 \\ q_5 \end{bmatrix} + \cdots + \begin{bmatrix} q_n \end{bmatrix} \]

Mission
\[ M = \begin{bmatrix} m_1 \\ m_2 \\ m_3 \\ m_4 \\ m_5 \end{bmatrix} + \cdots + \begin{bmatrix} m_n \end{bmatrix} \]

(Reprinted with permission from the publisher)
Figure 1B

Matrix Model of the University with External Agents and Associations

(Alpert, 1986)

(Reprinted with permission from the publisher)

Note: Disciplinary support represented in the vertical columns of figure while institutional support represented in horizontal rows.
The Roles of the University President in the United States

The roles of the university president in the United States represent a growing body of research. Although much of what has been written has been ad hoc and usually taken the form of commentary regarding the changes that have occurred within the last 40 years (Association of Governing Boards, 1996; Bornstein, 2002; Fisher, 1984, 1996; Hesburgh, 2001; Lovett, 2002), scholarly research has also been conducted (Birnbaum, 1992; Cohen & March, 1986; Fisher, Tack, Tack, & Wheeler, 1988, Kaufman, 1977; Kerr, 1984, Kerr & Gabe, 1986, Tierney, 1987, 1988).

Most of what has been written on the roles of the college and university president documents or discusses how the roles have changed based on contextual factors or societal changes. As Stoke (1959) explained, “The college president as a Man of Learning has been giving way to the Man of Management” (p.3). The literature suggests that the complexity of the presidency is directly proportional to the rate at which higher education expanded then and now. This is nothing new. In point of fact, many scholars and critics tend to view presidents and their universities as one in the same. “The remarkable history of American higher education has been written around strong presidents, institutions have been personified by those who led them” (Fisher, 1991 p. 176). Presidents assume a degree of accountability for their institutions and are subject to all happenings that affect their colleges or universities. Thus, the demands placed the presidency change as the context in which higher education changes. In support of this claim, Kerr (1991) stated:
Moreover, the university has changed; it has become bigger and more complex, more tensed with checks and balances. There are more elements to conciliate, fewer in a position to be led. The university has become the multiversity and the nature of the presidency has followed this change. (p.27).

In 1996, the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges’ Commission (AGB) on the Academic Presidency released it’s report, *Renewing the Academic Presidency: Stronger Leadership for Tougher Times* which described the current state of the academic presidency as weak and unstable:

> The greatest danger we see is that in this new era of growing doubts and demands, colleges and universities are neither as nimble nor as adaptable as the times require. Why? Because the academic presidency has become weak. The authority of college and university presidents is being undercut by all of its partners… (p. x).

### Defining Presidential Roles

Throughout all of the literature, the most cited framework when it comes to identifying presidential roles and responsibilities was derived from Mintzberg (1979). This study described the five basic parts of an organization and explained that the “strategic apex” is the very top of the hierarchy. He mentioned five roles that Chief Executive Officers fill: 1) Leader, which includes staffing of the organization, motivating staff, and rewarding staff; 2) Disturbance Handler, which consists of resolution of conflicts sent up the hierarchy; 3) Resource Allocator, which consists of designing the structure, the assignment of people and resources, the issuing of work orders, and the authorization of major decisions; 4) Monitor, which consists of reviewing the activities of employees; and 5) Disseminator, which consists of the transmission of information to employees. It can be stated that all presidents fill each of these five roles. However, it should be noted that these roles are contextual in nature in that a specific role (s) may be
taken advantage of more than the others during specific situations (e.g. crisis/conflict) that are internal or external to the university.

It is important to mention that these roles are merely attempts at classification for a somewhat nebulous profession and should serve as nothing more than guideposts for analysis. Dodds (1962) was able to reduce the roles of the university president from Mintzberg’s five to three: education, management and public relations while Cohen and March (1986) provide for four roles. These roles are the operating budget, educational policy decisions, academic tenure decisions, and planning. Although all of these researchers account for the division that exists in the academic presidency between the purely academic and administrative setting, each attempt at classification fails to account for the president’s two-dimensional, internal and external duties.

On the other hand, Tierney (1987) does not classify the roles of the university president. In, *Symbolism and Presidential Perceptions of Leadership*, Tierney discusses the importance of university culture through symbols and the need to move beyond functionalist categories of leadership and focus on the processes of symbolic interpretation through the activities of the presidents. These symbols help define the “web of leadership” and authority in higher education.

In their work, *Leadership and Ambiguity: The American College President*, Michael D. Cohen and James G. March (1986) attempt a systematic analysis of the nature of the academic presidency by “combining empirical data with speculation and the author’s own favorite organizational model, ‘organized anarchy’” (Kaufman, 1980, p.72). Furthermore, Cohen and March (1986) explained that, “there does not seem to be a clear core of objectives that presidents should pursue and, consequently, no clear set of
attributes that will assure success. Neither is there a well-defined model of the presidential job” (p. 57). In fact, one can argue that differences exist between the perception and reality of what a university president is and does. Many perceive the presidency as a position with great power while, in reality, today’s academic presidency is a severely-limited position in which direct influence over decisions is not as extensive as one would assume.

In addition, the American Council on Education (ACE) report, *The American College President* (Ross & Green, 2000) consists of the National Presidents’ Study, which, “provides a contemporary description of college and university presidents” (p.1) through interviews of presidents in both public and private institutions of higher education according to the Carnegie Classification system of 1994 (p.1). The report found that most presidents reported spending a majority of their time on personnel issues, planning, community relations, budgeting, and fundraising. Although the report failed to indicate how each of these areas was defined, the findings are consistent with the roles of the academic president as outlined by the authors mentioned previously.

There is no doubt that the roles of the academic president have evolved over time but there is some question as to whether these roles have changed significantly. The literature indicates that the role today contains several dimensions that logically flow from the tasks to be performed. The tasks are not at all that different from what they have been over many years. Yet, as the situation changes, effective performance of those tasks requires different skills and competencies. Although most of the literature has focused on describing how the position of the president has changed over time, and has focused on describing the roles of the president in general terms, it is necessary to define these roles
systematically in order to analyze how particular presidents’ roles vary in responses to
the demands imposed by the internal and external environments which define their
positions.

The Accountability Movement

Accountability in higher education is easily understood in theory but difficult, at
best, to define. In addition to the extensively written works of political scientists in this
country (professors) that center around accountability in government and organizations
other than institutions of higher education, the reluctance of members of the academy in
the United States to examine accountability itself is evident considering the amount of
literature found in other countries that center around higher education and accountability.
In order to understand accountability in higher education one must develop a clear,
concise definition of the term within the arena of higher education. Trow (1996) attempts
such a definition by defining accountability as the following:

In its broadest terms, accountability in higher education refers first, to the
relations of colleges and universities to the people, groups, and institutions in the
society that supports them and, second, to the relations of the members of a
particular college or university to one another (p.15).

In considering this definition however, Trow posits that accountability in higher
education is potentially problematic in that the administrative and bureaucratic structures
of colleges and universities consists of authority being diffused throughout the institution
while , in reality, authority is usually exercised through several actors, thus making the
locus of responsibility and accountability discernable (p.21). In this context,
accountability is portrayed as an alternative to trust in which strengthening one will result
in a weakening of the other. Arguably, accountability to external bodies or agencies
weakens the autonomy of institutions (p.16).
Burke (2005) addresses this struggle to define accountability by raising several important questions, both new and old: “Who is accountable to whom, for what purposes, for whose benefit, by which means, and with what consequences?” (Lingenfelter, 2003; Behn, 2001; Trow, 1996). Referencing higher education, Burke (2005) states that:

The pronouns who, whom, and whose represent, respectively the traditional trio of agent, principal and beneficiary….At the state level, higher education …governing boards are nearly always the agents exercising authority delegated by governors and legislators as the principals, mostly over public colleges and universities but, to some extent, over private institutions as well. The beneficiaries are, ultimately, the public and, more immediately, students, businesses, governments, and social and civic organizations…. [However] at the [university] level, senior administrators become the agents, exercising the delegated authority of their principals and boards of trustees for the immediate benefit of students and external clients and, ultimately, for the public at large” (p.3).

Currently, “there is no educational, social, or political consensus on exactly what higher education should be doing, what constituencies it should serve, and how it should serve them” (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005). The report of Spellings Commission report on the Future of Higher Education, *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education* (2006), has made this issue more intense by asking colleges and universities to become more accountable to the public. This represents a new shift of accountability from private markets to the federal government. Calls for accountability and performance indicators similar to those that plague our public schools as a result of federal legislation, No Child Left Behind (2002), have been perceived by the faculty as a direct threat to academic freedom and by administrators as a form of mistrust of authority.

*The Accountability Triangle.* In order to adjust to this new transition regarding accountability in American higher education, “one must look first not to the academy, but to the external forces that shape society’s needs for education…. ” (Callahan & Finney,
In essence, evolving social conditions call into question the purposes of higher education while concomitantly reexamining how these purposes can best be served. “If societal needs require a significant increase in college participation and attainment, then change and innovation in both policy and practice are likely to be needed” (Callahan & Finney, 2005). However, achieving such change in today’s higher education environment in which higher education is central to the welfare of most individuals will be no less daunting than creating and implementing an “elementary-secondary education system that ‘leaves no child behind’” (Callahan & Finney, 2005).

The balancing of institutional and public interests for accountability will be difficult yet critical. Leadership within institutions of higher education and public policymaking is equally critical at a time when public funding is primarily allocated to maintaining the institution rather than performance. Such a policy message does nothing more than reinforce the status quo.

Schmidtlein & Berdahl (2001) call for “constructive consultation and requirements for accountability that recognize the fundamental characteristics of the academe will effectively serve the public interest and give vitality to the educational enterprise” (p.88). With the exception of Burke et. al (2005) the literature regarding models of accountability as it pertains to American higher education is complex if not incomplete. Burke’s model, called the Accountability Triangle, borrows from the figure used by Burton Clark (1983) which describes state control, academic oligarchy, and market model to assess the coordination of national systems of higher education around the world (p.x). Burke posits that the major challenge of accountability in higher education is best represented through a balancing act of state priorities, academic
concerns, and market forces which is known as the Accountability Triangle with each of the above mentioned categories placed at each corner of the triangle. State priorities are described as those needs and goals for higher education programs and services expressed by state officials and civic leaders. Next, academic concerns invoke the issues and interests of professors, administrators, and other members of the academic community. Finally, market forces are described as the needs and demands of customers—parents, students, businesses, colleges, and universities. All three of these categories also reflects the civic, collegiate, and commercial cultures and interests respectively with state priorities representing political accountability, academic concerns representing professional accountability, and market forces driving market accountability (Burke, 2005). Furthermore, “colleges and universities, public and private, must respond to all while submitting to none of these imperatives” (p.x).

The role of the Federal Government. Despite having a secondary role in financing and supporting institutions of higher education, the role of the federal government is quite pronounced. Through regulation of federally funded activities as well as mandates to the states regarding issues of federal interest, the federal government assures access for diverse student populations into institutions of postsecondary education as well as maintains an influence on areas of research that is of national interest. Thus, as state appropriations increase, university presidents have come to rely more and more on the acquisition of federal grants and initiatives to support their institutions.
Understanding Presidential Leadership

“Leadership as a concept and a set of practices has been the subject of an enormous quantity of popular and academic literature” (Leithwood, 1999). Although extensive research has been done on the roles of the academic president, there is little research that describes the interplay among these roles in any given context. In, The Dilemma of Presidential Leadership, Birnbaum & Eckel (2005) state:

Over a term of office averaging less than seven years, the president is expected to serve simultaneously as the chief administrator of a large and complex bureaucracy, as the convening colleague of a professional community, as a symbolic elder in a campus culture of shared values and symbols, and (in some institutions) as a public official accountable to a public board and responsive to the demands of other governmental agencies. Balancing the conflicting expectations of these roles has always been difficult; changing demographic trends, fiscal constraints, the complexity and diversity of tasks, university dynamics, and unrealistic public expectations make it virtually impossible for most presidents to provide the leadership that is expected” (p.340).

Bornstein (2002) notes that academic presidents are often criticized for not “measuring up” to the iconic presidential figures of the past, those that were both public intellectuals and academic entrepreneurs. With today’s academic presidents moving along a continuum of multiple and diverse constituencies while being confronted with public demands for increased involvement in civic and economic development activities, it becomes evident that in the real world, “presidents are called upon to be the academic leaders, financial managers, and fund raisers, as well as public intellectuals, [and] civic leaders…. [while] providing ethical and effective leadership in all areas” (p. 212). Thus, the authority of the president, his or her real leadership, depends on the willingness of these constituencies to accept him or her as a leader.
Similarly, Tierney (1988) stresses the importance of institutional culture on presidential leadership. He relates presidential leadership to the concept of power by examining the factors of time, space, and communication within an organization.

…power lies throughout the system and does not reside in a single role or individual. One cannot differentiate study of an organization and a study of power in an organization. To speak of an organization is to speak of power (p.24).

Analytically, the academic presidency portrays many characteristics similar to those expressed in Burke’s Accountability Triangle. “Presidential [roles] can be seen as compromising administrative, political, and entrepreneurial components” (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005, p.34). As an administrator, the academic president is expected to carry out the policies of the trustees, allocate resources, and establish systems of accountability. As a politician, the academic president must respond to the needs of faculty, students, staff, alumni, and elected officials while forming coalitions to gain the support that is critical to the maintenance of his or her position. As an entrepreneur, the academic president must develop and exploit markets that provide resources for their institutions through fundraising, communicating with state and federal government and the like. “In sum, the president is at the center of a vastly complex and fragile human organization” (Kaufman, 1980, p.111).

**Cognitive Frames of Presidential Leadership**

The ability to view and interpret any given situation through various perspectives is not a new concept in the management of organizations. The works of Bolman and Deal (2007) and Birnbaum (1988) suggest that “organizations have multiple realities and that a
manager who can use multiple lenses will likely be more effective than one who deals with problems from a single perspective” (Bensimon, 1988).

Using a frame analysis (Bolman and Deal, 2007; Birnbaum, 1988) to depict characteristics of good presidential leadership, Bensimon (1988) conducted a study of thirty-two presidents’ cognitive frames and constructed espoused theories of leadership in relation to the characteristics of the structural, collegial, political and symbolic/cultural frame. “A frame represents a distinctive cognitive lens that helps the president of a college determine what is important and what can be safely ignored” (Bensimon, 1988). In essence, these four cognitive frames determine what questions are asked, what information is relevant, how a particular problem is defined, and what course of action should be administered (p. 421).

The Bureaucratic frame. The bureaucratic frame consists of characteristics such as: unambiguous goals, portrayal of the organization as a closed-system resistant to penetration by any external agent, and absolute power resting with the administrative leader regarding analysis of a problem, the development of a solution, and implementation. “Presidents with a bureaucratic frame are likely to emphasize their role in making decisions, getting results, and establishing systems of management” (Bensimon, 1988).

Limitations. This frame tells us much about authority as defined by legitimate, formalized power but does not identify informal types of power and influence which are inherent within any decision-making processes. The bureaucratic frame “explains much about the organization’s formal structure but little about the dynamic processes that characterize
the organization in action” (Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley, 1974). This cognitive frame provides a snap-shot of the formal structure of the university at one particular time and thus cannot be used to explain or understand changes over time or how and why such changes occurred (pg. 36).

*The Collegial Frame.* Within the context of the collegial frame, “organizations are viewed as collectivities with organizational members as their primary resource [with] an emphasis on human needs and how organizations can be tailored to meet them” (Bensimon, 1988). Goals are controlled by a collective community of scholars with a shared system of values. Presidents operating within this frame tend to seek participative, democratic decision making while concomitantly motivating others through interpersonal skills to put the interests of the institution first.

*Limitations.* Perhaps the greatest limitation of the collegial frame is its misleading simplicity. Although decision making by consensus is a critical component to this cognitive frame such practice is rarely a depiction of the actual workings of presidential leadership. “The collegial model fails to deal adequately with the problem of conflict. Proponents of the collegial model are correct in declaring that simple bureaucratic rule making is not the essence of decision making. But in making this point they take the equally indefensible position that major decisions are reached primarily by consensus. Neither extreme is correct, for decisions are rarely made by either bureaucratic fiat or simple consensus” (Baldridge, Curtis, Ecker, and Riley, 1974, p.14).
The Political Frame. The political frame portrays an organization as a collectivity of formal and informal groups competing for power to control institutional processes and outcomes. (Bensimon, 1988). Decisions are made as a result of bargaining and consensus building. This frame describes universities as “pluralistic entities...made up of groups with different interests and values and that conflict will erupt when resources are scarce” (p. 422). Therefore, within the political frame, conflict is central to the life of an organization. A president operating within the confines of the political frame is often seen as a “mediator or negotiator between shifting power blocks” (p.422). In order for a decision to be made and executed, the president must develop a dominant coalition of participants that will support such a decision. The president carefully navigates through the streams of diplomacy and persuasion while being sensitive to external agents and their influence over the decision-making process.

Limitations. The political frame appears to address the limitations expressed within the bureaucratic and collegial frames in that it places an emphasis on formal and informal roles in developing coalitions as an illustration of the dynamic process of decision making represented by the notion of conflict. These coalitions are often temporary and rarely depicted as a means to an end. No single process or group of characters can solve every problem therefore this frame fails to take into account that the solutions provided by such political coalitions are temporary and often compromise the autonomy of an institution by making it vulnerable to external agents. Thus, these coalitions are in a constant state of flux.
The Symbolic Frame. Through this cognitive frame, organizations are viewed as clusters of cultural systems with shared beliefs which describe or invent organizational structures and processes. It is within this cognitive frame that one can place Cohen and March’s (1974) concept of “organized anarchy” in order to depict a president with a symbolic orientation. Because of their problematic goals, unclear technology and fluid-like nature, presidents working within this frame would serve as facilitators of some on-going process in essence not leading the institution but channeling preexisting solutions to solve current problems (Bensimon, 1988).

Limitations. The symbolic frame is often considered to be the most influential and powerful of the frames. Presidents operating within this cognitive frame often have a clear understanding of the institution’s mission and the concerns of all. Hence, they are able to incorporate their own values into the collective conscience of all involved in the decision-making process. However, a president operating within this frame serves to maintain the status quo during a period of institutional stability in which there exists no major visible or viable internal and external conflicts and threats.

Presidential Leadership in Context of Organizational Perception

Presidential Leadership within a Rational Systems Perspective. Simon’s theory of Administrative Behavior (1976) clarified the processes by which goal specificity and formalization contribute to the rational behavior of organizations (Scott, 2002; Scott & Davis, 2007). Academic presidents operating within this system simplify decisions by
restricting the ends toward which activity is directed. Goals supply the value premises that underlie decisions. Value premises (assumptions of desirable outcomes) are combined with factual premises to make decisions (Scott & Davis, 2007). The more precise the value premises, the greater effect they have on decisions. Each goal in the means-end hierarchy is an end to things found below it and a mean to those above it. Thus, academic presidents utilizing the rational system feel that activities can only be evaluated against the goals above it. Furthermore, goals may be delegated to different units which, in turn, simplifies the decision making process for participants. Scott (2002) notes that, “from this perspective, an organization’s hierarchy can be viewed as a congealed set of means-ends chains promoting consistency of decisions and activities throughout the organization” (p.46). However, Simon (1976) also notes the cognitive limitations of decision makers through the concept of bounded rationality defined as, “a form of behavior associated with uncertainty where individuals do not examine every possible option open to them, but simply consider a number of alternatives which happen to occur to them” (March & Simon, 1958).

In sum, the rational perspective suggests that specific goals guide decisions on how to define organizational structure. Some of the rhetoric used in this perspective are words like information, efficiency, optimization, implementation and design. Presidents operating within this system tend to emphasize the rationality of the structure itself, not the rationality of the people in it and so the academic president must be able preserve the current structure through understanding and continuing to use formal lines of communication and departmentalization while accomplishing preexisting goals with little
or no interruption to the autonomy of their university and without regard to the conditions of the external environment (Scott & Davis, 2007).

*Presidential Leadership within a Natural-Systems Perspective.* The natural systems perspective emphasizes human relations. From a human relations perspective, academic presidential leadership is a mechanism for influencing the behavior of individuals. Scott & Davis (2007) notes that academic presidents operating within this system displayed two basic dimensions of leadership. These are consideration (trust, friendship, and respect) and initiating structure (organizing capability of the leader). Later studies showed that the leadership characteristics varied with the situation and specific motivational needs of the individual participants. Most of these studies ignored formal authority vested in the positions of leaders (p.64).

Considered by theorists as one of the most descriptive and influential works ever produced, Chester I. Barnard’s first attempt at organization theory, *The Functions of the Executive* (1938), stressed that organizations are essentially cooperative systems, integrating the contributions of individual participants (Scott, 2002). He defined the organization as, “that kind of cooperation among men that is conscious, deliberate, and purposeful” (Barnard, 1938, p. 7). Thus, university presidents operating within this system rely on the willingness of participants and secures it through a variety of inducements (material rewards, opportunities for distinction, prestige, and personal power). However, the president has the difficult task of directing these efforts toward a purpose. In other words, the “inculcation of belief in the real existence of a common purpose is an essential executive function” (Barnard, 1938).
Philip Selznick’s (1949) Institutional Theory acknowledges the rational view that organizations are designed to attain goals, but he notes that formal structures can never conquer the non-rational dimensions of organizational behavior. Thus, academic presidents do not act purely based on their formalized roles while universities do not act purely on formal structures. Presidents may bring their personal values, beliefs and assumptions that may restrict rational decision-making. In addition, the structure of the organization may adapt based on individual actions and the external environment.

Academic presidents working in the natural systems perspective focus more on organizational behavior and implementation. He or she recognizes that the administrative hierarchy and organizational structure is not the only feature of organizational dynamics. Goals are imposed from above, but willingness comes from the bottom up. A president’s authority is only realized when those below accept and comply with that authority. Thus, the president is able to see their institution as a purposefully coordinated system of communications linking all participants.

*Presidential Leadership within an Open-Systems Perspective.* Guided by the work of Lawrence & Lorsh (1967) academic presidents within the open-systems perspective utilize contingency theory which states that the amount of uncertainty and rate of change in an environment impacts the development of internal features in organizations (Scott, 2002). Thus, the external environment surrounding and permeating institutions has important effects on the organizational structure and behavior of the institution. Academic presidents in an open-systems perspective see their institutions as both hierarchical and loosely coupled systems. This sense of both independence and inter-
dependence is based on factors found in the external environment and thus have a direct influence on an institution’s structure, functioning, and efficiency.

Such differentiation is bound to generate conflict. Such conflict is usually generated by mutual task dependence, task-related asymmetries, conflicting performance criteria, dependence on common resources, communication obstacles, and ambiguity of goals (Scott, 2002). While an academic president operating within the rational systems perspective views such conflicts as disruptive and best resolved; an academic president operating within the natural systems perspective views such conflicts as a part of the negotiation process between coalitions and their conflicting interests, and an academic president operating within the open-systems perspective understand and incorporate these differences into the culture of their institutions to generate meaning and thus demonstrate visible leadership to all constituencies (Kaufman, 1980). Underlying the open-systems perspective is sense of trust that a leader will do the right thing with what limited discretion remains. In order to instill that trust, leaders will have to demonstrate that they understand and are committed to the values that people can follow.

The Importance of Multiple Perspective Approaches to Presidential Leadership. The literature stresses the importance of adopting a multi-perspective approach to leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2007; Birnbaum, 1989). Following a study by Morgan (1986) many scholars noted that given the dynamics of organizational structure found in higher education (collegial, professional, anarchical, cultural, political) certain theoretical perspectives on leadership were highlighted in response to the particular aspects of phenomena found in the internal and external environment. As Morgan (1986) identifies:
Any realistic approach to organizational analysis must start from the premise that organizations can be many things at one and the same time. A machine-like organization designed to achieve specific goals can simultaneously be: a species of organization that is able to survive in certain environments but not in others; an information-processing system that is skilled in certain kinds of learning but not in others; a cultural milieu characterized by distinctive values, beliefs and social practices; a political system where people jostle to further their own ends; an arena where various subconscious or ideological struggles take place, an artifact or manifestation of a deeper process of social change; [and] an instrument used by one group of people to exploit and dominate others and so on...[in order to understand leadership] it is much wiser to start from the premise that organizations are complex, ambiguous, and paradoxical (pp.321-322).

This interplay between leadership and the organization does manifest itself in higher education. Given the current pressure for our institutions of higher education to become more accountable, appropriate presidential leadership must be exercised. Different demands from accountability require different responses or roles of leadership at different times. Such fluidity along the continuum of presidential leadership requires an academic president to posses many social and practical skills. Birnbaum’s (1989) research attempts to integrate the bureaucratic, collegial, political, cultural, and symbolic aspects of the university by claiming that complex organizations cannot function efficiently and effectively without leaders who “coordinate their activities, represent them to various publics, and symbolize the embodiment of institutional purpose” (p.27). Thus, the “best” academic presidents are those that can effectively adopt a multi-perspective approach when focusing on issues found within and outside the walls of their institutions. Such an approach calls for the constant rebuilding, maintaining, and self correcting their institutions.

Conversely, Bensimon’s (1988) study on good presidential leadership found that presidents that were able to utilize a multi-frame approach were quite rare and predominantly found in presidents with a significant amount of experience (greater than ten years), whereas single frame approaches were more common in new presidents.
because “their espoused leadership theories reflect normative perceptions of the presidential role rather than their own experience” (Bensimon, 1988, p.92).

**Socialization, Role Theory, and the Influence of Internal and External Variables of Context on Presidential Decision-Making**

As previously stated, as the accountability movement gains greater ground, academic presidential leadership must change. To acknowledge that this relationship exists is not enough. A deeper, in-depth analysis of this relationship is required. Being that effective academic presidents are capable of utilizing a multi-perspective approach in response to internal and external variables of context, one can identify the existence of some type of socialization process within the profession of the academic presidency itself. As a concept, socialization can be thought of as a key construct leading to an understanding of how roles and behaviors may change in response to experience (Duquette, 2004). In turn, this experience results in the “acquisition of the habits, beliefs, attitudes, and motives which enable a person to perform satisfactorily the roles expected of him in his society” (Brim, 1966).

*Role Theory.* Role theory posits that behavior is molded through expectations held by the individual and other variables of influence to generate roles which, in turn, specify what goals should be pursued, what tasks must be done to accomplish those goals, and what other actions may be required within a specific context. These roles correspond to different expectations and are dictated, in part by social structure and social interactions. Individuals are influenced by and perform their respective roles in accordance with
prevailing norms while concomitantly influencing the norms, behaviors, expectations, and behaviors associated with these roles. Thus, the relationship is reciprocal and didactic (Merton, 1957).

*Presidential decision-making.* Van Gennep’s(1960) model of socialization depicts various stages, termed separation, transition, and incorporation; which an individual undergoes as they transition from one role to another (Duquette, 2004). Such a separation is sensible when one attempts to delineate the various prescribed roles and decision-making process of academic presidents. Davies & Morgan (1983) and Dearlove (1995) proposed a model of the decision-making process integrating the anarchistic, political, collegial, and bureaucratic constructs of higher education institutions. The process begins with a form of unstructured anarchy in which problems remain vague and all possible solutions are identified resulting in the coupling of similar problems with potential solutions (Bush, 1995). During the political phase, issues are labeled and identified more specifically with bargaining and negotiations among different interest groups taking place. While in the collegial phase, compromise is reached and the solutions are tested against criteria of acceptability and feasibility resulting in agreed policy outcomes and degrees of commitment to the decisions. Lastly, the bureaucratic phase modifies the policy based on administrative considerations with the outcome being a legitimate and operationally functional policy (Bush, 1995). Although not perfect, this model is useful in “highlighting the process-oriented nature of organizing and policy-making in educational institutions, and in acknowledging that…distinct images of [leadership and] organization may be relevant in analyzing and describing the phases of the complex processes within
higher education institutions” (Kekale, 2005). As a result, it becomes evident that Van Gennep’s stages of separation, transition, and incorporation correspond respectively to the rational, natural, and open-systems perspectives of presidential leadership previously described.

The Influence of Values and Ethics on the University Presidency and Decision-Making

In considering the internal and external environment within which the academic president operates, Birnbaum & Eckel (2005) note:

Goals of access, quality, and diversity, which are in conflict and which call for quite different institutional structures and responses, appear then wane on the public policy agenda in cycle; the essential educational missions of teaching, research, and service compete for resources; and there is no rational way to assess the legitimacy of the competing and incompatible demands of many internal and external groups (p.345).

Given the complexity of the job, an obvious question to ask would be why anyone would want to become an academic president? Furthermore, being that institutions have multiple, ambiguous purposes how can presidents determine if their decisions and policies have been successful? With influence coming from internal and external variables of context often resulting in decentralization, how can a president know how much power they possess or what their limitations are based on each role? A common theme found throughout all the literature on presidential leadership is the inference that institutions require strong presidential leaders (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005). However, what is meant by a strong presidential leader?

Although most of the literature based on the roles of the academic president come from the president’s themselves, the knowledge generated only produces an understanding of how presidents relate to their prescriptive roles within their profession
with little, if any, understanding of how the president internally processes such roles within any given context. Thus, there is a need for a paradigm shift in which the critical focus of leadership in higher education centers on the values and ethics of leaders themselves (Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R., 1999).

“The influences on leadership and education in general can be thought of as coming from multiple social sources [and] a leader who wants to understand the motivations of those they are supposed to lead will be sensitive to all potentially significant categories of influence” (Begley, 2006). Shapiro & Stefkovich (2005) explore the use of multiple ethical paradigms- the ethic of justice, which centers around concepts of equality, dignity, respect, and laws; ethic of critique, which focuses on the analysis of social class and inequities; the ethic of care, which focuses on concepts of trust, loyalty, and empowerment; and the ethic of the profession, which focuses on questions pertaining to the ethics of justice, care, and critique to answer what are the expected outcomes as outlined by the profession in the evaluation and decision-making process of educational leaders (p.25). Although discussed separately, Shapiro & Stefkovich (2005) acknowledge that there is frequent overlap among the paradigms, some paradigms are preferred over others based on context, and some degree of conflict is generated in the decision-making process based on the incompatibility of personal values, values of the profession, values of the organization, and values of the society (Begley, 2006).

However, the use of ethics in the decision-making process is not consistent. Begley (2006) states that “administrators tend to employ ethics as a guide to action at certain times; in situations of high stakes urgency, when consensus is impossible, when responding to the unprecedented situations and for certain hot-button social issues [e.g.
accountability] which tend to quickly escalate debate to a point where people seek refuge within an ethical posture” (p.246). Regarding presidential leadership, the lack of any empirical evidence to support the use of such ethical decision-making practices in developing policy in higher education institutions in response to internal and external variables of context is very limited. However, if one considers the academic president as an agent of social change, then the use of ethics in the decision-making process, although limited, is critically important.

Complementing the decision-making model outlined by Enderud (1980), Davies & Morgan (1983), Dearlove (1995), and Bush (1995) address the decision-making process and the interplay among various constituencies within the context of higher education institutions (anarchistic, political, collegial, and bureaucratic). Begley (2006) provides a model of the decision-making process that occurs within the *individual* leader incorporating the ethical constructs outlined previously while proposing a logical sequence for appropriate application:

Beginning with the ethic of critique is necessary in order to understand all perspectives applicable to a situation….The ethic of care naturally follows next in the sequence as a way to keep the focus of the process on people rather than on organizations or policies….Finally, once the ethics of critique and care have been used carefully to interpret a situation, the ethic of justice can be applied as a basis for deciding on the actual actions that will maximize benefits for all while respecting the rights of the individual (p.583).

These models assume that “there are wide variations in the contexts for leadership and that, to be effective, these contexts require different leadership responses” (Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R., 1999). Thus, such models are important because they provide much needed insight as to how academic presidents respond to unique circumstances or problems within the context of accountability.
**Ethical Leadership and the University Presidency.** Given the current climate of accountability and uncertainty that plagues our institutions of higher education, the concepts and practices of presidential leadership and decision making are all the more important. However, when one considers the immensity of the task to govern and guide these institutions through unpredictable and rather tumultuous times of having to do more with less while being accountable to several internal and external agents. The roles of the presidency can no longer be loosely coupled to the complexity of the organization to which they serve. Rather, a critical link must be established between theory, perception and practice of presidential leadership as expressed in their decision-making processes. Such a link can be defined as ethical leadership.

Before ethical leadership can be defined, one must examine and critique the main schools of thought about leadership in general. Grint (2000) states that the trait, contingency and situational approaches to leadership are constrained by the concepts of essentialism and determinism in which leadership can be characterized by personality (trait), the environment in which leadership is to be exercised (situational) or by matching specific traits to certain environmental contexts (contingency).

According to Knight and O’Leary (2006), “the problem with the trait approach is that it concentrates on the qualities of the individual as essential and universal aspects of leadership regardless of diverse contexts” (p.129). Thus leadership and personality are synonymous. This lends itself to the phrase that leaders are born and not made. In contrast, “situational leadership perceives the context as essential but the qualities of the individual as less relevant” (p.126). Thus, once a situation has been defined, the
appropriate leadership skills will be expressed. In regard to contingency theory approaches to leadership, the right leader will emerge in a prescribed circumstance.

Constructivist theories of leadership posit that leadership is not about the individual or the situation, rather an outcome of interpretation (Grint, 2000). “Within such a framework, leadership would simply be the embodied manifestation of collective and communal interpretations of appropriate behavior in particular contexts” (Knight and O’Leary, 2006). Therefore, leadership and the context in which the process is enacted are mutually dependent upon the other. “If leaders fail to understand that leadership is about interpretation, there is a greater tendency for them to fall back on the conventional individualistic approaches to leadership, which is likely to make ethical leadership problematic because leaders become pre-occupied with their own image as leaders rather than with their ethical responsibility to others” (p.129).

What exactly does one mean when they discuss, ethical leadership? Knight and O’Leary (2006) define ethical leadership within the moral philosophies of virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism. “Deontology focuses strongly on the ethical act and most deontologists…believe that there are universal rules that provide standards of right and wrong behavior” (Knight and O’Leary, 2006) and echoes the concept of the ethic of justice. A critique of deontology is that such ethical practices which have a prescribed action and/or value may detach a leader from their own moral judgment. This is often seen between the clashing of professional and personal ethics within the context of an ethical dilemma.

In contrast, virtue-based ethics posits that, “morality is internal and the key to good lies not in rules or rights, but in the classic notion of character (honestly, fairness,
compassion and generosity)” (Knight and O’Leary, 2006). They further state that virtue-based ethical systems revolve around the agent, character, and dispositions of persons involved and this differs sharply with deontology which focuses on a highly contextualized act.

Ethical leadership focuses on character and thus has a very strong virtue-ethic component. Whereas one cannot rule out the influences of deontology (prescribed duties and rules) and consequentialism (the greatest good for the largest number) as it relates to ethical practices of leadership, a focus on virtue-based ethics defines ethical leadership as, “not only choosing what to do as individuals, but also and essentially discovering who we are in relation to others - in short our membership of organizations, communities and societies” (Knight and O’Leary, 2006).
Chapter III

Methodology

This chapter outlines the conceptual framework and methodology used to conduct this study. The description that follows includes the rationale for the construction of the conceptual framework, justification for the use of qualitative research and multi-case studies in this instance, research design, which includes procedures for the selection of participants, as well as the collection, management, and analysis of the data collected through document analysis, triangulation, and cross-case analysis. Similarly, methodological issues such as reliability, validity, and limitations of the study will also be discussed.

Conceptual Framework

“Productive leadership depends heavily on its fit with the social and organizational context in which it is exercised. So, as times change, what works for our leaders changes also” (Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R., 1999). Weik (1969) posits that the word, organization, is a noun and also a myth. “If one looks for an organization one will not find it….what will be found is that there are events, linked together, that transpire within concrete walls” (p.73). Furthermore, these sequences, their pathways, and their timing constitute the dynamics of what is referred to as leadership. Thus the process of presidential leadership and decision-making suggests the resolution of “equivocality in an enacted environment by means of interlocked behaviors embedded in conditionally related process” (p.79). In other words, presidential leadership and the decision-making process is “enacted” through contingent behaviors that develop and are
interpreted by the meaning of individual interactions. This conceptual framework draws upon two main models: Burke’s (2005) Accountability Triangle and Begley’s (2004) Arena of Influence model.

In his book, *Achieving Accountability in Higher Education*, Joseph Burke (2005) draws from the previous work of Burton Clark (1983) to outline the major challenge of accountability as balancing the response of higher education to state priorities, academic concerns, and market forces- what is referred to as the Accountability Triangle (p.x). Each corner of the accountability triangle represents specific approaches to accountability. Academic concerns consist of assessment, audits, and accreditation; state priorities consist of standardized testing, performance budgeting and funding, and performance reports; and market forces consist of ratings based on reputation (p.297). Figure 2 is an illustration of the Accountability Triangle as outlined by Burke.
FIGURE 2

*The Accountability Triangle* (Burke, 2005)

(Reprinted with permission from the author)
Within the context of the higher education institution itself, the works of Morgan (1986) and other scholars (Birnbaum, 1989; Middlehurst, 1993; Bush, 1995) led to the development of different organizational perspectives (collegial, professional, political, anarchical, and cultural) which relate to different external phenomenon, in this case, the different corners of the Burke’s (2005) Accountability Triangle. It is important to understand these organizational perspectives and how they relate to the role(s) and decision-making process of the university president both separately and in sequence.

Looking at the university presidency as a role in-and-of-itself, Cohen & March (1974) separate presidential tasks into administrative, political, and entrepreneurial components. Again, each component may be utilized together, in sequence, or independently depending on what is considered by the president to be the most effective style of leadership within a specific context based on organizational perspectives in response to external demands. Within this framework, such styles of leadership exist within three leadership perspectives; rational, natural, and open-systems. Again, university presidents should not be restricted to only one of these three systems. Each is important in defining the role of the president. He/She must have a rational foundation in which boundaries are understood and defined. Such a foundation would limit the degree of uncertainty within the university community allowing the university to run as effectively and efficiently as possible. Additionally, using the natural-systems perspective would allow these boundaries to be defined by people and relationships. When uncertainty forces a “rational” president to acknowledge the external environment, it is
important that they be able to form relationships based on trust, commitment and affirmation. Such relationships will generate commitment to a collective purpose that may result in a unified response to the external environment’s call for action. Lastly, the university president should be able to initiate such a process incorporating rational and natural systems through an open-systems perspective. Such a perspective focuses on the process of crossing the boundaries of formalization into the realm of informal roles and interpersonal relationships in order to achieve a common sense of purpose toward the attainment of any goal which will move the university forward.

Examining university presidents as individuals and not as a role provides greater insight on their perceptions of the position, expectations, and the decision-making process. In his article, *Self-Knowledge, Capacity and Sensitivity: Prerequisites to Authentic Leadership by School Principals*, Begley (2006) presents a concentric circles conceptual model of leadership based on multiple social arenas of influence which define some personal, professional and social values. Working from the inside ring of the model to the outside ring, these arenas include self (which extends through all the rings), groups, profession (which represent the formal areas of administration), the organization itself, culture found within the community and/or society, and the transcendental which consists of spirituality. For this research, such a model is applicable because the premise of this model is that a leader’s character is “the outcome of many transient influences as well as relatively more enduring values acquired from multiple arenas” (p. 578). Such is the case for university presidents. Figure 2 is an illustration of the process outlined by Begley.
Figure 3

*Arenas of Influence* (Begley, 2006)

(Reprinted with permission from the author)
Although theoretical constructs such as socialization and role theory posit that presidential roles may be as much a product of social attributions as a set of desirable behaviors, the conceptual framework presented here provides for a greater understanding of how the university president as an individual relates to these social attributions and desirable behaviors (translated into roles) in order to generate meaning and exercise appropriate leadership through the decision-making process, policy formation, and actualization between internal and external variables of context. Within this conceptual framework we see how president’s personal values, embedded within the ethical paradigms of critique, care, and justice contribute to their decision-making process and guide their actions and behaviors which is ultimately defined as their leadership style. Figure 3 illustrates this relationship.
FIGURE 4

Conceptual Model Depicting the Roles of the University President During an Era of Accountability
Justification for Qualitative and Multi-Case Studies in This Study

Krathwohl (1998) writes that “qualitative procedures are ideal for complex phenomenon…. [and] are extremely useful for exploration- to find out how to understand a phenomenon” (p.229). In addition, Stake (1995) describes the essence of qualitative research as consisting of four components: holistic, empirical, interpretive and empathetic.

First, qualitative research is holistic by the fact that it is concerned with the “process and context [of a phenomenon] rather than simply outcomes or focusing on differences and comparisons, as in quantitative research” (Toma, 2006, p. 33). Next, qualitative research is empirical because it occurs in natural settings. In case studies (which will be used to conduct this research), the “setting is the case, a social unit- a bounded complex system of information” (Creswell, 1998, p. 67). Furthermore, as Stake (1995) indicates, qualitative research is, “by nature, descriptive and detailed, favoring natural language” (p.44). These descriptions and details result in the development of concepts and theoretical constructs that “explore rival structures or alternative explanations” (p.47).

As stated previously, qualitative research is interpretive in that it focuses on gaining meaning and understanding and building concepts and theories (Toma, 2006). This is done as a result of the researcher becoming an insider in which he or she gathers detail through “multiple, usually interactive methods, identifying and systematically reflecting on their own role in the inquiry and acknowledging and accommodating
personal biases, values and interests” (Creswell, 2003, p. 112). Methods used for this study include document review and interviews.

Finally, qualitative research is empathetic because it “concentrates on the frames of reference and values of those involved through a planned design that evolves during the course of research” (Stake, 1995, p. 50). This concentration on frames of reference and values through a planned design does have many distinct advantages that describes complex personal and interpersonal phenomenon that would not be measurable through a single dimensional scale in qualitative research.

Thus, Stake (1995) views the primary role of qualitative research as providing explanations about how a particular effect or set of effects is related to a given cause. “Qualitative research is especially helpful when it provides us with someone’s perceptions of a situation that permits us to understand his or her behavior” (Toma, 2006, p. 42).

**Research Design**

This study used a comparative case study design. Case studies develop an in-depth analysis of a single case or multiple cases carefully bound by place and time. (Creswell, 1998). Conrad & Serlin (2006) go on to state:

> [In case studies] researchers draw on multiple sources - documents, interviews, observations, artifacts and the like-focusing sharply on context to describe the case, generate themes, and make assertions. Case studies may be either unique (intrinsic) or representative from a broad issue (instrumental) and can be selected based on purposeful sampling-choosing cases because they are interesting…as opposed to drawing a random sample. (p. 45).

Similarly, Yin (2003) references the significance of case studies as a means to explore multifaceted relationships that cannot otherwise be explored by quantitative
measures. Case study research does not necessarily require a large number of cases but multiple case studies allow for cross-case analyses organized by common themes and thought to be generalized to other settings. As such, case studies are, once again, perhaps the most applied of the approaches to qualitative research, particularly if [the] application is focused on informing [theory] and improving policy (Conrad & Serlin, 2006).

This study used a case study approach for all four presidents because of its focus on individual presidential perceptions of their roles, leadership styles, values and decision-making processes. This required data that extended far beyond questionnaires and surveys.

*Site and Sample Selection.* An inherent component of a comparative case study design is that of site and sample selection. For this study, the site selection consisted of four-year, Research I, land-grant institutions. Although each institution may be vastly different, such criteria allowed for the collection of as much relevant qualitative data as possible in order to control for any mitigating variables.

Sample selection was an on-going process. Through document review and analysis (consisting of the president’s curriculum vitae, any relevant newspaper articles, internet searches, and policy) I used purposeful sampling to identify ten distinct university, land-grant presidents leading their institutions through stability, crisis, and change in light of increasing external demands for accountability. Such sampling leads the researcher to choose cases because they are interesting, convenient and representative.
Overall, it was important to identify enough participants to provide a thorough analysis of the role of the university president during this era of accountability while understanding that not all university presidents selected may be available or provide an accurate analysis. From these ten presidents, five responded to my request for an interview. From these five, one president asked to be removed from the study after the interview had taken place for an unspecified reason. Therefore, a total of four presidents from research I, land-grant universities in the northeastern and central United States, participated in this study.

Research Strategies and Instrumentation. The main issue governing this research design is one of access. Being that this study involves conversations with prominent university figureheads, access was extremely difficult. However, with flexibility (scheduling appointments with the presidents months in advance) and significant contacts (those faculty and staff that had pre-existing relationships with the presidents) such interviews were feasible. In regard to the document review and analysis of the presidents, such information was easily accessible to the public. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity of the universities and the presidents included in this study.

Data Collection. Yin (1994) cites archival records, direct observations, interviews, and participant observation as key methods of collecting data. This study drew heavily upon considerable, in-depth document review/analysis and interviews with four university presidents. The president’s curriculum vitae provided background information such as previous administrative experience, tenure at current institution, and educational
background. The newspaper articles helped identify an initial profile of the presidents and
their institutions and through continued analysis the identification of themes and the
triangulation of data were possible. The newspapers used in each state were those
published by the students of the universities represented in this study as well as the
newspapers in the state with the greatest circulation. The internet was used to access
articles such as editorials and commentaries written by the presidents about their visions
and expectations. Additionally, these articles written by the presidents provided an
additional understanding of the university climate, culture and relationship with external
constituencies. Policy archives provided an understanding the university’s climate and
culture. Only those policies created and implemented during the president’s tenure for
this study were used.

“During data collection, it is important to develop a database, or a filing system,
where various pieces of data can be deposited” (Heck, 2000, p. 381). Such an approach
made triangulation possible so that other data sources can uncover material that may
elaborate on an interview or perhaps even contradict them. The interviews provided the
participant’s perspective and understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Thus, for
the purposes of this study, interviews were a critical component being that the
interpretations of various roles and perspectives on leadership and decision-making will
contribute to a greater understanding of the university presidency both as a position of
authority in-and-of-itself as well as the individual within that position of authority.

In addition, the interview format used the information provided from the
document analysis to initially generate an overview of the president. The interviews were
semi-structured (see Appendix A) with a suggested set of questions relating to the
specific research questions guiding this study all within a set time schedule (approximately 90 minutes) while also allowing for the presidents to share their experiences, interpretations, and examples as they wished.

Data Analysis. “Coding and analysis are data reduction processes whereby the amount of data is winnowed out to those directly relevant to the study’s focus” (Krathwohl, 1998, p. 325). In order to make sense of the data collected from the document analysis and interviews transcription was used and the data was then organized by the researcher into categories and codes that related to the conceptual framework and initial research questions that guided this research. The categories of Roles and expectations in the presidency, leadership style, influence of personal values and ethics on professional decision making, the impact of internal and external variables on decision making, and determination of leadership approach served as initial codes for analysis of the data generated from this study.

Other contributing factors were color-coded by the researcher as they emerged. These include tenure at current institution and the relationship of the president with internal and external governance. Additionally, sub-codes/categories were identified during the analysis of data. Once the data were grouped in accordance to the theoretical foundations of the conceptual framework, axial coding was used in order to relate the categories to their subcategories (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Such interpretation provided for a complete, rich description of the roles, leadership, and decision-making of the university president.
Cross-case analysis. According to Heck (2004), “comparisons across a number of cases can produce evidence that is more compelling than a single case because they are based on more instances” (p. 382). The conceptual framework developed for this study served as a relatively parsimonious theoretical foundation for the comparison and identification of patterns across cases. “Eventually, one can make inferences based on the comparisons, for example, deriving theoretical propositions that provide a general explanation that is grounded in the individual cases” (Benham & Heck, 1994). To illustrate these inferences a research text was constructed. Figures and tables were created to summarize the findings and relationships among the variables to the goals and purposes of this study. (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Validity and Reliability. As with qualitative research, “the [validity] of a qualitative case study depends on the degree to which it rings true to natives and colleagues in the field” (Fetterman, 1989, p.21). Conrad & Serlin (2006) state that “the case is [valid] when what the researcher presents describes the reality of the participants who informed the research in ways that resonate with them” (p.413). Similarly, Marshall & Rossman (1999) write that “reporting processes and interactions within the boundaries of the cases with sufficient depth to really highlight their complexity satisfies the [validity] standard” (p. 57). Thus in order to truly satisfy the validity standard triangulation must occur in which the cases being studied must be carefully bound and explained as richly as possible through multiple sources (Conrad & Serlin, 2006).

For this study, standards for reliability (dependability) were attained through member checking- “asking participants to check how their own comments have been
interpreted…and later contacting research participants to test the evolving analytical
categories generated” (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). Triangulation of data was useful for
reliability as well. Use of the aforementioned techniques served to maximize accuracy
while minimizing bias.

Significance. This study had the effect of informing theory, policy and practice. Much of
the current literature informing practice has been a-theoretical; thus, this research used
theory to inform practice. Informing practice can provide university presidents with
insight and additional information on the roles they fill or perhaps lead to the creation and
understanding of new roles. It is my hope that this study provided a snapshot of
organizational theory to explain the nexus between increased demands for accountability
and the role of the university president while concomitantly analyzing how presidents
internalize and navigate through such a nexus using both a professional and personal
value systems to guide the process of effective ethical decision-making within their
institutions. All of which is critically important given the environment of American
higher education today.
Chapter IV

RESULTS

This study took place over a time period of two years, from 2007-2009 at four, Research I, land- grant institutions of higher education throughout the northeastern and central United States. Despite these commonalities, the institutions that are represented are quite different, as were the presidents that lead them.

Each president and institution was granted anonymity as a condition of their participation in the study. While there were moments in which the presidents visibly struggled in conceptualizing their roles as well their decision-making processes all of them presented their answers openly and candidly thus making their responses unhindered and rich in depth and scope.

The overall goal of this study was to gain insight into the various roles and ethical decision-making processes used by presidents and determining what internal and external variables of context, if any, influences their roles and their ethical decision-making. Taking into account that the labeling of specific roles of the academic presidency as well as the intangible nature of invoking a concept of ethics into the process of decision-making, there was some variation in the perception of their roles as well as their invocation of ethics into their decision-making there were more similarities in their responses than variations. Three of the four presidents chose not to label themselves as using any one specific leadership trait or theoretical approach and all described their decision-making processes through their unique experiences as president of their respective institutions.
The results of these interviews are a collection of perceptions and experiences of presidential roles and decision-making processes in light of various internal and external variables of context all within a realm of accountability. These individual responses are documented along with profiles of the institutions and the presidents such that their comments may be seen in a proper context.

All four vignettes provide descriptive background of each institution and participant for this study. The names of both have been changed to protect the identities of the participants and their respective institutions. Each vignette is divided into the following five sections: institutional profile, profile of president, expectations for the roles of the university presidency, leadership, the perceived impact of personal values on professional decision-making, and the perceived impact of internal and external variables of context on presidential decision-making.

Table 4 was constructed to serve as a point of reference throughout the following chapters. It should be noted that the presidents listed are in no particular order. They are based on the order in which they were interviewed.
Table 4:

*Interview Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Years as President at Current Institution</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Professional Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President A</td>
<td>East Longview State University</td>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President B</td>
<td>Forest Hills State University</td>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President C</td>
<td>Flat Plains State University</td>
<td>&gt; 5 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President D</td>
<td>Rolling Ridges University</td>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Non-Academic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Study I

East Longview State University

Institutional Profile

East Longview State University (ELSU) is the largest public research university in its state in the North East. At the time of the interview, ELSU had over 2,200 faculty, more than 30,000 undergraduate students, and over 10,000 graduate students (including international) at each of its satellite campuses in both rural and urban settings; all geographically dispersed throughout the state. Together, these campuses comprise more than 25 degree-granting colleges with more than 100 bachelor, more than 50 doctoral and professional degree programs that span across over 150 academic departments. It is within one of these colleges that the land grant mission charged to the university resides.

Governance Structure

ELSU has a two-tier system of governance. Ultimate governance of ELSU rests with two coordinating boards, so named for the purpose of this study. They include the University Coordinating Board, which oversees most of ELSU’s fiduciary responsibilities, and a State Coordinating Board; which maintains most corporate control of the university. For the most part, the members of the University Coordinating Board (of which there are over 50) are elected members as mandated by state law. Members of the State Coordinating Board of which there are less than 20 with no more than 10 members appointed by the governor of the state. Furthermore, these members are also
considered members of the University Coordinating Board. Working together, these two boards comprise the primary system of governance and accountability for the university.

The president of ELSU is considered an ex-officio member of the University Coordinating Board and the State Coordinating Board and manages the everyday operations of ELSU. Additionally, it should be noted that this individual is chosen by and held accountable to both governing boards.

**Sources of Funding**

During the last 10 years, there has existed a great deal of tension between the governor (of which there have been at least 2 during this time) of the state and the administration of ELSU regarding the funding of the institution. For 5 of these years, ELSU has seen budget cuts of more than 10 percent thus furthering a trend of decreasing state support and ultimately placing ELSU among the lowest institutions for state appropriations contributing just under 25% of ELSU’s annual budget of more than 1 billion dollars.

As a major state-research university, ELSU generates revenue from both the public and private sector. As mentioned above, appropriations from the state contribute under 25% while tuition, endowments, federal appropriations, federal/state/municipal grants and contracts, and auxiliary enterprises contribute about 30%, 1%, .5%, 20%, and 15% respectively for the 2008-09 fiscal year.

Expenditures at ELSU (for 2008-09) consist of approximately 30% for instruction, 20% for research, 10% for student aid, 5% for student services, 10% for basic operations of their physical plants, about 2% for libraries, and about 15% for auxiliary services. ELSU has placed a strong emphasis on securing funding from various sources.
such as endowments and research grants. In fact, ELSU has undergone more than 2 major capital campaigns in the last 5 years as well as developed a series of stringent guidelines for how this money should be spent. In regard to Funding for Research, in the 2008 fiscal year, ELSU brought significant amounts of funding from federal, state, corporate, and foundations to conduct research with total estimates of about 70%, 15%, 5%, and 15% respectively. It should be noted that ELSU research funding has doubled within the last 10 years, with most of the growth due to the acquisition of federal grants and initiatives.

**Strategic Plan**

In an attempt to keep up with the increasing demands placed upon the institution from external agents such as student enrollment (academic concerns), technological advancements (market forces) and university-community relations/development (state priorities), while concomitantly utilizing, identifying and even creating internal agents of strength (related to mission, campus environment, and the like) for support, the president of ELSU has recently undertaken a bold initiative to create a master plan for the university which is ongoing although some initiatives have already been undertaken as will be discussed later.

**Profile of President A**

President A comes from an academically and administratively oriented background with both parents having served as administrators in similar universities throughout the continental United States. Serving as president of another major-research I university for more than 5 years and holding key administrative positions in at least 2 other institutions prior to his appointment as president of ELSU, of which he has also been president for more than 5 years.
Improving institutional quality. During his tenure at ELSU, President A has been commended and criticized for his efforts to strengthen ELSU’s connection to the state which was considered to be fragmented at best after the tumultuous relationship that existed between his predecessor and the former governor of the state. Understanding the need to improve upon a tarnished image, President A assumed the presidency of ELSU focusing on key areas of the university—faculty, students, campus climate and university autonomy. Having inherited a geographically dispersed university with little or no autonomy among the campuses in addition to a tense relationship with the state, President A immediately outlined his “strategic ambitions” complete with what he considered to be realistic and measurable benchmarks and began his first major initiative to centralize ELSU’s support systems and administration. Having cut key positions in the university hierarchy while consolidating the responsibilities of others, President A met intense opposition from key stakeholders. However, by constant communication through memos, newspaper editorials, and internet technology, President A was able to better communicate changes as they were occurring while explaining and justifying his rationale along the way.

Improving educational quality. After restructuring the administration of the university, President A then began another initiative: to provide the most enriching educational experience possible to the students of ELSU. He attempted to do this by centralizing the academic programs of the various colleges within the university. This initiative covered every aspect of undergraduate learning and residential life from the admissions process to
curriculum and the campus infrastructure. Such a drastic initiative was met with intense scrutiny by faculty, students and alumni as many felt that such a drastic measure compromised the unique history of each campus and identity of each college within ELSU. In response to this, President A created a task force consisting of a diverse body of faculty, students, board members, legislators, and alumni which conducted an analysis of the current structure of ELSU over a period of about 1 year. In doing this, President A empowered the various members of the task force to witness firsthand, the need for his initiative. He also gave them a say in the process, having implemented most of the recommendations from the task force over a time period of about 2 years while coupling the implementation of future recommendations to ELSU’s next capital campaign.

*Funding of institution during difficult economic times.* Like most public, research institutions in the United States, ELSU has seen a consistent decline in state appropriations. Thus ELSU finds itself in the midst of increased demands for accountability with limited resources. Understanding that ELSU is a state institution, President A tied the need for institutional funding to relations with ELSU’s internal and external constituency. Thus there is a strong emphasis on alumni relations, visibility of scholarship and research to the greater community through the development of partnerships with state corporations, increasing the venues for communication regarding the achievements and research initiatives of faculty, student involvement in state budget restoration attempts, research and teaching opportunities with prominent faculty throughout the university in addition to promoting a diverse campus environment through competitive recruiting efforts of both students and faculty.
Despite the attempts of President A to strengthen ties with the state government, the state continues to attempt to identify weaknesses in accountability within its institutions of higher education in an attempt to justify decreases in appropriations. Within the last 5 years, ELSU found itself in the midst of a major state initiative in which all state institutions of higher education were investigated and evaluated regarding how well they managed their day-to-day operations. Unaware of the initial charge and outcome of such an investigation, President A as well as the presidents of other state institutions were surprised by the state’s release of a formal document which identified several key areas of weakness in the governance and financial management of ELSU and other institutions. The document recommended that such weaknesses were the result of failed leadership and transparency within the operations of the university. Furthermore, the document called for the need for greater state involvement over the decision-making practices (governance) of each institution.

Recognizing the political nature of such a document, President A immediately responded with an open letter to the members of ELSU and the greater community. In this letter he stated that in order for institutional governance to be effective, it must be above the influence of state politics. Returning the focus of institutional quality to state appropriations, he also noted that this was not the only means of support for ELSU and although ELSU is accountable to the state, it is equally accountable to all who invest in the institution. In response to the state’s document, President A initiated a task force to evaluate the findings of the state regarding ELSU governance and management of resources while also consulting with outside agencies to evaluate ELSU’s governing practices. Throughout the process, President A kept the public aware of inconsistent
findings detailed in the document while also highlighting the need for transparency in all of the decisions regarding anything pertaining to ELSU. The outcome was a call to maintain the integrity of the governance practices of all of the state’s public institutions while meeting the needs for greater accountability. Practices such as increasing transparency and reaffirming accountability regarding decisions made at all public universities in the state through the development of specific objectives as well as measurable outcomes would demonstrate the accomplishment of such objectives.

Results of President A Interview

Expectations for the Roles of the University Presidency

Regarding how the role of the presidency has changed, President A stated that he believes the concepts of maintenance and enhancement of East LongView State University are dependent upon keeping channels of communication transparent, open and easily accessible to everyone. He stated that he believes a key component of his role as president is to “provide the channels for communication” by “creating the networks for the dialogue to take place” (President A, interview 2008). By this, President A means that he views his role as one in which he has to create the opportunity for lines of communication to be established or used effectively. When asked specifically how he fulfills this role, President A responded that he does so by “fundraising, meeting with faculty, staff, students and outside constituents, as well as blogging and releasing statements through the media” (President A, interview, 2008.)

Regarding external accountability and policy mandates, President A stated that those anticipated measures have made his role more difficult. “With the given state of our economy it has become increasing popular to anticipate having to do much more with
less and less” (President A, interview, 2008.) He outlined several measures that he had undertaken such as streamlining practices, departments, and budgets all within the last year and a half. President A further mentioned that current economic conditions caused him to take a close look at how the university is managed and that it made more sense to centralize many facets of the institution, from programs, departments, and offices across the several campuses. An example of this is the centralization of the admissions office and criteria for East Longview which resulted in uniform entrance criteria for all colleges within the university.

In general, when asked about the presidency as a profession, President A stated the following:

I think that any president has to be easily accessible to all that he works for. As a president you have to find that balance - that balance between public relations, campaigns, students, administrative tasks and so on. Certain agendas may take up more of your day than others and sometimes these things are expected and unexpected. So I feel that a president, in general needs to be very flexible to the needs of their institution. He has to be very conscious of what is going on around him but he also has to understand that he cannot know everything that is going on. Usually when something comes across my desk or my email, it is a problem that requires my attention. Sometimes it is an angry parent, donor, trustee, student or member of state government. A president has to know who it is that they are working for and why they are working for them. When you lose sight of this, you no longer are an effective president.

In response to the effect that external constituencies have on his presidency, President A stated:

Just because the government tells me that my university COULD do something doesn’t mean that we as a university feel that we should. So if I enacted whatever they told me to do all the time, I would undoubtedly alienate myself from members of the institution and consequentially close a few of those communication channels I told you about.

Regarding his professional role, President A stated that one of the more difficult aspects of the presidency pertains to time. “There is never enough time in the day to accomplish everything you want to accomplish and everything you do varies from day to
day” (President A, interview, 2008). When prodded further, President A explained that he was not referring to the concept of time management but was talking about which issues required immediate attention and which issues did not. Referring to this as the “triage method”, President A stated that having to make the determination of which matters could wait and which could not on a continual basis was difficult and further compounded by the fact that most of these matters pertained to negative issues which sometimes required immediate attention and took away from time that could be used to acknowledge the positive things that that university was doing. Stated differently, the presidency as a profession consists of “triage and praise” (President A, interview, 2008).

Conversely, the most rewarding aspect of the presidency according to President A is focused on the accomplishments of the students of East Longview State University.

President A stated:

The most rewarding aspect comes during our graduations. When I speak at the convocations, I see the diversity of our students, the pride in their eyes and I see all friends and family taking pictures. I see moms and dads cry as their child walks across that stage to get their degrees. I hear cheers and whistles, and I see smiles. Knowing that our students have made it, knowing that is an indication that we have served them well as they move to the next chapter of the lives, and knowing that we have prepared them the best way we know how, that is what makes my job rewarding and the most interesting. I mean, personally sure, as a president you meet many interesting people and are given the opportunity to engage in many rewarding activities, but nothing moves me more than commencement.

Leadership

When asked to describe his leadership style, President A said that it was impossible for a president to restrict themselves to only one style. Instead, he chose to focus on the traits that every president and/or leader should have. Identifying himself as a “leader who listens”, President A identified himself as a team player and not just an
authoritative figure within a hierarchical diagram of university administration.

Communication was identified as one of the cornerstones of his leadership.

According to President A, the evolution of a problem is a process in which the needs or concerns of a particular individual, group or organization are not being addressed. As president most of the time, President A stated that he is told what the problems are by other constituents such as emails, meetings, and the student newspaper although he was quick to point out that he spends an equal amount of time identifying problems in areas with which he has the most direct contact.

Along with the process of the evolution of a potential problem comes the identification of which problems to address before they become a crisis. When asked if he felt that he was able to identify problems before they escalated into a crisis, President A stated:

What is a crisis to one person may not necessarily be considered a crisis to me. Now, when you consider any given crisis, it is the result of not addressing or identifying a problem beforehand and taking corrective action. Somewhere along the way, the channel cracked or leaked. So what do we do? We repair the channel. Sometimes, I have been slow in responding to a situation and it did escalate but eventually, things will die down as the channels are repaired and reopened.

In addition, when asked about any particular strategies or procedures to effectively handle problems, President A responded with:

The triage approach. I always look at a request or situation and try to determine whom is affected by the situation. Is it a large population of our students? Is it the community? Or is it one student and/or their family? I triage my situations (when I am able to) based on how many people are affected by a given situation.

From that point, President A then determines whether the problem is one that requires his direct involvement or one in which he can serve a mediator between those affected. Either way, the problem is then addressed and resolved.
As stated previously, President A considers communication to be one of the cornerstones of his leadership approach and this is also exemplified through his policies and outlined objectives for the university. When asked about how he articulates goals and inspires commitment to those goals for East Longview University, President A’s response was:

The first thing is to make sure that all the goals are in line with the mission and focus of the institution. Sometimes as president that means that you have to have the vision of where a certain initiative will lead to and the trust of those around you to lead them there. I would say without those two things, it would be impossible to articulate anything. That being said [clears throat], any administrator, not just a president should recognize the value that each employee brings to the table and openly acknowledge that contribution no matter how small. Sometimes you see a few administrators that only come out when things are bad or they have to lay down the law so to speak. Those aren’t true leaders in my book. Bad things happen, yes. But good things happen all the time too. Acknowledging both is critical…. critical to an institution’s effectiveness and such. Critical to the development of the trust thing I just mentioned. Critical to getting the job done.

Attempting to gain insight on how university presidents decide which leadership approached to use I asked President A to describe his leadership style. President A responded that his style is one that invokes the principles of communication and assessment and using these principles to bridge any gaps that may exist among people, places and things in the support of his vision for the university. Furthermore, President A posited that leadership style is largely based on context with certain approaches to leadership displayed prominently over others and that a president must be able to balance such approaches. For example:

Sometimes you have to play hardball. When an issue is pressing or has been left hanging for too long, sometimes you need to push to get people to take action. Sometimes a crisis may warrant a quick response and you have to make sure that the response given is appropriate and can immediately address the issue. The other side of the spectrum would involve something like fundraising. You cannot be as abrasive. You can only be ambitious.
President A stated that achieving this balance is directly correlated to experience and when asked about modifications that he has had to make to his leadership style he offered the following anecdote:

When I became president of [my first university] I think I aimed too high when it came to goal setting. I was ambitious, but I did not have a real understanding of the university’s unique culture. I knew how to deal with certain aspects of university life, the dynamic and the serene, I had an appreciation for all that the university had to offer but no understanding of what made it tick, so to speak…and so I came to realize that I was only affecting the university climate without a full understanding of its unique culture.

President A was able to gain insight and understanding of the culture of the university through interactions with various mentors throughout his presidency. These mentors encouraged his to remain ambitious but to couple that ambition with the goals that were incremental, measurable and aligned with the mission of the university.

Reflecting on that experience, President A commented:

I wanted to get from point A to point C without point B. This understanding that I am walking about did not come for some time either. It took many mishaps for me to understand and even then, I still question whether it was fully understood by me before my departure. So, my leadership style changed in that I began to listen more than I acted.

**Perceived Impact of personal values on professional decision making**

Throughout the interview, President A associated the term ethics and ethical behaviors as personal “fundamental rules that guide you morally….the very core of who you are” and ethical behaviors as “those actions that would accomplish the greatest good for the most people” (President A, interview, 2008). According to President A, the strongest behavioral indicator of ethical conduct in the academic presidency is an awareness of the world around them which would provide for a greater understanding of
various contextual matters so that they may inspire change and not necessarily create it.

President A elaborated on this by stating:

Well anyone can come into a position and say, “because I am X you have to do as I say.” The problem with that mentality is that there will always be someone of a higher X degree who may have the same mentality. With that in mind, then nothing gets accomplished because they are more consumed with their rank and going through the motions of the job instead of really focusing on problems, identifying them as well and then communicating with others to come up with the best possible solution. Now…that said, there are times when a leader will have to make snap decisions and so long as they have the trust and support of their constituents they are okay.

When asked how often he employed the use of ethics in his every-day decision making, President A answered that he does so daily. “Every… day I have to make decisions that will affect thousands of students, families, friends, workers and more. Every speech I write, every function I attend, I always keep in mind why I am there and who I serve” (President A, interview, 2008). Highlighting the establishment of tuition in any given year as an example of ethical decision making, President A emphasized the importance of understanding the mission of the university and the population it was meant to serve. By increasing tuition the university is decreasing the access of a particular student demographic and despite tuition increases being an expected reality every fiscal year, President A has attempted to increase access and opportunity for all students through the suspension of several projects, a new capital campaign initiative and meetings with several state legislators and business executives so that partnerships or potential opportunities for collaboration may result.

President A argued that the assessment of any situation is key in order to understand what is required to address a problem both immediately and long term. “By short term I mean stopping the bleeding. Long term means addressing the conditions that allowed for the problem in the first place. This notion is applicable to every single
situation. It is a universal truth” (President A, 2008). Guided by the personal values of empathy, openness, and responsibility, President A posited that these values are those on which he bases his decisions. When asked about whether or not his values have changed since assuming the role of the president, President A felt that his personal values remained intact while his professional values had changed.

As a president I have learned about many things. Some things I wish I didn’t learn about or know but all of my experiences have not compromised what I have felt or believed even during the times when others may have felt I was wrong. Professionally, when you move from institution to institution, the goals and needs of those institutions change as well. So you need to adapt. Whereas one institution may value access as the most important aspect of their mission, another may tend to favor assessment. An effective president would find a way to bridge the two.

**Perceived Impact of Internal and External Variables of Context on Presidential Decision-Making**

When asked about how the interrelated variables of budgeting, curriculum, social and political contexts, pressure from interest groups, laws, policies, and regulations impact his decision making and the management of the university, President A offered the following:

First, the need for change has to come from somewhere. As president I ask myself if this change is necessary and if it is legitimate. The problem with interest groups is that they sit and wait for an opportunity to try and push their agendas. To them, their cause is the greatest need of all and they fail to see the bigger picture so with them, I have to be careful. Some changes have to be implemented gradually and some not. Obviously the speed at which these changes occur depends on particular social and political realities. Oftentimes it is these realities that dictate the budget which in turn enhances or takes away from our established curriculum. During times when change involves decreasing an appropriation to a college or something to that effect I always try to do so in a manner that will have the least negative impact on the university community- but I also understand that there will be a negative impact nonetheless.

When asked to whom he felt accountable and why, President A answered that he was first and foremost accountable to the university and the state. He also extended the
concept of accountability to himself to make decisions that are in the best the interest of the university as a matter of habit and not convenience. President A acknowledged that the governing board and the state legislature do have some influence over his decision making and is grateful that is influence has been, for the most part, in favor of the university.

When asked about the impact that greater demands for accountability had on his professional practice as a university president, President A articulated that the concept of accountability is not one that impacts just his role but also the roles of the university community. He mentioned that there are some parts of his job that he would like to do without such as fundraising but when faced with the dilemmas of these unfunded accountability mandates, that role has now become a necessity. Additionally difficult decisions have to be made continually.

Decisions on where to cut, what to condense and what to create have to be carefully determined and there is little or no room for second guessing. We all have to tighten our belts so to speak and keep pushing forward. The students are here. They are coming and they will continue to come. This university has the responsibility to make sure that these students leave here with the tools and skills necessary to make it out there in the real world.

When asked to summarize what influences his decision making, President A immediately responded that the anticipated outcome of his decisions was front and center. When making any decision, President A attempts to ensure that the decision is aligned to the university’s mission overall vision and he has to do so often in the midst of criticism and scrutiny.
Case Study II

Forest Hills State University

Institutional Profile

Forest Hills State University (FHSU) is multi-campus, public, land grant and also the largest major public research I university in the Northeast in its state consisting of over 20 campuses geographically dispersed. FHSU is considered to be one of the best institutions of higher education across the country as reflected in increasing admissions, advancements of research, the modernization of the physical plant, philanthropic contributions, technological innovations and curriculum proactivity. As of 2008-09, FHSU had a total enrollment of more than 75,000 students across 20 campuses including 70,000 undergraduates, over 5,000 postgraduates and over 5,000 faculty members. Collectively, these campuses and colleges are not autonomous. They offer over 150 majors, have diverse curricula and serve a diverse student population from around the world.

Governance Structure

It should be noted that FHSU, although considered a land grant institution is not directly controlled by the state nor is it considered part of the statewide system of higher education. FHSU is primarily governed by a Board of Constituents comprising approximately 30 members including the president of FHSU, the state governor and other members of state office. Some members are appointed by the governor of the state while the remaining members are elected. This board’s duties include the selection of a president for FHSU, the creation of goals and the strategic direction the university must pursue to get there, and approval of FHSU’s annual budget.
The president of FHSU is granted authority to control the affairs of FHSU by the board. Practically, the president will delegate responsibilities regarding the day to day management of the institution to the administration, faculty, staff and even students. This allows for the president of FHSU to be primarily responsible for the reputation of FHSU to its constituencies as well as enact procedures and policies that support the goals and direction prescribed by the Board of Constituents.

**Sources of Funding**

FHSU’s status as a state affiliated university is reflected in the sources of funding. In 2008-09 appropriations from the state constituted approximately 10% of the FHSU’s operating budget. The major sources of funding for FHSU consist of tuition, subsidiary corporations and restricted sources of funding at approximately 30%, 25% and 20% respectively.

Expenditures at FHSU (for 2008-09) consist of approximately 20% for instruction, 15% for research, 3% for student support, 5% for basic operations of their physical plants, 10% for student aid, 10% for institutional support, 10% for auxiliary services and 30% for subsidiary corporations. Thus FHSU has placed a strong emphasis on securing and maintaining funding from various external sources including, but not limited to, an endowment of over 1 billion dollars, federal agencies of which FHSU has several long-term partnerships, and private industry.
Strategic Plan

FHSU’s strategic plan is based on analysis of management practices spanning a period of approximately 20 years and collective fiduciary reports of the other campuses. The strategic plan, as envisioned by the Board of Constituents outlines goals and strategies to support existing philosophies and commitments as well enhancing and, in many cases, initiating new initiatives to “connect” all of the colleges (through collaboration) to each other as well as to external agents such as business, industry and agriculture throughout the state with the colleges establishing their own benchmark indicators which are evaluated annually. These goals, known as the “Master Initiative” consist of many strategies focused: improving educational quality (regarding faculty and students), the need for a diverse community of university learners (with attention focused on life-long learning); the alignment of resources with initiatives; community service through scholarly contributions and outreach practices; and improvement of institutional efficiency with the development of new ways to generate revenue ultimately reducing costs. Again, this plan is ongoing with some initiatives already undertaken and will be highlighted in the upcoming sections.

Profile of President B

President B has a strong academically and administratively-oriented background as a result of many diverse opportunities not only during his professional career but also during his undergraduate and years of graduate study. Having served as president of another comparable institution for less than 5 years before his current appointment, of
which he has been president for over 5 years, President B has held key administrative positions and achieved national distinction for most of his career. As a result of his studies and these experiences, President B brings a distinct perspective, and often unconventional approach, to leadership on all aspects of institutional life with an unusually clear focus on values and civic engagement in regard to what [variables] drive a university (as a conscious and living enterprise) to advance and flourish. President B also brings a clear sense of responsibility as to the partnership that must exist between a state and its higher education institutions to advance and promote education for all who seek it.

*Improving institutional quality.* Perhaps President B’s strongest leadership quality is his ability to align initiatives to improve institutional quality, educational quality, and issues with funding, with a one word concept, engagement. Understanding the need for an institution of higher education to adapt to the needs of a constantly-changing, globalized society in light of new technologies, demographics, and state expectations, President B has articulated a vision in which demands for accountability can only be met and exceeded if a university is able to effectively and efficiently engage with the community it serves. Initiatives for engagement come at a cost and with all public institutions competing for the support of their state government, President B believes that universities must advance their missions from maintaining the concepts of teaching, research and service to a mission that actively advances these concepts through continual /lifelong learning and the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge. Such an initiative can only be accomplished if the university is more engaged with the community it serves by understanding the needs of the community and utilizing the various strengths and
components intrinsic to the university (students, faculty expertise, etc.) to form a partnership with community stakeholders to solve complex problems.

Regarding students, President B believes that in order for FHSU to become more engaged, it must become more student-oriented. That is, the perception of a traditional student using higher education as a means to an end should be replaced with the model of a student as a lifelong learner model. Understanding that the needs for lifelong learning students, that is, students who may enter or reenter the academy at all stages of life as opposed to traditional students who attend universities directly after secondary education, requires a shift in the paradigm of thought pertaining to the notion of what is a university student. President B understands that these “non-traditional” students represent additional obstacles for his university and require a new train of thought about what it means to be engaged with the student population. Such engagement, although difficult, is not impossible. President B believes that the answer lies in the advancement of technology which is paramount to concept of the student as a lifelong learner because it allows for unprecedented access to greater and more diverse experiences. Advancing technology and teaching students and faculty how to utilize it, allows for the development of intellectual capital that is equally important in a more globalized society.

President B believes that technology must be promoted and advanced in all areas of university life, especially the curriculum. Thus one of President B’s major initiatives led to the creation of internet-based majors and corresponding curricula of study. “FHSU-Online” connects students as lifelong learners that are location bound (in different states and countries) with the teaching, research and expertise of FHSU faculty, thus generating partnerships that otherwise would have been non-existent or limited.
In alignment with advancements in technology, President B has coordinated several initiatives for cross-departmental/college collaboration along with corporate and community partnerships often resulting in the development of a new major and/or addition to the construction of state-of-the-art buildings. Thus in the last 5 years, FHSU has seen a dramatic increase in joint-degree programs. Such programs appeal to a wider student audience and contribute to the vision of students as lifelong learners by combining traditional degree programs in non-traditional ways. For example, within the last year, FHSU developed a joint degree program, (M.B.A./M.D.) between the FHSU College of Medicine with the College of Business. Because both programs permanently reside in different campuses, it only seemed logical that they be brought together on one campus through the construction of the Medical Practice and Administration Building on the FHSU “main campus” (the campus populated with the most students and faculty) and the recruitment/placement of highly esteemed faculty members representative of both programs. Being that this program is relatively new it requires students to reside on the main campus although there are plans to make this degree option available through “FHSU On-line.” This is the most recent of at least three similar initiatives within past ten years or so.

On the other hand, FHSU faculty were not pleased with the creation of a virtual FHSU campus and some proposals for joint-degree programs. In fact, there exists an unspoken elitism among the various programs, colleges and campuses regarding quality education at FHSU. With so many campuses and colleges across the state serving a particular demographic as reflected by the socio-economic conditions within that particular demographic, autonomy is very difficult to achieve across the board regardless
of the joint-programs and similar initiatives created. Faculty thought these initiatives created an undue hardship for the administration and faculties of these colleges, as they had to hold frequent meetings with their distant campus counterparts to discuss the development of a consistent curriculum across campus program lines. Prior to this initiative, a college course in English at a branch campus consisted of a curriculum that was quite different from the curriculum of the English department on the “main” campus. Therefore, students that wished to transfer from other campuses often had to retake the English course at the “main” campus in order to receive recognized credits. In essence, this process seems counterproductive being that any degree granted by FHSU carries with it the FHSU name and seal with no mention of the campus affiliation. Additionally the merging of two previously non-affiliated majors of study through joint-degree programs often meant an extension rather than a condensing of the curriculum. Thus faculty comprising both programs of study in the joint degree option, often chose to keep their course curricula intact making the average length of study for such programs 6 years.

President B’s response to this problem was to delegate the responsibility of a more uniform curriculum to the administration of the individual colleges. With the creation of new buildings and the expansion of technology answering the question of “where” in reference to the aforementioned initiatives, the administration and faculty of the various colleges and campuses were responsible for the development of the “when, how, and why” and thus, conflict was inherent in the process of implementation.

Also within a decade or so, President B has managed to restructure FHSU through the development of several initiatives and offices linking the university with its constituency. Some units that were considered major units that were independently
operated and disconnected from each other, have been restructured in an effort to better serve the needs of the public. New administrative positions (i.e. Vice President of Community Affairs) as well as faculty committees (i.e. Faculty Committee on Community Affairs) were created to oversee these mergers and partnership models. Thus, such restructuring initiatives allowed for FHSU to become more engaged with its community through the development of partnerships (which increased opportunities for students and faculty) to address local needs.

*Improving educational quality.* With the development of these new and innovation joint degree programs, it seemed logical that changes and advancements in the educational quality of FHSU would follow. The “FHSU Community Initiative,” is an ongoing process which allows for consistent monitoring (through carefully developed assessments of learning outcomes) and improvement of the education that FHSU students and its constituents have come to expect. Considered a subset of the initiative to improve institutional quality, the “FHSU Community” Initiative attempts to bridge the university’s advancements in scholarship, service and research to the student experience (as lifelong learners and defined by President B as the nexus among student life, academic distinction and civic engagement) as it applies in the context of a diverse world. This is accomplished through streamlining curricula while ensuring coordination with the student experience, using technology to improve student learning, developing a culture in which students have a conscious awareness of self and how they can not only relate to the world, but initiate change.
Specifically, President B has focused on streamlining FHSU programs and operations so that these programs are consistent throughout the campuses by way of “matrix courses” that is, courses that are available on-line via the “FHSU On-line” virtual campus and accessible to all students for specific programs. Furthermore, President B restructured all of FHSU’s student-centered services. This consisted of: new policies and procedures regarding academic counseling, career advancement, health and wellness, recruitment and admissions. President B also issued a report called, *Transcending Global Boundaries: Forest Hills State University’s Far-Reaching Commitment to Diversity in the Academy*. In this report, President B outlined FHSU’s strategic plan to recruit and retain a diverse population of students and faculty by outlining several benchmarks in the recruitment and retention process, the creation of more avenues of research and exploration as it relates to multiculturalism and diversity through the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, and professional development opportunities for faculty to create an awareness of cultural differences so that they may be more receptive to the characteristics and needs of the student population. Although these benchmarks make suggestions for performance indicators, President B also left the development of these indictors to the individual colleges and campuses across the state further hindering autonomy within the university by not having a uniform measure of assessment.

*Funding of FHSU during difficult economic times.* Although FHSU receives little financial support from state appropriations, the institution is not shielded from the impact of reductions in state funding. Generally FHSU’s funding formula reflects a reciprocal relationship between state appropriations and tuition. Thus, if appropriations decrease,
tuition (which is the dominant source of funding for FHSU) will expectedly increase. This increase in tuition impedes President B’s engagement initiative in that increases in tuition generally impact the number of diverse students seeking admission to the university. Such a relationship is counterproductive to FHSU’s land grant mission.

However, policies enacted by the Board of Constituents in previous years led to preservation of FHSU assets over a long term period of time. Through philanthropic practices established over the years, FHSU has a very diversified endowment from public and private sources. Such practices have minimized the impact of the economy on FHSU. It should be noted that FHSU does not use any endowment to support its operating budget.

Addressing the lack of accessibility in light of increasing tuition, President B has called on philanthropy for the creation of scholarships and the creation of endowments by donors to support those students who would not be able to attend FHSU otherwise. However, President B has made it clear that these scholarships are not meant to be a one-time investment, rather it is to be sustainable. Again utilizing technology, President B has used the virtual world to connect with alumni and donors leading to an increase in contributions of approximately 4% within the last year.

In order to encourage donors, President B turned to the Office of Donor Relations as a means for prospective and current donors to acquire insight on how to maximize their contributions and, in some situations, even generate revenue for the donors themselves. This office explores various funding opportunities through the identification of beneficial aspects of economic downturn such as low-interest rates and the limitation of taxation on certain personal assets should those assets be transferred to FHSU.
With the restructuring of the FHSU physical plant as well as its corresponding programs, sustainability of these programs as well as advancements will undoubtedly require consistent financial support. Thus, President B initiated a new capital campaign, “For Our Future: Reaffirming FHSU’s Commitment to Society” and within the less than 5 years it has been in operation, it has already secured 80% of the total amount obtained by the previous capital campaign which lasted for 5 years. Such commitment is the direct result of an increase in outreach initiatives and specific objectives that President B has outlined.

The implementation of a university structure and programs coupled to the state’s public and private sectors, have allowed for President B to openly petition the state legislature, through various modes of communication, to limit current and future reductions in FHSU state funding. Citing the important contribution that FHSU makes to the state economy as well as nationally, President B notes that with over 50% of FHSU’s expenditures being for the citizens of the state, it would be impossible to spare them from any impact that further reductions will have on the university. Touting the major accomplishments of FHSU and illustrating specific examples in which FHSU has contributed to the state economy, President B has been able to portray a symbiotic relationship between the state and its land grant state institution. Thus, anything that would negatively impact the university would undoubtedly have a negative impact on the state economy. Addressing this issue further, President B has testified several times before the state legislature and held numerous private meetings with the state governor requesting no further reductions in state appropriations. To some, it may seem like these meetings were ineffective. Recently, the governor’s proposed budget called for a
reduction of funding to FHSU in excess of 15%. Such a reduction would make FHSU’s state appropriation the lowest in over a decade.

Although this budget is merely proposed, the Board of Constituents has responded with a series of policies and practices meant to minimize the impact of such a reduction in an attempt to retain the quality of FHSU’s institutional programs (of which tuition and state appropriations are the two principal sources of revenue). These policies include caps on salary, caps on basic operations costs, caps on the costs of employee services and benefits as well as delaying physical plant construction and expansion of services and limiting the allocations of endowments. Throughout this process, President B has done a commendable job of informing all members of the FHSU community (as well as the taxpayers of the state) of the current situation regarding FHSU’s state funding as well as justification for the actions the university administration will be implementing as a result of ailing state support.

President B’s campaign to (re) define the academe. Politically, President B felt that he has taken a rather controversial role in which he, speaking as a representative of other leaders in other state institutions, questions the concept of what it means to be a public university. Increases in costs resulting in competition for scarce resources and a lack of affordability in light of limited state support have caused public institutions to shift to the behaviors of their private counterparts especially when it comes to funding. Highlighting the fact that FHSU’s state government uses public funds to subsidize the state’s private institutions of higher education, resulting in appropriations greater than 50% of those given to the state’s public institutions, President B attempted to FHSU a critical blow to
the state legislature. Furthermore, he demonstrated that as a result, FHSU has had to rely on increased federal support for research, teaching and other programs while highlighting that FHSU now receives more funding from the federal government than it does from the state.

Privatization. In an attempt at resolution, President B offered several recommendations. First, he encouraged everyone in the community to lobby their state legislatures for more funding of their state institutions. Although President B openly acknowledged that this may be the least effective strategy, he outlines it as an important one nonetheless, considering that the response of the state legislature will dictate what these institutions must do next.

Anticipating that the state will give priority funding to other public needs deemed to be greater than higher education, President B proposed that public universities shift their paradigms of thought by redefining their institution’s missions regarding the commitment of a public institution to the greater community it serves and develop funding models based on relationships with the private sector in addition to using resources more efficiently. For FHSU, President B has outlined a series of strategic initiatives which focus on commercialization in the areas of research and outreach, continued investment in student-centered services, and an increased emphasis on external fund raising thus limiting the role of the state in its public universities while concomitantly promoting institutional autonomy.

The importance of a strong system of institutional governance. The call to shift paradigms in response to the state’s limited support of its public institutions created an
opportunity for President B to define a new paradigm which transferred the power once held by the state to the institution itself. President B outlined another initiative in which he calls for public institutions to restructure their often politically-oriented governing boards in a manner that limits the role of the state and hinders the decision-making process by basing decisions on political philosophy or commitments rather than on merit. Calling on institutions to restructure their systems of governance, systems that have been in place for quite a long time, requires a great deal of effort and commitment from the university.

President B outlined several specific characteristics, based on empirical data, which strengthen institutional governance. These include: increasing the size and diversity of those that comprise the governance structure (i.e. academic interests, representatives of business, industry, and political appointments) resulting in a more broadly-constituted system of governance. This would limit the influence and impact of state appointed membership which has resulted in the concept of an institutional one-sided governance decision-making mentality that relies heavily upon political affiliations or agendas. Comparatively, an increase in the size and diversity of an institution’s governance structure would serve to balance out multiple perspectives on governance and decision-making.

President B stated that he is aware that such an undertaking would result in a more complex role for the president. Citing that a larger and more diverse governance structure would be less predictable than their politically appointed, smaller counterparts and generate more opportunities for conflict, President B articulated that such conflict is not necessarily negative in that it would require a greater amount of effort, coordination
and understanding so that the administration can articulate any and all initiatives as clearly as possible. Additionally, this would align the university governance structure to the strategic, long-term goals of the institution in which it represents therefore, negating any political influences which often result in decision making practices that provide temporary solutions to long term dilemmas. Furthermore, it is the role of the president and university administration to ensure that the governance system has a thorough understanding of the various duties, responsibilities and the limitations of each.

Results of President B Interview

Expectations for the roles of the university presidency

President B has had a fairly long tenure at FHSU. When asked how he feels his role will change in the next few years he answered that he felt it would not change much during the years he has left as president. However, he does anticipate that his priorities are going to be different from year to year depending upon which initiatives emerge as well as budgetary considerations. President B then focused much of his answer on what he believes is the inevitable privatization of American Public Higher education.

About 8.5% of our total budget comes from legislative appropriations so we resemble a private university more and more. We will have an increased initiative in private fundraising like our private universities but I have been president long enough that I do not expect major changes being that we have already accomplished most of our major changes and are now only fine tuning and keeping up with things that have evolved” (President B interview, 2008).

President B articulated that policy and accountability mandates have not changed his role very much because FHSU has always been open and accountable to its constituencies. He felt that these unfunded mandates and disclosures take up more of his
time through various public statements, reports and speeches in an attempt to be more
publicly accountable.

Similarly, when asked about his understanding of the academic presidency as a
profession, President B stated:

Well it’s a combination of a leadership position and a management position. Some
people like to talk about it in one of those terms or another but I think there is
no escaping that it is both. A school like FHSU is a huge enterprise with a 4
billion/yr. budget. We write 43,000 paychecks a month. We have 1,700
buildings. It’s a big, complicated management challenge so there is a lot of that
to this job but universities are not like corporations and military organizations
where as the boss you tell people the way it is going to be and they go out and do
it. It is more consultative where everybody feels like they are owners of the
university and there are a lot of constituencies so in that respect it is a leadership
position because you have to work to keep people with you. You have to get
them to buy into the agenda, keep them informed. They have to feel like you are
making the progress with them and on their behalf and that’s the other side of the
job which is that you can’t have one without the other

When asked about the qualities a president should possess in order to accomplish
the above, President B responded with the term energy. This energy is best exemplified
through dedication to the position and not a matter of simply drifting through the job. A
president should use this energy to be social and outgoing, knowing that the nature of
their job is to engage with several various people. Additionally, President B felt that in
order to be successful a president needs to have a high tolerance for ambiguity and
differences of opinion in that the presidency faces a lot of external pressure and scrutiny.

When asked about which aspects of his job he finds most difficult, President B
acknowledged that government relations was the most difficult part of his job. “It is not
my kind of thing and I do it because I have to and I do not derive a lot of pleasure out of
it” (President B, interview, 2008). By government relations, President B was referring to
both state and federal, noting that he often goes “down there” just to play the “political
game.”
Going down there you are playing the political game and you are in an environment down there where there’s a lot of stuff going on. You talk about ethics and I am not comfortable with the way business is done by some politicians so you are always having to walk a line between how much am I going to play that game and or how much won’t I. Or the lobbyists that want FHSU to work for them or want my endorsement for something or show up for an event that will benefit them. There are a lot of judgment calls in there. So government relations is difficult and not something I would warm up to any time soon.

Conversely, the most rewarding parts of President B’s job are the things that he can do with students. Referring to his interaction with the students as the “fun part” of his job, President B felt that his interaction with students helps him maintain his focus on why he does what he does and how important it is for him to make a difference for all of the students.

**Leadership**

When asked about his personal leadership style, President B commented that his style was somewhat unique aside from the leadership and management dichotomy he described previously. He refused to give his style a name or associate it with any theoretical constructs. Additionally, President B did not feel that his style was reflective of a mentor. Everything he learned as president which eventually became a part of his leadership style was learned by “keeping my antennae up and seeing people’s strengths and weaknesses and seeing the good and the bad that people do” (President B, interview, 2008). In other words, he has learned most of what he knows about leadership through the mistakes and accomplishments of others. When asked what he felt makes a situation problematic, President B responded:

I think there are 2 ways in which things pop up on the radar screen as a problem. First, things that by my value system are not right and I do not like what I see and I define it as a problem and then there are a lot of things that I don’t see any issue but someone else sees it as a problem and so it now becomes my problem. For example, we have a particular space issue right now. There is a space on campus that in my opinion is grossly underused. It is under the control of a
particular unit in the university, several thousand square feet of space and they use it a little bit but it is my opinion that it is the most underused space on campus. Now that unit is not complaining about nor are other units because they don’t know the space is there or they know it is not theirs. I’m thinking this is a problem because everyone is short on space. So I say we need to put that space to use but I get into a lot of politics from different units. Now, if I’m the only one that thinks that’s a problem. Now there are other things that pop up. It’s in my mail every day. People tell me “you’ve got a problem with this faculty member or this dean.” I look at the issue and say that the writer’s a crackpot and there is nothing wrong and we handled the problem exactly right but because somebody’s mad about it and making noise about it and is threatening to make a bigger deal out of it now I have to deal with that person. So, [there are] two ways in which it could happen.

Throughout his long tenure as president of FHSU, President B also stated that some problems that he has had to deal with seem to be recycled from year to year. The most common problems seem to center around race relations, sexual identity and gender issues as well as the problems that arise from different factions within colleges and departments. “You have theorists against the applied folks or it’s the cultural studies verses the traditional literature folks. Many disciplines have their own version of that so in any university people are very passionate about these kinds of things and there are many platforms in which to let them play out” (President B, interview, 2008).

**Perceived Impact of Personal Values on Professional Decision-Making**

When asked how he defines and identifies ethics and ethical behavior, President B could not provide a distinct answer. He said, “It’s actually a murky area because what one person thinks is ethical somebody else doesn’t” (President B, interview, 2008). He expanded on this by saying that to some presidents ethics and ethical behavior are an operational issue and not one that would provoke deep thought. Regarding his own ethical constructs, President B said:

Frankly, I don’t spend much time thinking about ethics or what’s ethical. I am kind of led by my own moral compass so it’s like what the Supreme Court justice
said about pornography. “I cannot quite define it but when I see it I’ll know it.” Everybody has a value system on certain issues and we know when we have gotten up to that line and say we won’t cross it. We talked earlier about governmental affairs. There are things that other university presidents will do when they are dealing with politicians and I draw the line in a very different place. I just won’t do it. I just don’t want to go there and you see it in athletics. There are a lot of gray areas in making decisions about student athletes and recruiting and I set the bar very high for [FHSU] in terms of any rule breaking, infractions. I want us to have the cleanest program possible. If we are start getting into that zone then I will do something about it whereas other universities would just turn the other way. So each person kind of has to decide. Now if I look at the president’s cabinet or my council then we are mostly on the same wavelength on these things but occasionally we have things that we do debate and I think in an area like that the president can set the tone so people know I won’t approve of that so they don’t head down that road. This morning I had a meeting with the V.P. who felt that there was something in their area that wasn’t looking good and it was very uncomfortable for them and myself but many others felt that what was happening was just fine and it falls in that gray area and I do not want to be in that gray area. It is not that anyone has done anything illegal it is just that we do not like the way things look there to us. It just does not feel right. So we see it as something of an ethical issue or an issue of propriety. Is it proper?

Additionally, when asked to discuss his personal values, President B went immediately to his upbringing. Talking about growing up in a poor family, President B has grown up with an increased awareness of financial management. He stated that he is “uncomfortable spending money on things you don’t have to spend money on” (President B, interview, 2008). He then illustrated an example of whether or not to fly first-class. “Why pay $4,000 when I can pay $1,000? It’s not really my money so I don’t think it’s right….I guess it is a bit of an ethical decision in that you operate with a value system about how lavish a lifestyle should you or somebody else be leading” (President B, interview, 2008).

The greatest amount of time spent during the interview consisted of President B creating and explaining hypothetical situations and talking them through as if it were a real dilemma. He first began with issues of student misconduct.

So a student screws up something badly. Should we kick them out, give them probation or say boys will be boys what do we care? Where some of those things
The reason an issue turns into an ethical issue is when you play favorites and say things like “oh well that is a football player so we better let him off the hook.” So you get into an ethical issues like are you treating everybody fairly. Well what if you say, “well if they are an athlete then they should be held to a higher standard.” So to me, I guess that ethics, values and policies all kind of merge together and you know we’ve got tens of thousands of people with different circumstances so when do you decide to make an exception to the rule because of the circumstances. Some will say that is not ethical and everyone should be treated alike but you may feel that the rules say that I have some discretion to decide and so you can say that you will take a risk on this kid and they may turn out to be all right.

Secondly, when discussing faculty issues President B asked:

If a faculty member makes a mistake when do you charge them with a crime because technically you can verses when do bring them in and counsel them and say, “look I know you are doing some bad stuff but how can we get you to turn this around and get better?” There’s a lot of judgment calls.

Expanding on his decision-making process or as President B refers to them as judgment calls, he outlined his decision-making process as a series of progressive steps with the first being the acquisition of facts and knowledge through collaborating with professionals within areas in which the dilemma is evident. After gathering all the necessary people the team works through the process of solving the problem and President B serves only as a mediator. President B made it perfectly clear that he rarely interjects during the deliberation process nor does he overrule what the team decides. “If you don’t support the system 99% of the time then everyone in the system is going to be frustrated and say, “who cares what we do if the president is going to do whatever he decides”” (President B, interview 2008).

Since entering the academic presidency as a profession, President B stated that he did not think that his underlying values had changed over time.

I don’t think my underlying values have changed. I think over time you become more tolerant, flexible a little more “oh here we go again. I have seen that before.” Crises that pop up don’t seem like they are that big like when I was younger or less experienced. By this point I have kind of seen everything and you know the world is not going to come to end over it. So you still pay attention to it but the tension level may not be quite as great.
These virtues of tolerance and flexibility were developed through President B’s involvement in numerous national projects and the various types of interactions he has had with members of other universities and becoming involved with different groups over time.

**Perceived Impact of Internal and External Variables of Context on Decision-Making**

When asked about how the interrelated variables of budgeting, curriculum, social and political contexts, pressure from interest groups, laws, policies, and regulations impact his decision-making and management of the university, President B said:

There’s a lot in that question. First, a president should know better than to initiate anything regarding curriculum. That is that faculty’s golden egg. Taking our budget as an example, I would never tell the faculty how to streamline their programs. I would tell them that they have to streamline. There’s a big difference in those two perspectives. I’ve been here long enough to know what we as a university are capable of. Pressure from interest groups has no bearing on my decision-making….None at all.

When asked about accountability, President B answered that he was accountable to the people of the university and himself. “At the end of the day, I am the one responsible for the decisions and choices made for and by the university. Knowing that I have done the best I can is what lets me sleep at night” (President B, interview, 2008).
Case Study III

Riverside State University

Institutional Profile

Riverside State University is considered the flagship university for the state’s unique system of public higher education. Also a land grant university, RSU has over 5,000 academic faculty, more than 40,000 undergraduate students, and more than 12,000 graduate students throughout its many campuses. Often considered to be at the forefront of many research initiatives, RSU has received several national and international recognitions with the most recent being in green technology. RSU has over 10 colleges and schools with over 100 major areas of study.

Governance Structure

Governance of Riverside State University resides with one governance board, named for the purpose of this study to be the Board of Relations. This board consists of approximately 20 members with less than half appointed directly by the governor of the state. The profiles of the other members range from students to local and national entrepreneurs and policy analysts. The president of Riverside State University is considered an ex-officio member of the Board of Relations although in some cases, his authority may supersede any decision that the board has made.

Sources of Funding

Within the last 10 years, the entire state has undergone radical reform in higher education. With the creation of a state system of higher education, it was imperative that relations between the state and those of the state universities be a cooperative one. After
several years of collaboration and conflict, the state was able to create this new system which includes Riverside State University. Unlike the other universities in this study, Riverside State University has not seen any drastic budget cuts from the state although it should be noted that there has been a steady decrease in state appropriations from year to year. Working with a budget of approximately $4 billion dollars for the 2008-09 fiscal year, ($600 million of which comes from state appropriations), Riverside State University is able to capitalize on its national reputation and research agendas to generate additional revenue. Riverside State University has also had two successful capital campaigns within the last 10 years and currently has an endowment of approximately $2.5 billion.

Expenditures at the Riverside State University for the 2008-09 fiscal year totaled slightly less than $4 billion with approximately $120 billion, $400 million, $150 million, $200 million, and $100 billion directed towards instruction, research, civic engagement, scholarships, and medical buildings, respectively. Additional research expenditures performed under the various foundations and corporate enterprises account for an additional $700 million in expenditures.

**Strategic Plan**

With most of the university’s strengths and weaknesses identified throughout the restructuring process of creating a statewide system of higher education, Riverside State has used this information to supplement its strategic plan to include many programs and initiatives that are considered transinstitutional in scope and opportunity. This means that most of the policy initiatives focus on bridging gaps and creating opportunities that serve to enhance the state system of higher education as a whole and not just one particular institution. As the flagship university of the state, Riverside State University has focused
particular attention to the creation and collaboration of various academic programs and research departments on a local, state, federal and international level.

**Profile of President C**

Although not coming from an academic background, President C is the president with the longest tenure as an academic president found in this study although not all at one particular institution. Serving in the office of president for greater than 5 years, President C brings with him a wealth of experience in the realms of success, conflict and controversy. President C shares a positive relationship with the governor and other representatives of the state which allows for the expeditious accomplishment of many initiatives both local and broad in size and scope.

*Improving institutional quality.* President C asked that each college create a comprehensive, strategic plan in the following areas: financial sustainability, technological advancement, diversity of faculty, staff, and students, a facility consolidation plan, and a capital investment plan. These programs may be reviewed yearly by the specific department, across departments or even across colleges. President C felt that this was important because such flexibility would permit for more autonomy across the university.

Regarding accountability, President C recommended a data-driven process with benchmarks and measurable outcomes to determine progress yearly. This would ensure that all projects and goals remain aligned with the university’s overall objectives as well as identify problems and concerns that are university wide and not just college specific.
This process allows for President C to establish and implement new policy procedures for those particular areas of concern.

Such a project was not without critics. Several op-ed pieces in the local and university newspaper referred to President C as a micromanager and the state governor’s puppet. Many felt that President C gave the illusion of responsibility and power to the colleges to develop their own plans when he in fact gave them the specific plan and expected compliance. Any college that attempted to deviate from the outlined plan was quickly reprimanded by the president and the governing board and one college had its budget temporarily frozen.

It has been approximately 2 years since the project was implemented and the result has been fairly positive. Reports from the colleges are submitted yearly and combined into one full report for the governor’s office. In the governor’s report are recommendations for short-term and long-term initiatives. Most of these recommendations and requests are granted. It should be noted that the governor’s report exceeds 700 pages and the contents are very specific leaving little, if any, need for clarification or questions. This report is also released to public view on the university website other digital media such as social networking sites.

Improving educational quality. Understanding that there have been at least 6 reform attempts targeted specifically for educational quality at Riverside State University, President C strongly feels that a more concrete system of accountability should be established in order to monitor progress towards his predetermined objectives. In a “back to basics” approach, President C outlined a structure that he recommended all colleges
adopt. In this outline, called “The Accountability Project”, President C diagramed how colleges should establish goals that are in line with his strategic objectives and the overall mission of the university. This hierarchical diagram includes elements such as the Overall Education Plan of the University, College 5-year strategic plans, department strategic plans aimed at enhancing curriculum and diversity, assessments through program and college reviews by an appointed Area Coordinator, and a performance assessment of administration which includes the dean, vice provost, provost and chancellor. Furthermore, the project outlined specific time periods for objectives to be met, overviews of resources and funding needs, and integration of program, department and university goals.

*Funding of RSU during difficult economic times.* In several documents, memos and speeches to the community, President C has remained steadfast on the concepts of innovation and careful investing to counteract the current negative effect of the economic climate on institutions of higher education. Unlike most public institutions, Riverside State University has the financial support of the state legislature having spent over $200 million for programs in higher education relating to innovations in science and technology over the 2008-2009 fiscal year. President C used this opportunity to link these innovation programs from the university to the state community through economic development opportunities such as the development of major research centers and programs that targeted all demographics.

In additional memos to the university and external community, President C has openly praised the governor and state legislatures for their continuing support of higher
education. In addition, President C has stated that he will continue to work closely with the state to ensure that Riverside State University holds an important role in the future of the state’s economy. For the 2009-2010 academic year, Riverside State University has actually seen an increase in state appropriations and President C acknowledges that now the state’s higher education institutions must deliver on their promise to educate as a means of investing in jobs and a better quality of life.

Results of President C Interview

Expectations for the roles of the university presidency

When asked how he felt the role of the university president has changed, President C responded, “Presidents are now doing what they were hired to do” (President C, interview, 2009). When asked to elaborate further, President C continued, “This is an unprecedented time in higher education. Everyone talks about how education is the key to a successful life and yet no…not many people seem to want to invest in that concept. Presidents must now apply their personal sense of scholarship and entrepreneurial skills to get them to buy into investing in the future” (President C, interview, 2009). Expanding on this idea of the president’s changing role, President C acknowledged that the support he has from the state government has been critical to maintaining the university. Thinking ahead and articulating the vision for the university amid limited resources is the reality in which President C operates but he does so in collaboration with state officials and, therefore, feels his role has gone from figurehead and coach to more of a team player.

President C’s understanding of the university president’s role as a profession indicates a proportional relationship to external constituencies such as the federal government, state government, and university board; all of which issue mandates based
on financial appropriations. President C shared that the need to restructure the state’s public universities had been addressed for many years and that implementation of a plan “….was only a matter of time and opportunity. You cannot make someone believe that something needs to be fixed until they can see it is broken for themselves” (President C, interview, 2009). In his eyes, President C now sees his presidency as one that requires “great patience, depth, knowledge, and articulation” (President C, interview, 2009).

When asked about vision, President C articulated that his vision was lost when the state system was created. Although he felt more than capable to upholding RSU’s goals and mission, he felt as if his position had been relegated from visionary to implementor. Still, “having some input into the creation of new policy and mandates is better than none at all, I suppose” (President C, interview, 2009).

President C proudly spoke of the achievements of distinguished faculty, staff and students at RSU. He viewed these accomplishments in scholarship, research, teaching and service as actions that not only strengthen the institution’s identity but also his role. “We continue to produce first-rate advancements in research, teaching and volunteerism. We do not keep this within our walls. We have outreach that extends beyond states, countries and oceans. No one could ever dispute that we must be doing something right if we continue to produce results” (President C, interview, 2009). Still, when asked what he found most difficult about the presidency, he answered:

I have sometimes found it difficult to deal with external political constituencies. I am very comfortable dealing with the campus community, I don’t mean everyone is always on agreement with everything, it is much more complicated than that. Faculty, staff, students, alumni, so I am also comfortable with many of its external constituencies but I struggle with, I struggle with the political arena. I struggle with…the politics and the ummm…hardball politics that I sometimes have to play here in the state. That for me is the most difficult part of my job.
Conversely, the most rewarding aspects of the presidency according to President C involve the mediation of conflict:

I love working with constituencies within the RSU community in all manner of issues even ones that are more complicated….where people don’t agree. I find that rewarding that if you can bring a measure of agreement to an area where there was disagreement or you make progress to a goal that is contested about which there is a struggle. I find that very…I am proud to say that I find that very, very rewarding. For example, we significantly reorganized undergraduate education in our main campus. I had a great deal to do with that and feel very proud. I didn’t do it single-handedly don’t get me wrong but since then we have simply transformed alumni relations but projects like that will significantly transform our communications, how we communicate and tell our story is much differently and better than it was 5 years ago. Those are the kinds of accomplishments that I feel very proud of.

Leadership

President C does not feel that he models or favors any one particular leadership style. He described his style as one which consists of many components. Furthermore, every component is somehow related to his vision. His leadership style is dependent upon the vision he must communicate to others. For example:

I don’t have a name for it. I take the vision thing very seriously. I work hard, for example I work very hard on my annual address to the university community and then making sure that it isn’t just a one day speech but the challenges and objectives that I set are widely communicated and worked on by the university community. I do take pride in giving a good speech but if it is just a good speech it is forgotten by the end of the afternoon. But the setting for the vision that inspires people and actually causes them to work on certain things during the year ahead- that is very rewarding.

President C spent a considerable amount of time talking through the process of how he identifies and resolves problems. When asked how he defined and identified whether an issue was a problem which entailed his involvement, President C stated:

Okay well, I mean there’s a whole…there’s a whole ummm…raft of things that I am dealing with continuously not necessarily because they are problems but because they are the responsibility of the president. A day doesn’t go by when I am not involved in one way or another with fundraising. A day doesn’t go by when I am not involved in the recruitment and retention of outstanding leaders for the university. There are dozens of subjects that are on my plate because it is part of what I have to do as president. There are communications with key
constituents, meetings with members of my administration to make sure we are on the same page with the goals we are achieving, meetings with business and civic leaders, and meetings with legislators. None of these are necessarily problems, but the president has to be continuously engaged in certain activities with key people.

When asked to elaborate on his statement, President C articulated that a problem related to being the president is that there was not enough time in the day to effectively deal with problems. Therefore, he felt that he cannot spend time proactively anticipating problems rather than being reactive.

Things come to my attention because they haven’t been able to be solved in a lower level in the org or because they have suddenly become very visible and problematic. So things get to my attention because they are routinely and rightly part of my job or because they flare up and require presidential attention. Now this brings me to something else I want to make clear. Ummm… I could spend my whole day, everyday answering email, responding to phone calls, meeting with people, answering letters, doing dutiful stuff and there is a certain amount that I have to do but if that’s all you do then the big visionary goals that I mentioned before don’t get achieved. You’ve gotten through the day. You’ve answered your email, phone calls and what was asked of you but you have not changed the university. It is no better at 5 p.m. than it was at 8 a.m. So I have a very extensive system for me of keeping tabs on the big goals so that I know that I am working on that and I can’t just say, whew, I got through the day and I am still president. That’s good. That would be a miserable approach to leadership.

Similarly, when asked if he felt he was able to identify problems before they escalated into crisis, President C provided the following insight:

Sometimes yes, sometimes no. After something has escalated…sometimes yes you can see something building. You can look around the corner so to speak and see that if certain steps are taken then this can really be a mess. And you can head off, you can figure out a way to head off or figure out a way to limit the damage. Other times, you fail to do that and something comes up and you say, geez if only I had focused on that or anticipated this or had paid attention that that warning signal 2 weeks ago maybe I could have prevented this. Nobody is smart enough to always prevent the problems but there certainly are some that are…if only we had done A,B, and C then it would not have gotten this bad. Now we have to do catch up or whatever. I don’t think anyone is smart enough or good enough to anticipate every problem but you should…I mean one way of measuring a leader is to measure the crises averted- things that did not go wrong. But there’s a skill involved in having things not go wrong or minimizing the number of things that goes wrong and that is not a very visible part of leadership. I mean the fact that the faculty didn’t go on strike, the students didn’t chain themselves to the radiators, so that’s important.
Regarding the resolution of problems, President C felt that problems are best solved using a team-based approach. This approach involved identifying key people to participate in the discussion, presenting his point of view on the problem at hand to the team members and listening to the dialogue that results. President C acknowledged that the team approach is necessary because there are people with different levels of expertise and knowledge of the issue of whom he may not readily be aware. Toward the end, President C recaps all that he has heard, redefines the problem based on the discussion and presents what he feels are compelling statements made by the team to resolve the problem.

**Perceived Impact of personal values on professional decision-making**

Within the context of his role, President C defined ethics and ethical behavior into separate components. Beginning with ethical behavior, President C stated:

Well I think that as president you have to model really good and ethical behavior and that means at least 2 things. It means insuring that you yourself and the institution are in full compliance with the rules, regulations, laws, expectations and the like. But it also means a kind of innate commitment in all circumstances to doing the right thing and in many cases the right thing isn’t written down. These are means far more than just obeying the law and abiding by the regulations, complying with the requirements. Of course we will do all that. Although it is not easy with 1000 requirements to make sure an institution this big is doing it you just have to commit to doing it and if you screw it up, you admit it and fix it.

Modeling ethical behavior is important to President C. During the interview, he provided anecdotes where other presidents have not modeled ethical behavior. As a result, that behavior resulted in either termination from the presidency or the loss of respect from the faculty of their institutions.

Although President C separated ethical behavior from ethics in his initial response he does not view the two as mutually exclusive.

But then it is also consulting your own conscious and doing the right thing and that sounds so easy but all of the difficult issues that reach me are such close calls, like 51-49, it’s not always obvious that the right thing to do is x or the wrong thing to do is y. In fact it is usually not obvious at all. If it were just a matter of determining to do what is right and just you know pick the right thing every time it would be a lot easier to be president.

When asked to provide an example, President C commented:
One thing we confront every spring is with the state’s development of its budget do we umm... work exclusively behind the scenes with people in the governor’s office or the legislature to kind of tweak the budget in a way that improves it for RSU or do we mount a medium or full size campaign calling on students, faculty, alumni, parents to lobby the legislature to do what we want. Well, there is no right answer to that question. There are some in some circumstances where one works better and people disagree. There’s a core of students every spring that think we ought to be out there protesting on the steps of the state capital and sometimes that is the right thing to do and sometimes that isn’t. So right and wrong is not always black and white.

Along those lines, when President C was asked how often he used ethics in his decision-making, he responded that he believed all of his decisions are ethical. When discussing things with his team all choices seem to prefer a certain ethic over another. “We are not contemplating doing something unethical. We are in deliberation among difficult choices, all of which are ethical and so the question becomes, “Which is better for our institution?” (President C, interview, 2009). Understanding that the final decision is ultimately his responsibility, President C acknowledged that he would not make any decisions without consulting with at least one other person.

When asked about his personal values, President C felt that his personal values were closely aligned with the values of the institution. Touting a strong belief in the power of public education and the need for greater investment to expand opportunities to students of various demographics, he also explained that sometimes these personal values come into conflict with each other.

For example the value of academic excellence can be at odds with the value of educational opportunity. If the state cuts the budget I have to make a decision about how big a tuition increase to recommend to the board. There has to be a tuition increase because the state has cut our budget and our programs will be badly hurt if there is not a tuition increase but here’s where academic excellence and educational opportunity are potentially at odds. If it is a 5% tuition increase we don’t have all we need to maintain the quality of our programs but we probably haven’t shoved too many students out of the door. If it’s a 20% tuition increase I have lots more money to take care of the quality of our academic
programs but a lot of our students are not going to be able to come back to school. Now here are two really good values. On one hand, academic excellence. Who’s going to be oppose to that? On the other hand, educational opportunity. Who’s going to oppose that? They don’t always work hand in hand. So you do a lot of research, figure out how much tuition revenue will generate and what you can do with it, how many students will need more financial aid and if you have access to that additional aid and at the end of the day you come out with an 8% increase. So you see that values you hold dear can be in conflict with each other. You have to figure out a way to maintain as much as both of them as you can.

Since entering the presidency, President C did not feel that his values have changed. Rather, “earlier in the presidency I had to realize how to attain goals that are reflective of these values” (President C, interview, 2009). An example that President C gave was:

I mean if I spend $10,000 to raise the salary of faculty member whom would otherwise leave to go to Harvard, that is $10,000 less that I have to spend on a class for students although he is not teaching any better or any more than he had before. Now, keeping him or her from going to Harvard is a good thing but there are those that would disagree. But teaching those courses with that $10,000 would be a good thing too but I can’t spend it twice. So it would be nice if you are always working to attain all your values but one good value can be realized only at the expense of another good value and I do not think I’m a bad person because I only incompletely upheld that second value. I made a choice among good values.

Perceived Impact of Internal and External Variables of Context on Decision-Making

President C believes that he is accountable to many constituencies and these constituencies influence his decision-making. First, he is accountable to the governing board of the university. Another, and the most important to President C, is the faculty of the university. “You cannot be a successful president without the support of the faculty.” Additionally, although he believes these groups are transient President C is also accountable to students and alumni. Finally, as a state university, President C believes
that he is accountable to the state and he acknowledged that this sense of accountability
was the least relevant to his position.

This sense of accountability has had an impact on presidency of President C. “I’m
a lot more aware of the scrutiny we are under, the expectations people have for us. People
think a university president is very powerful and there is some truth to that but the
amount of attention that comes with it is very high. I’m in the spotlight. I’m the goldfish
in the clear bowl.”
Case Study IV

Rolling Ridges University

Institutional Profile

Rolling Ridges University (RRU) is an ivy league, private university with a land grant mission and therefore unique in regards to this study. RRU is one of the top research universities in the United States and has consistently ranked within the top 5 for privately secured fundraising. The university has approximately 12 colleges and schools, some of which are funded through contractual obligations with the state. RRU has approximately 3,000 faculty and more than 15,000 students at the undergraduate, graduate and professional level.

Governance Structure

The Board of Trustees is comprised of approximately 60 members with 10 appointed by the state legislature. The trustees preside primarily over the fiduciary responsibilities of the university. Ultimate governance of the university resides with the Board of Trustees.

The president is the chief executive officer and presides over all affairs of the university. The president is elected by the Board of Trustees and serves as an ex-officio member of all faculties and committees. The president also has several vice presidents and staff that report directly to him regarding different areas of the university.

Under the Office of the President is The Office of Academics. This office has an overseer called the Academic Success Officer. The role of this office is to oversee all the academic programs of RRU with the exception of the professional schools, each of which have their own Academic Success Officer.
Sources of Funding

For the 2007-08 fiscal year, RRU recorded approximately $3 billion in revenues and just under $2.5 billion in expenditures. Appropriations from the state accounted for $250,000 and tuition and fees accounted for about $700,000 for revenues. Unlike many public state universities RRU has managed to sustain support for its various colleges through state appropriations however in recent years a notable decline has been observed. The remaining revenues were generated through philanthropic donations as well as external sponsored grants and programs.

Wages and salaries accounted for most of RRU’s expenditures totaling just under $1.8 million and the remaining expenditures went to either the purchasing of land for future expansion projects or miscellaneous technical and professional services. Most of RRU’s support for research comes from federal grants which are estimated to be at 60% while state, commercial, foundation, and RRU resources account for approximately 10%, 6%, 10% and 14% respectively. Within the last 5 years RRU has relied on its own resources to fund the institution’s research activities. Most of this was accomplished through the use of funds from the university’s multi-billion dollar endowment.

Strategic Plan

RRU had a strategic plan in place prior to the arrival of President D. Growing economic concerns both in the state and federal arenas, however, have caused a fundamental shift in priorities for RRU. Therefore the strategic plan is now undergoing major revisions to reflect this shift. Late in 2008, President D his task force produced a report called, Envisioning the Future: Rolling Ridges University at the Crossroads. This report represented the culmination of over a year’s worth of work done by internal and
external agencies which identified the areas of strength and weakness within financial, structural and educational conditions of RRU. The report focuses on the aforementioned arenas of the institution and couples them to the current economic, social engagement and personal achievements. In essence, the report calls for a restructuring of the institutional culture. The report focuses on both the short and long term investment of human and financial capital in an attempt to create awareness of the importance of higher education on a national and global scale.

President D has stated that RRU’s unique status as a private institution with a public, land grant mission requires the university to develop a new mission that is coupled to that status. To achieve this, President D has called to combine RRU’s standards and expectations for excellence with a more open and collaborative culture through the development of innovative programs in the hard sciences, social sciences and the arts. Since these new initiatives are just being developed, implemented, evaluated and adjusted accordingly, President D has also called for a strong system of internal and external measures of accountability and assessment with particular attention to the areas of technology, access, globalization, and retirement and replacement of faculty.

The result was a report with four key goals and strategies. The first goal focused on enhancing the educational quality of the faculty, staff and students through the continued financial support of those programs and colleges with notable reputations around the world while focusing on the development of interdisciplinary programs in areas of great social concern such as economics and energy. It is believed that such a focus will permit RRU to enhance the quality and reputation of its programs through
coordinated and tactical recruitment of faculty to meet the anticipated demand that will arise as a result of faculty retirement within the next 10 years.

The second goal addressed access for all students regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity. Understanding that the government has not been able to meet the needs of the increasing costs of a quality education, President D felt that RRU must rely heavily on the private donations of the alumni and the endowment fund of the university to help need-based students finance their education with as little debt as possible. Therefore, President D has worked with another committee to develop a new financial aid award strategy that is reflective of RRU’s recruitment and enrollment policies at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Furthermore, President D called for close supervision and interaction with the college deans through external evaluations of any given curriculum, requirements for teaching courses and realistic teaching load in an attempt to develop appropriate means of assessment for student performance while enhancing the administration and organization of the undergraduate and graduate programs.

The third goal calls for greater collaboration across the various disciplines found in the university. Such collaborations in conjunction with the university’s outreach and extension programs would develop a modern definition to the land-grant mission of the university by reaffirming the university’s commitment to serve the needs of the public and prepare its citizenry for participation and competition in a globalized economy.

The remaining goals focused on measures of accountability to ensure stability and sustainability regarding new policies and procedures. Specifically the report suggests assigning particular university administrators with the responsibility of performing
continual risk assessments and establishing accountability measures for financial, security and educational operations within the university.

**Profile of President D**

Having served as president of RRU for just under 3 years and serving as a president in another institution for just one year before assuming the presidency of RRU, President D is the president with the fewest years of administrative experience in this study. President D spent most of his life as an accomplished professional in a highly respected field in the sciences and has gained notoriety as a man who understands and appreciates the contributions of the sciences and the arts. It is this balance that makes President D well-respected and liked throughout the university and the greater community. To date, he has not received any extensively negative press and there have been no major controversial issues that he has had to preside over. President D has raised more than $2 billion in two years through RRU’s capital campaign; a record for that institution.

In addition to his presidential responsibilities, President D also holds academic professorships in two RRU colleges. Unlike his counterparts, President D teaches a course within both of these colleges in the fall and spring term. President D can often be found casually conversing with students on campus or walking the campus while listening to music. President D has been quoted as stating that student engagement in dialogue is one of the cornerstones of any presidency and he exemplifies this quite well.

Similarly, President D maintains a positive relationship with the local and state government. As expressed by President D in articles and memos, both the president and the governor of the state have committed to developing programs that meet and exceed
the needs of the state and hopefully set a precedent for other institutions both nationally and abroad.

_Improving institutional and educational quality._ Working with the governor and members of the state legislature, President D initiated several new partnerships in areas such as housing, transportation, and the environment with local and state businesses in an attempt to diversify the state economy. For example, with regard to housing and transportation, President D formed a committee to determine ways in which RRU’s Master Plan can align with the county’s future plans for development. Similarly, this committee has also explored ways in which affordable housing incentives can be made to employees of the university. Taking this one step further, President D guaranteed to provide money annually to the implementation of these initiatives.

With his commitment to sustainable practices, President D has placed RRU at the forefront of green/sustainable energy. With the support of the federal government through numerous grants, RRU has become one of the top research universities in the United States for bio-fuels, green technology, agribusiness, and renewable energy. The results of this research have led to several patents and technological advancements on a global scale.

_Funding of University during difficult economic times._ Although a private institution, RRU has not been immune to the economic crisis. With strong support for higher education from the state governor, President D has focused on the institutional expertise of the faculty, staff and alumni to determine which actions should be taken in response to
the current economic climate. Overall, President D expected to face a budget cut of approximately $50 million with a majority of those cuts pertaining to the endowed and state-assisted colleges of the university. Therefore, procedures were implemented to streamline operations while redirecting resources to programs that President D felt are research “hotspots” and would potentially generate the most interest and revenue for the university. As a result, several programs were cut across the colleges and all but one of the academic departments were restructured. Despite these cuts, President D remained true to his word that there would be no layoffs of any university employee. He also instituted a hiring freeze for all non-professional staff as a way of saving money so that the university could recruit top scholars and researchers.

In addition, President D implemented a temporary construction pause and a very thorough two-month university-wide review of operational effectiveness through an outside agency to determine areas of cost savings to optimize the use of university resources. To aid in this process, the president also held a series of open-forum meetings with the community to update them on the agency’s findings as well as suggested changes.

To offset any major decreases in funding, President D has focused a majority of his time to fundraising. Despite the downward trends of the economy, President D has been able to secure record numbers of donations within the last year. The president has established a committee under the supervision of the chief financial officer to identify specific areas of investment. These investments have led to a highly diversified portfolio in which the university is in a stronger position than most institutions nationally to weather the storm of economic uncertainty.
Results of President D Interview

Expectations for the roles of the university presidency

The interview with President D was somewhat surprising in that President D comprised the least amount of total interview time (43 minutes) with the president providing very succinct answers to the questions. When asked what changes President D anticipated his response was focused on the demand for external sources of funding and streamlining procedures, offices and policies. Additionally, when asked how policy and accountability mandates have changed his role, President D felt as though “a president’s role supersedes policy sometimes…[with] accountability mandates met depending on who demands them” (President D, interview, 2009).

When asked about attributes a president in today’s institutions of higher education should possess, President D responded with:

Well….a president must be able to adapt to their surrounds, always represent the university to the best of his or her ability at all times, and create an environment conducive to learning and generating new knowledge.

The necessity for adaptability is not an easy one to accept as President D explained that the most difficult aspects of his presidency center around dispersing limited funds and resources among so many excellent, world-renowned programs and departments. Such choices are never made lightly and oftentimes President D mentioned that he felt that his university had become a pay-based-on-performance corporation with those programs that produce the best results (publicly for the institution) being financially rewarded. Despite that, President D feels humbled that he is a part of globally-respected university that is a major contributor to the world economy and finds this to be the most rewarding aspect of his presidency.
Leadership

On the subject of leadership, President D described his leadership style:

My leadership style is simple: watch and learn. We have so many intellectuals here that most of the time they teach me. My style involves letting them do what they do best, create. I will handle the paperwork so to speak. I suppose I am like their research assistant! [laughs].

More often than not, President D likened his role to one of a manager or CEO of a corporation in which his job responsibilities entailed ensuring that all “pieces of the university run smoothly, effectively and in unison with each other” (President D, interview, 2009).

When asked what he believes makes a situation problematic enough to require his involvement, President D said:

When I am asked to intercede, it is usually something that has already been labeled as a problem which means it has made it to the newspapers or even the local or national news. At that point, it is usually something or someone that has been so wronged that it justifies a public outcry. Those responsible for responding to the situation perhaps did so in an inefficient manner or perhaps they handled it efficiently and it was not to another’s satisfaction. So I would say the situation becomes problematic when those responsible for the situation feel the solution does not reflect the cause appropriately or vice versa….

Furthermore, when asked how problems are identified, President D continued by stating:

For the most part, the administrative arm of this university has been fairly good at communicating to me about potential issues, law suits and the like. I always encourage them to make sure they save and document everything. Crisis occurs when administration fails to account for their actions in a timely and appropriate manner. By that time, it becomes my issue.

When asked if he used a specific approach regarding the analysis of a problem, President D outlined the following process:

I attempt to speak with those involved about the origins of the problem. With them, we analyze the responses made or not made and come to a conclusion as to whether we failed to address the problem or if we addressed it to the quality and standings reflective of the university and our written procedures. My point in doing it this way is to ensure that everyone has a clear understanding of what the
issue is and then, after consensus is reached on the issue itself and what it is, I refer to policy that was created to deal with that specific issue. Sometimes it’s black and white and sometimes I consult with the board for those gray areas.

Throughout the interview, President D provided examples of problems that were not so black and white and how he resolved them. Ultimately, his decision was based on what was in the best interest of the university as a whole and not its individual parts.

“Sometimes I had to make decisions that I knew would negatively impact students or a certain subgroup of students; sometimes with faculty and staff. But my decisions have always been fair and reflected on the goals of this university. People may not feel that way when a decision impacts them in a bad way, but they will see it eventually” (President D, interview, 2009).

**Perceived Impact of Personal Values on Professional Decision-Making**

According to President D, the aforementioned goals are best articulated through his many policy initiatives. Since taking office, President D has amended approximately 110 existing policies and implemented over 20, sometimes without the formation of any committee. President D felt that he brings with him a business savvy that carries with it a sense of respect and tolerance from the university committee however, this business-like demeanor does not exclude him from concepts and definitions embedded within ethical pedagogy and praxis. When asked what he identifies as ethics and ethical behavior as well as what his personal definition of ethics was, President D answered:

Behaviors that do no intended harm to any person or group of people. Acting ethically means you respond in a respectful manner to any situation and that you often analyze a situation before you act on it….So I guess I would define ethics, which is difficult to do I might add, as the intrinsic motivators that drive your consciousness and perceived consciousness of the world around you.

When asked to expand on his definition of ethics and what he felt were the qualities a university president should possess to satisfy this definition, President D
answered that every president needs empathy, the ability to understand and relate to the world around them and acknowledge the worlds of others. He was then able to illustrate this perspective by referring to a previous statement in which he noted that he often had to make decisions that were based on the university’s best interests. He acknowledged that those particular decisions did not make him popular with the student body or the faculty senate at the time but in the end it was the right thing to do. Still, President D stated that those decisions are not as common as some would believe and that in fact not every decision is an ethical one.

Not every situation is an ethical one otherwise we would not have policies. Sometimes a situation is best handled by what is black and white. It is written, everyone should have seen or read it and they cannot dispute its existence. When a decision had to be ethical, these are usually extreme cases and a president has to be careful that an ethical decision does not set precedent for similar situations or circumstances.

When asked what personal values and attributes guided his decision making, President D stated:

Responsibility. I am always responsible. No matter what. As president, all eyes are on me. If the faculty are great then the president is great. If the students are great, then the president is great. If the administration is great, then so is the president. My values call for respect for all, tolerance and empathy.

Furthermore, when asked if any of these values had changed since assuming the presidency, President D stated that values are not capable of changing.

**Perceived Impact of Internal and External Variables of Context on Decision-Making**

When asked how the interrelated factors of budgeting, curriculum, social and political contexts, laws, rules, and regulations influence his decision-making, President D did not acknowledge a direct influence. Rather he felt that his decision-making had
influenced all of these factors. When asked about the influence governing boards of the state and university had over his decision making, President D answered:

The board is the collective consciousness of the university. It is the heart and soul of everything we represent. They are the blood and I am the main artery. It is important that we all flow in the same direction. Their policies become mine and vice versa. We work together. We argue but we work together. In the end, politics has no place in our boardroom. The state has done and continues to do little. They understand that if something isn’t broke then they shouldn’t fix it. We make them [the state] just as proud.

Still, when asked to whom he felt he was accountable to, President D responded:

I am accountable to my board and every student that walks into this campus. They are paying for a service and carry certain expectations with that service. As president I must make sure that I deliver on the service, no matter the cost with the understanding that my investment will have a 100% return in the future.
Conclusion

The four presidents’ responses to the questions posed provided great insight into the perceived changes to the role of the university president during an era of accountability as well as further insight into the internal and external variables of context that influence their ethical decision-making practices. Although there was some similarity in the responses provided, many perspectives and interpretations were provided by the participants. All responses were amenable to study, interpretation, and synthesis. Those presidents whose responses required further elaboration were asked to do so. The profiles of each president as well as the profiles of their respective institutions are provided so that a proper context can be associated with responses generated as a result of this study thus leading to a more accurate analysis.
Chapter V

Findings and Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how university presidents perceive, construct and adjust their professional roles and what potential influence their personal values and ethical postures may have regarding their professional decision-making. This chapter summarizes the design of the study and provides an analysis of the findings.

Purpose and Design of the Study

This study will focus on the changing role of the university president during the era of accountability in which there exists greater demands for decision-making, policy and practice. As outlined in Chapter I, the central questions guiding this research were: (1) In what ways have expectations for the role of university presidents changed in the last decade? (2) Are there particular leadership styles evident in their personal/professional roles? (3) How do university presidents decide which leadership approach they would use? (4) Specifically, what internal and external variables of context impact university president’s decision-making? (5) What is the impact of their personal values on their professional decision-making?

To address the aforementioned research questions, a comparative case study was conducted. The study consisted of semi-structured interviews and document analysis to collect data about the presidents and their respective institutions. Interviews with four university presidents of Research I, land-grant institutions provided the researcher with the rich data. Additionally, documents such as newspaper articles, memos, press releases, minutes from university governance meetings, written reports, budget records, and policy
archives provided further data. Triangulation of the data (interviews and document analysis) as well as member checking (asking the participants to examine how their comments have been recorded and interpreted) were also used for this study. A review of the literature as it related to presidential roles, leadership, ethics and decision-making provided the foundation for the conceptual framework, *The Roles of the University President During an Era of Accountability* (Sambolin, 2008). This conceptual framework was used to identify, sort, and interpret that data derived from this study.

In response to the guiding questions, this study found a grouping of factors associated with presidential roles and decision-making. Some of these factors included: presidential tenure at the current institution, self-expectation of roles, relationship with the state government, leadership approaches to problem solving, modifications to leadership styles, personal values, professional values, and ethical postures.

In order to interpret and understand the findings of this study it is important to contextualize the data obtained. Even though the presidents interviewed varied in terms of tenure, experience, and the structures of their respective institutions, all responses and thoughts were equally considered and valued in this analysis without preference to any one president.

**Findings**

Once the interviews were transcribed and coded, repetitive themes emerged from all four presidents. Throughout the analysis of the data, relationships among the themes were identified and compared to the conceptual framework developed for this study. These themes and relationships are: leadership versus management, effective communication/shared vision, assessment of problems, team-oriented approaches to
problem-solving, administrative versus ethical decision-making, academia versus non-academia, leadership, and decision-making, the relationship of the governing boards of the university to presidential roles, leadership, and decision-making, and the relationship of the state government to presidential roles, leadership, and decision-making.

**In what ways have expectations for the role of university presidents changed in the last decade?**

The major theme revealed during the analysis of presidential expectations centered on the concept of leadership vs. the practice of management. For the purposes of this study, the term *leader* refers to the ability to develop and communicate a vision through policy that supports the mission of the institution and the term *manager* refers to the adherence to, maintenance and modification of existing policies.

All four presidents in the study stated that throughout the years they found themselves trying to manage a growing enterprise with decreased financial support. President A stated that “the demand for a high quality, globally relevant education is there, but the dollars are not.” Thus, these presidents implemented similar strategies in addressing this issue.

Moreover, policy and accountability mandates have had a profound effect on the roles of the four presidents. Presidents A, B, and C perceived their roles as consisting of both a leader and manager. President D, as evident in his interview, expressed frustration about what he perceived to be the changing of his role from a position of leadership to a position of management. He acknowledged the prestige and reputation of the university and its faculty but at times appeared to be overwhelmed by such measures of publicity.
and proficiency. “I compare my role as president of this university with a captain of an enormous ship. I am supposed to steer. I am supposed to set the direction but the ship had a course and destination long before I came aboard and so I find that my job now entails ensuring the course to that intended destination is as smooth as possible.”

Within the context of this study and the subsequent analysis, those presidents with a tenure of greater than 5 years articulated a significant relationship between their roles and the relationship that existed between the state government and the university administration. President A and B had tenures of greater than five years and had little state support. In fact, several documents contend that each state had attempted at least twice to exercise greater control over their corresponding universities. When such a negative relationship exists it has been observed that these presidents shift their roles to visionary rather than managerial. Such an approach allows for the university to be proactive in adapting to the external environment and not compromise institutional effectiveness or educational quality. “As leaders of higher education, presidents have to be innovative and practical. Part of that innovation has to come from what the needs are of those we serve. If we create an opportunity or program that addresses that need then demand will be high and dollars will follow” (President B). Thus there was a connection between the tenure of Presidents A and B and their perceptions that accountability mandates and policies did not have a great impact on their roles. “These calls for accountability are nothing new. It just means more paperwork for us. As a university, we have more important work to do than writing another report for the state” (President A).

Conversely, President C and D have a very positive relationship with their respective state governments but for different reasons. President C represents an
institution that is now a part of a state system of higher education. The governor uses RSU as a conduit for disseminating policies and mandates that come from the state. President C has not expressed any concern over the roles he and his institution play in advancing the agenda of the state government primarily because the state is committed to making this system work.

Whereas President C is now part of a state system, President D has inherited an institution that is independent of the state. Being the only private, land-grant institution in this study, Rolling Ridges University also has the support of the state but does not rely as much as the other institutions in this study on the state for support. In fact, the state relies on the university to provide opportunities for collaboration on numerous state projects and studies. Still, President D appeared the most affected and frustrated by the impact accountability had on his roles.

All four presidents identified roles and responsibilities similar to Mintzberg’s Managerial Roles Model (1979) which was discussed in Chapter II of this study. These roles were categorized as: administrative, political, and entrepreneurial (See Table 5). All of these roles were supported in the analysis of the data derived from the interviews and document analysis.
Table 5

The roles and responsibilities of the university president

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Presidential Role</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Spokesperson for University</td>
<td>Represents the university through public appearances and reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor for Information</td>
<td>Requests and receives information. Maintains interpersonal contacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disseminator of Information</td>
<td>Communicates this information to others through various outlets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>University Figurehead</td>
<td>Performs symbolic duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Provides guidance and motivation. Advises and influences constituencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>Creates and implements new policies, projects, identify opportunities for growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disturbance Handler</td>
<td>Resolve conflicts, adapt to external changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resource Allocator</td>
<td>Distributes resources, establish priorities of university</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presidents A and B identified politics and interaction with state government as the most difficult aspect of their presidencies. President A felt that the political arena “is a difficult one. You need to learn how to play the game and meet with the right people at different times. To me, that is a waste of time.” Similarly President B stated that his relationship with the state is ceremonial in that he makes the necessary appearances and
speeches at the state capital. Presidents C and D saw the political arena as a necessity within their presidency,

All four presidents expressed that decision-making regarding termination, consolidation, and creation of programs, departments, and projects was difficult. The presidents discussed the disparity that exists between the sciences and the arts and how they struggle to make fair decisions for both. “As a research university, external funding is critical to our institution. If you look at what’s out there most of those funds are for science, mathematics, and technology. How do I tell the arts department that they need to cut a program without making them feel insignificant?” (President A). President C spent some time addressing this topic. “We are the flagship university but are now one part of the whole picture. We are competing for the same students. We have to retain some sense of institutional autonomy” (President C).

The most rewarding aspects for the presidents centered on student success and institutional reputation. All of the presidents spoke of their talented faculty and devoted staff and their positive interactions with the student body. Every president provided an anecdote that revolved around student interaction, whether it is about students producing quality research, protesting budget cuts imposed by the state government, or seeing thousands of students every year at commencement. President’s A and B spend two or more hours a day responding to student e-mails. Presidents C and D were observed teaching a class that is offered every semester. “We don’t shape the students. They shape us and we ensure that they have all of the tools necessary to make it out there” (President A).
Are Particular Leadership Styles evident in the President’s Personal and Professional Roles?

All of the presidents were somewhat reluctant to limit their leadership styles to a specific area but the major themes revealed pertaining to leadership style were: effective communication, assessment of problems, and a team-oriented approach to problem-solving.

Presidents A, B, C and D did not readily identify with one particular leadership style. Each responded that their leadership style was situational. All of the presidents articulated characteristics of a distributed sense of leadership. In his own words, President A identifies himself as a “leader who listens.” Citing the importance of listening regarding great leaders, President A emphasized he views his roles as a communicator, disseminator of information, and a team player. The fact that President A sees his role as being a member of a team and not one that is exclusive is something that he believes develops as a president gains experience in their role. Charisma and humor also seem to be characteristics of President A’s leadership style. With regards to how he as a president identifies problems, he replied that he doesn’t identify them, rather he is “told what they are” through avenues such as the student newspaper, local media and meetings.

Effective communication/shared vision. Given the dynamic nature of the role and environment of the academic presidency, President A states that his style is dependent upon “communication and assessment.” His personal assessment of his leadership style is one of an assimilator “in that whether to improve something that is currently ineffective or to initiate something new, I see my style as bridging the gaps that would exist among
people, places and things to make those initiatives necessary”. This concept of communication and assessment comes after years of experience according to President A. “Understanding which situations tend to favor a particular style of leadership over another is a learn-as-you-go process.” President A tends to see himself as a critical link in the network of university administration, often indirectly referring to himself as the conduit to which channels and opportunities for communication and collaboration arise with examples such as, “Presidents have to provide the channels for communication….to create networks for dialogue to take place.” This concept of the president as an effective communicator is increasingly important to President A in all aspects of his role.

President B perceives his professional role as a combination of leadership and management and he notes that such an approach is not without criticism. Although President B did not self-identify his leadership style he did articulate that consultation is paramount, however, he also concedes that situations exist where he chooses not to consult with others. Limiting this strategy, for the most part, to the politics within state government, which he finds reprehensible, President B has been able to use his political influence as a strong advocate of privatization within public institutions of higher education. President B assumes two distinct roles: that of the figurehead of FHSU and a more prominent federal agent role. Although President B has a long tenure at FHSU he felt that he was better known through the awards and appointments he received on a national level. Both of these attributes however are embedded within a distributed leadership style. For President B effective communication is critical. Thus when President B assumes his role as the figurehead of the institution, one is able to question whether he has true, authoritative power. It is well known that the power of ‘control”
over FHSU comes directly from the power of the Board of which President B states, “
Our board consists of truly dedicated and compassionate individuals that want nothing
but the best for their institution. They are sons and daughters and [FHSU] is one of their
parents. I am confident that the board will always act in the best interests of the university
and its students”. Comprised of many influential individuals, it is the Board that
generates policy. Employing a top-down approach, in which there is a high reliance on
the lower administration, President B assumes the role of spokesperson for the enactment
of initiatives. He does so using a very student-oriented approach (engagement and the
need to prepare students for a globalized society). Specific procedures on the enactment
of such initiatives are left to the administration of the campuses and colleges. Thus, with
branch campuses located throughout the state, autonomy (curriculum, admissions, and
the like) is lacking. This is why there is so much contention among the faculty of these
colleges regarding issues such as the implementation of an academic joint-degree
programs as well as the courses and curriculum for the on-line campus.

Thus, as the state government’s appropriations decrease from year to year,
President B has placed a greater emphasis on collaboration with the federal government
as a means to generate additional revenue through the acquisition of numerous research
grants and other federally funded projects. President B senses that this trend will not only
continue but be required for the viability and sustainability of public institutions of higher
education.

President C did not associate himself with any particular leadership style but
stated that his leadership approach is contextual however, document analysis indicated
the contrary. Memos as well as minutes from several meetings and task forces illustrated
that President C is very assertive, time-oriented, ambitious, competitive and sometimes harsh. For example, in a memo to a task force dated in 2009, President C wrote: “I understand the apprehension displayed by those represented in this committee, but we must seize this opportunity now and work out the problems later. We simply cannot let another institution take advantage of this opportunity.” Similarly, President C has outlined numerous goals each with their target date of completion and has forced the colleges to shift their priorities towards the completion of these goals. In a local newspaper, one tenured faculty member stated, “I and my colleagues believe that we are being forced to compromise our reputations as scholars and researchers for the reputation of the university. If my research doesn’t tie into one of [President C]’s goals, then it won’t get funding and I will have to suspend my project.”

Likewise, President D described his leadership style as a “watch and learn”. Still considered to be a new president with only two years of experience, President D has attempted to observe and understand the culture of Rolling Ridges University (RRU). Like President C, President D also has a positive relationship with the state government. In his interview, President D openly stated that his job is to “handle the paperwork.” In an interview with the local cable network in 2009, President D further validated this perception by stating that, “I would never want to fix something that is not broken. Our university, our research, our scholarship and our outreach is among the best, if not the best, in the world. I’ll just focus on getting the money.”

Assessment of problems. There is some variation in how each of the four presidents describes how he handles problems. For example, President A attempts to foresee
potential problems but mostly focuses on problems that are brought to his attention. President B looks for problems and takes corrective action immediately if the situation warrants his intervention. To President B, not all “problems” are truly problems but more administrative issues. Presidents C and D are told by their governing boards and state government what the problems are and they then lead solution efforts. This will be discussed further in the next section.

*Team-oriented approach to problem-solving.* Once a problem requires the president’s involvement, all four presidents identified the process of problem solving as a collaborative effort. All four of the presidents outlined their problem-solving approaches similarly and described a process that complimented the literature on presidential decision-making (Kekale, 2005; Davies & Morgan, 1983) found in Chapter II of this study. This process was identified as the following: understanding and defining the problem, identifying those involved and have expertise on the issues, facilitate as needed, develop policy that will address similar issues in the future. All of the presidents stated that a majority of problems are handled effectively within departments and the lower administration. Those problems that reach the president’s level are more complex. All of the presidents in this study shared concern over the importance of understanding and defining such problems. For example, President A stated that a difficult aspect of his job is making the decision as to which problems are truly significant and which are not. “What is considered a crisis to one person may not necessarily be considered a crisis to me.” President B identified the development of a problem and crisis as a breaking down of the channels of communication. Sometimes President C identified his role as a
mediator in which his job is to provide the tools necessary for effective communication between opposing points of view. At other times, Presidents A, B, C and D understood that some situations cannot wait and an immediate response is required.

I always look at a situation and try to determine who is affected. Is it a large population of our students? Is it the community? I triage my situations, when I am able to, based on how many people are affected (President A).

Additionally, some of the problems that the presidents must address are recycled from year to year. Ongoing examples include decreasing state appropriations and increasing tuition. Thus, the responses to these recycled problems are also recycled from year to year.

The timing of this research coincided with a severe economic recession. With state and federal governments competing for every American dollar, the economic climate had an impact on the nation’s institutions of higher education. This climate caused the four university presidents to reevaluate the institutional and educational quality of their institutions and make, according to President A, “some extremely difficult decisions for the future of our institutions.” The approaches used address the problems created by the economic climate were similar among all four universities and all four presidents.

Every president with the exception of President D stressed the importance of developing a new vision for their institutions. Presidents A, B and C felt it was important that today’s university president a president be a visionary when it comes to articulating goals and inspiring commitment to these goals through policy but also warned that these policies must align with the mission and focus of the institution. “An understanding or awareness of the culture of the institution is critical to policy implementation and the effectiveness of the institution as a whole” (President B). Presidents A, B, and C spent a considerable amount of time working with their institutions to develop a comprehensive
strategic plan that was aligned to the president’s vision goals for the university. By allowing the faculty, staff and students of any given college within the university to develop their own strategic plans that complement the president’s overall vision, the presidents were able to communicate their vision while concomitantly ensuring that the university community would “buy-in” to the changes necessary to make that vision a reality.

While attempting to improve the educational quality of their institutions and keeping in mind that the educational quality of any institution of higher education rests primarily with the curriculum in which the faculties have the most control, Presidents A, B and C acknowledged the importance of faculty in the process. Still, this was just one part of the process. These presidents were all able to frame their initiatives to improve institutional and educational quality in a way that would promote and attract diverse groups of students, faculty and staff. This vision led to the creation of task forces consisting of faculty, staff, students, stakeholders and members of the state government which were issued charges for developing recommendations that would improve the quality of the institution and educational quality. Importantly, these presidents outlined that the recommendations must be aligned to the “strategic goals” outlined by the president of the respective institution thus ensuring that the task forces will act in a manner that is consistent with the cultural aspects of the institution (i.e. mission) as well as their prescribed strategic goals.

Conversely, the above strategy was already in place and implemented as a result of President D’s predecessor therefore, President D did not feel that it was necessary for him to be a visionary for his institution. He said, “Well, let me explain. I do not think it is
my role right now to be visionary. That was what [the other president] was hired to do. He laid the foundation and I now build it up. I’m not a foundation setter. I’m a businessman. That’s my area of expertise and that is where I will work from.”

For example, like President B and C, President D consulted with an outside agency to review operational effectiveness in an attempt to identify areas of cost savings. Unlike Presidents B and C though, the results of this external review solely informed President D’s decisions regarding the funding and the allocation of resources. Such decisions, however, made President D feel as if the university had adopted a pay-on-performance model in which those programs identified as “hotspots” were given the most money and resources and those that were not had to fend for themselves. As President D stated, “Administratively, that’s what presidents do. We manage the money and when the money runs out it is our responsibility to find more.” Thus, President D spends a considerable amount of time within the political frame fundraising and has been extremely successful in securing donations. “Aggressive fundraising has allowed me to ensure that the university is financially sound and will not be greatly impacted by what’s going on out there with the economy.”

The Impact of Personal Values on these University President’s Professional Decision-Making?

There were many areas of convergence and divergence regarding the identification of ethics, values, morals and ethical behavior and the impact the aforementioned terms had on decision-making for Presidents A, B, C, and D.
Beginning with a definition of ethics, President A identified the term ethics as, “fundamental rules that guide you morally” while concomitantly viewing ethical behavior as those behaviors or “actions that would accomplish the greatest good for the most people.” During this portion of the interview it should be noted that President A identified ethics and values as separate concepts. When asked about how he would define ethics, President A went on to state that ethics consists of the beliefs that an individual “holds true to. It is what they believe and is the very core of who they are. President A felt that in order to demonstrate ethical behavior as it relates to his job, a president must again, possess a consciousness of the surrounding environment. It is here that President A felt that the role of a president as a visionary is important. Also stating a president should possess qualities such as empathy, awareness and understanding, he equated all of these qualities to the concept of trust. He then elaborated on the concept of trust as a key component to the initiation of change. “A true leader doesn’t mandate change. He inspires it.” Furthermore, President A made it clear that there were situations where consensus building cannot occur and he must make snap decisions. President A felt that these quick decisive moments are most accepted when he has the trust and support of his constituents. Thus, President A maintained that there is no singular, prescribed role for the academic presidency; rather there are sets of roles. Determining the relationships of these roles in response to a given situation is difficult at best.

According to President A, ethics and ethical decision-making are a part of his everyday life. President A stressed the use of ethics through his written and oral policies, presence at various functions, meetings, and anything in which he is called upon to do. It is here that President A sees his role as more of a problem solver rather than mediator.
Citing the increasing costs of tuition as a result of the lack of adequate state appropriations, President A has taken it upon himself to create new lines of communication and opportunity through fundraising campaigns, suspension of university wide building projects and meetings with potential sponsors from the private sector.

While attempting to solve these problems, President A relied on an assessment strategy. That is, “an assessment of the situation and what needs to be done in the short term and the long term. Short term means stopping the bleeding. Long term means addressing the conditions that allowed for the wound in the first place.” Citing this as a “universal strategy” President A believed that he is always willing to accept personal responsibility for his professional decisions. Again outlining the importance of his personal values of empathy and openness and how it is connected to his professional portrayal of the academic presidency, President A firmly believed that his personal values have remained unchanged throughout his tenure not only as president but since he entered academia whereas his professional values have changed. He stated, “As president, I have learned many things. Professionally when you move from institution to institution the goals and needs of those institutions change as well. So you need to adapt. Whereas one institution may value access as the most important part of their overall mission another may tend to favor assessment. An effective president would find a way to bridge the two.”

As noted in the interview, one way in which President B defined a problem is through visual cues that contradict his personal value system. Additionally, President B acknowledges that ethics and ethical behavior are often a matter of perception and often an operational issue for him personally. He does not spend a significant amount of time
debating and defining ethics. Rather, he relies on his own moral compass, acquired through numerous experiences and often as a result of the direct observation of the failures and successes of his colleagues. To President B, ethics is more about common sense than deep, reflective thought. In summary, President B does not identify his personal values and professional codes of ethics as mutually exclusive and thus rarely in conflict with one another.

When asked about ethics and ethical behavior, President C redirected the question to problem-solving. He openly conceded that there are many things that he is dealing with on a continual basis and sometimes is not able to detect problems as readily as he could but once something has appeared on his radar screen he is often able to determine what an appropriate course of action should follow. In fact, according to President C one way to measure a leader’s leadership is to measure the amount of crises that were dealt with expeditiously and effectively. Conversely, when the issues are more complex, President C found that a team-oriented approach worked best, however it should be noted that the members of team are determined by the president himself. Although President C also has tenure of greater than 5 years, throughout the interview he expressed great concern over various decisions he has had to make for the university based on state mandates. Unlike, most mandates issued to public universities across the United States, the state government has always supplied the university with funds to implement their mandates. President C has become frustrated with trying to balance his roles as president of RSU in addition to his new roles as a president within a state-wide system of higher education. Often citing the need for the president to have patience, President C struggles
with trying to preserve the culture of RSU at a time when all public institutions in the state have lost its sense of autonomy.

Every day I am either defending my values, the values of the university or the values of the state-wide system. This is my daily ethical struggle. Are my decisions supposed to be for the good of the system or the good of my university? These types of judgment calls are not always at odds with each other but I have found that I have been asking myself these questions more and more each day.

With reference to ethics and ethical behaviors, President C stated that both greatly impact his decision-making. Noting that ethics and ethical behavior are not limited to only university protocol, President C also felt that his personal values play an integral role in his decision-making. “My ethical frameworks emerge from my values. These values are tied to responsibility, fairness, trust, honesty, and care to name a few.” Fortunately, these values are aligned to the values of the institution but there have been circumstances when the President C’s personal values were in conflict with some of the institution’s values especially when recommending the amount of tuition increases for the next fiscal year.

The truth is that educating students is costly. It uses a lot of resources and will use even more as demands become greater. Programs must be developed. Buildings must house these programs and the like. I am certain that there are students out there that do not understand the need to increase tuition but the fact remains that these students are already here. As president, I have the ethical responsibility to ensure that they are able to stay here if they want to. That being said, when I recommend a tuition increase I always do so after a careful analysis of how I can supplement our own financial aid plan, not the federal government’s, to ease the burden on our students.

President D also acknowledged the complexity of ethics and ethical behavior. “Ethics is doing the right thing and sometimes, as [with] any administrator, that is not very easy to do. Every president wants to be ethical but not every president wants to be altruistic.” Citing values such as responsibility, empathy, honesty, compassion, trust, and
connectedness, President D felt a successful president is one that is always connected to his university. Elaborating further on this concept of connectedness, President D added:

A president must be a reflection of his or her university and not vice-versa. The university is a complex institution and the representative voice of all of the constituents. A president must listen and respond to that voice. Once that no longer happens, the president will be replaced.

President D felt that he did not use ethics in his everyday decision-making. He relied heavily on the expertise of the faculty of RRU. Press releases refer to President D as the president that “rules by committee” and there is some truth to that declaration. President D rarely interjects his opinion on issues that have not gained local or national attention and when he does, his presence is minimal. He coordinates the development of a team with expertise in the area of concern or issue and allows the members of the team to identify, address and solve the issue. President D will then develop a policy that addresses the issue should a similar issue arise in the future.

What internal and external variables of context impact the university president’s decision-making?

Although President A, B, C and D identified numerous internal and external variables which affected their decision-making the major theme revealed related to the influence of the governing board of the university as the primary internal variable and the influence of the state government as the primary external variable of context.

The influence of university governance. In reference to budgeting, curriculum, social and political realities, group interests, laws, rules, and regulations, all four presidents in this study cited the governing board of the institution as an internal variable that impacts their decision-making. Presidents A, C, and D identified the state government as the primary
external variable which influences their decision-making. “Our budget is determined by the conditions outside in the economy. Everything—laws, policies, special interest groups, politics; everything is related. It’s inescapable” (President A).

Despite saying that he takes personal responsibility for his professional decisions, President A acknowledges the influences of the governing boards of the university and state on his decision-making process. Despite a covert attempt by the state to implement a restructuring initiative that in essence would strip President A’s institution of its status and reputation by assimilating it with the other public institutions within the state, President A turned to the support and expertise of the internal university community (governing board, faculty, staff, students, alumni) to defend his institution from this initiative. President A understands that “seeing eye to eye on key issues is extremely important” but he is also careful “not to burn any bridges.” Thus although strained, President A attempts to address the relationship between the state and its only truly public, land-grant state institution as one of mutual respect.

Like President A, President B recognized the impact that the governing board has on his decision-making however, he also stated that the governing board members rarely interjects on issues that they feel he is more than capable of handling. “For the most part, they leave me alone. When I need their advice I ask and they respond but usually my role is to communicate with them what I am doing, what I need in order to accomplish what I am doing and why I am doing it.” President B can recall only one situation over eight years ago in which the governing board reprimanded him. “That one time, I honestly believed that I had done the right thing. I didn’t think they were going to fire me but I knew that they were not happy and now they were going to keep a close eye on me.”
The tight control of the Board allows for President B to focus on values and what students should learn in order to contribute and be competitive within a globalized, democratic society. Thus, what is observed here is the role of President B within the federal arena, where he has more power. With diverse experiences, and awards of distinction nationally, President B’s strong sense of leadership places him in a unique position where he is able to focus particular attention on leadership and values that presidents of academic institutions should have. He has written numerous articles on presidential leadership, values, and ethics.

Furthermore, President B did not feel that the state had an impact on his decision-making. “The money that we get from the state can sometimes come with a hidden agenda. Considering what we get from the state, of which the university is grateful, I find that every year it’s the same fiasco. The state wants “X” and we need “Z” but we can only get “Z if we do “Y”. I’m not about that game.” This externally perceived sense of presidential “egocentrism” has been noted by many faculty and staff and documented in several media outlets.

Documents and news archives indicate that there has been a consistent clash among the “titans” of the state: the governor and President B. These documents generated questions such as, Who has the real power? After all, President B “controls” the largest institution and one of the economic powerhouses of the state, and the governor runs all state affairs. Thus, Forest Hills State University, with an endowment that is self-sustaining allows for little reliance on state appropriations. Furthermore, with increased federal support, FHSU can operate in a manner independent from the state. This
relationship, supports the FHSU perception that President B’s power is defined by his role federally and not within the state.

*Influence of state government:* Unlike Presidents A and B, President C identified his presidency as one that is directly accountable/proportional to external constituencies. With the creation of the state-wide system of higher education, President C’s once autonomous presidency is now dependent upon the relationships that exist with the state and federal government. Acknowledging that the relationship between the state government and the university has been positive, President C expressed some concern that his presidency had gone from institutional visionary to implementer of state mandates. This expectation was reiterated repeatedly throughout the interview.

Publicly, President C touted the great relationship that his university shared with the state but memos express frustration and in some cases, concern. In a letter to the community, President C wrote, “We have boldly stepped into the forefront of higher education and all eyes are on us now to perform teaching, research and outreach in a manner which surpasses all others. I assure you that your concern is my concern as well….” President C understood that a positive relationship with the state is critical to the vitality of the university. In a review of over 150 memos, articles, op-ed pieces, policies, and reports, President B began almost every page with recognition and appreciation to the governor of the state as the state government for their “continued support and dedication to the commitment of higher education” in the state. When asked about this, President C said that such a response was “appropriate and necessary.” When asked to be specific,
President C stated that the state government understands the importance of higher education institutions as a means for economic growth both short and long term.

President C felt that he has accomplished great things as president of RSU during the creation of the state system. Working collaboratively with faculty, staff and students, he paved the way to restructuring undergraduate education at RSU. Despite feeling like he has lost the ability to be a visionary, President C still attempts to define and communicate a vision that is institution specific but also supportive of the vision from the state. Fortunately, President C has not met much resistance from the state government because RSU was an exceptional institution prior to the creation of the state system. As a result, RSU did not face budget reductions as drastic as those of other public institutions across the country and as a result was able to develop several programs, initiatives and policies at a time when most universities were streamlining or eliminating theirs.

As the figure-head of the flagship university of the state, President C implemented several initiatives that resulted in collaborations between the university’s academic and research programs to state, federal and global economic concerns. President C also facilitated the faculty, staff and students with the identification of areas within the university that were trans-institutional and set forth charges for each of the colleges to develop goals and objectives that were aligned to both the mission of the university as well the overall mission of the state-wide system of higher education. President C also identified specific areas that the university as a whole must focus on as well as charging each college to develop a set of benchmarks and other measurable outcomes in which data is used to demonstrate accountability.
Understanding that a state-wide system of higher education would result in increased competition for students, President C outlined several educational policies and initiatives that assist students financially and academically. Pertaining to financial assistance, President C worked with his colleagues to develop a supplemental financial aid program as well as additional scholarships and grants. Similarly, regarding academics, President C used money from the university endowment to enhance technology, research opportunities, instruction, and civic engagement opportunities for faculty, staff and students. Such an approach has been benchmarked by other institutions in the state.

President D also cited the governing board of the institution as having a strong impact on his decision-making. From the responses in his interview, it appears as if President D limits his role to performing the tasks mandated by the governing board. President D used the words “guide”, “facilitate”, “suggest”, and “comply” throughout his interview with all of these terms used to describe the relationship that he has with the governing board of the institution.

The Board guides me throughout the process…They [The Board] facilitate most of my relationships with external constituencies…One of my roles is to ensure that everyone is in compliance with the polices and goals of the university.

Based on their individual responses, all presidents demonstrated a paradoxical sense of accountability. Although they perceived their roles were in compliance with accountable praxis as defined by external constituencies such as the state government, each president’s perception of being truly accountable went far beyond defined roles. One could even posit that there was a strong ethical influence within their perceptions of accountability. Such an influence also guided their decision-making process as well as their leadership style in varying contexts.
Regarding accountability, President A observed that having to “do more with less” has become a cornerstone of university leadership. The policies regarding departmental and even campus consolidation and restructuring are examples of this aspect of leadership. President A feels that communicating as openly as possible with all those involved in the processes outlined above is tantamount to its success. President A stated:

If I enacted whatever they [state government] told me to do all the time without communicating it to the university community, I would undoubtedly alienate myself from members of the institution and close a few of those important communication channels I told you about.

Thus, it is very important to President A that everyone have an understanding of why his policies are being drafted and implemented although he has made it perfectly clear that they may disagree with those policies. This is a direct indicator of another characteristic that President A finds important to his role: accessibility. When asked about his understanding of the academic presidency as a profession, President A responded that “any president has to be easily accessible to all that he works for.”

President A also cited concepts such as flexibility and an awareness of constantly changing surroundings. In terms of leadership, President A’s responses indicate that the most fundamental aspect of the university presidency is service and that an effective president does not see the concepts of leadership and service as mutually exclusive.

When asked about the interrelatedness of budgeting, curriculum, social and political realities, interest groups, new rules and regulations from the state and how these variables affect his decision-making, President A stated the following:

The need for change must come from somewhere. As president, I ask myself if this change is legitimate and necessary. Some changes need to be implemented gradually and some cannot. Obviously the speed at which these changes occur is linked to particular social and political realities. Often times these realities dictate
the budget which in turn enhances or takes away from the established curriculum. During times when change involves decreasing an appropriation or something to that effect I always try to do so in a manner that will have the least negative impact on the university community but also understand that there will be a negative impact nonetheless.

The above quote is an example of President A’s leadership style and ethical decision-making process. Here, it is evident how the characteristics of empathy, trust, awareness, and decision-making based on the greatest good for the greatest number. The process outlined above by President A is also an example of whom President A feels accountable to. “I’m accountable to the university, the state….in essence everyone. It is the nature of the academic presidency.” Although this may be President A’s professional response, he goes on to state, “I am accountable to myself and so long as I can tell myself at the end of the day that I have done the best job that I could have done, then I am at peace with myself.”

President B expressed similar sentiments for accountability.

The president is the figurehead of the university. The president represents the university to the government, state and federal, and the community. The president has to lead the university through times of prosperity and times of difficulty and do so as effectively and efficiently as possible.

President B identified those he is accountable to in the following order: the governing board, the faculty, students, staff, alumni, and the state. This order can be considered a spectrum of accountability in which President B felt most accountable to the governing board of the university and least accountable to the state. This spectrum of accountability, although theoretical for the purposes of this study, is also didactic in the practice of various roles and the decision-making of President B.

As a result of the creation of the state-wide system of public higher education, accountability is engrained in all the roles of President C’s presidency. In practice, all
policies and initiatives have several measurable outcomes embedded within them to demonstrate accountable practice. In theory, President C feels that he is accountable to the governing board of the university as well as the faculty, students and alumni. It is important to note that when asked about accountability, President C did not reference the state government. Perhaps this was because it was understood that he had to be accountable to the state but it was unmistakable that President C felt more accountable to the preservation of the autonomy of his institution before any state-wide system of higher education. President C felt that accountability in and of itself was a new role that the university presidency must recognize that:

Today’s university president must be able to be innovative, inspiring, and accountable. We must be collaborators and work within the complex realities we now find ourselves in. These are just a few of our new roles.

President D identified a sequence similar to President B when it came to accountability and constituencies. First and foremost, President D felt accountable to the governing body of the university. “They hired me and they can fire me. They are like Big Brother- always watching.” After the governing board, President D felt accountable to internal constituencies such as the faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Unlike Presidents A, B and C, President D did not feel that he was very accountable to the state. “Our institution works hand-in-hand with the state on various projects and even though we work with closely with the state we do not answer to them.”

When taken as a whole, accountability is embedded within the personal and professional roles of the academic presidency and has only drawn considerable attention now in light of the current economic climate of the United States and its institutions of higher education. All presidents felt that accountability is not just reserved for their role as the head of the institution. President A illustrated this best by stating that:
Accountability is a huge responsibility not just for a president, but for everyone in the university community. Of course, having to do more with less or the same with less has led me to fundraise more than I would like but it is a necessity. Decisions on where to cut, what to condense and what to create have to be carefully determined and there is little or no room for second guessing. We all have to tighten our belts so to speak and keep pushing forward. The students are here. They are coming and they will continue to come. This university has the responsibility to make sure that these students leave here with the tools and skills necessary to make it in the real world.

**How do university presidents decide which leadership approach they will use?**

None of the presidents in this study associated their leadership with a particular style. When asked to describe their leadership style, they did so by describing characteristics of their leadership with the common theme being the phrase, “watch and learn.” All four presidents stated that their leadership style was contextual and thus different circumstances required different styles or approaches of leadership. This will be explained in further detail in the following section which will analyze the data using the conceptual model depicting the Changing Role of the University President During an Era of Accountability.

Additionally, all four presidents in this study had made some modification to their leadership styles. Such modifications were the result of both experience and the influences of internal and external variables. Presidents A discussed how he is attempting not to micromanage and empower those around him. President B mentioned that his modifications were the result of learning from the mistakes of those around him. President C felt his leadership style was being compromised in moving from a leader to a manager. Aside from an exceptional aptitude for fundraising, President D does not yet articulate well defined roles and accompanying leadership styles however such roles and styles will be defined as he gains more experience.
The Roles of the University President During an Era of Accountability

As mentioned in Chapter III of this study, the conceptual framework created for this study served as a conceptual scheme for the comparison of cases. Expanding on the works of Burke’s Accountability Triangle (2005) and Begley’s Arenas of Influence (2004), the conceptual framework provided for greater understanding of how the university president as an individual related their personal values to social attributions and how this process defined their roles, leadership styles, and decision-making. The conceptual framework also accounted for pre-existing characteristics of leadership and the university as defined by the literature reviewed in Chapter II. What follows is the application of the findings from each president to the conceptual framework.

President A. Based on what has been shared in the interview and the analysis of the data, there is little support from the state in regard to the funding of East Longview State University (ELSU). Understanding the many sources of revenue that are available to the institution, President A is able to assume the roles of entrepreneur and politician within the cultural, collegial/professional and political constructs of the institution in response to academic concerns (quality of research) and market forces (sources of external funding) embedded within the ethical paradigm of care—all within an open-systems perspective.

He accomplishes this again by aligning funding to his “strategic goals.” Empowering the faculty (collegial/professional) to conduct research conducive to the standards of a Research I institution within the confines of the institutional mission (cultural) allows for better attraction of funding. This in turn leads to greater attraction of
well-known faculty and an increase in request for admissions thus contributing to the overall quality of the institution. Politically, this is a strategic “bargaining chip” for President A, being that ELSU has been able to secure several state-wide corporate funding sources through partnerships and joint-business ventures which he can then use as a means to request additional support from the state or negate any attempts at a budgetary reduction for the following fiscal year. President A has also done a good job in empowering students to take on their state government and exercise their right to an affordable, quality education.

The state continues to seek increased control over ELSU and its other institutions of higher education as mentioned through the production of a formal document outlining several weaknesses in the governance of these institutions. Thus, using the conceptual model, one can infer that state priorities ultimately contribute to the anarchical nature of the institution and, in theory, are best addressed when the president assumes a purely administrative role which utilizes the ethical paradigms of justice and critique while operating within a rational and natural systems perspective. In this case, President A adopted a multi-frame approach and managed to utilize every component of the conceptual model to challenge the state’s role in the management of the institution. “Sometimes you have to play hardball. When an issue is pressing or has been left hanging for too long, sometimes you need to push to get people to take action. Sometimes a crisis may warrant a quick response and you have to make sure that the response given is appropriate and can immediately address the issue” (President A). Such an accomplishment is rare as most presidents tend to favor one role over another and these roles are contingent upon certain internal and external variables of context.
President A’s leadership style demonstrated characteristics consistent with all four cognitive frames of presidential leadership (bureaucratic, collegial, political and symbolic). Furthermore, one is able to identify the process in which decision-making occurs through a logical progression of thought and action through each of the cognitive frames to achieve a desired outcome.

President B. Similarly, there are several inferences that can be made when it comes to the leadership and decision-making process of President B using this conceptual model. During the period of economic crisis coupled with increased demands for accountability from both the state and federal government, President B relied heavily on rationality by redefining the vision of Forest Hills State University (FHSU) while continuing to remain faithful to the mission of the institution. Such a vision would lay the foundation for the creation and implementation of key policies and initiatives that would maintain institutional effectiveness and efficiency.

Perceiving the university as a corporation with its employees as stakeholders, President B also drew on the natural systems perspective by allowing each college of FHSU to create a master plan that was aligned to the entire university’s plan. Such a strategy allowed for the colleges to identify problems and develop the best possible solutions that would be written into policy and implemented gradually or, in some cases, immediately. By ensuring that the colleges create policies that aligned with the university’s master plan of the university, President B was able to inspire commitment and affirmation from within the university to address issues of economic crisis and accountability.
This research indicates that President B focuses considerable attention on academic concerns and market forces while focusing less on state priorities when making decisions. Additionally, interview results indicated that these decisions are made using all three ethical constructs of, critique, care and justice with greater emphasis on the first and second. Throughout the interview, engagement with students emerged as an important theme and was a cornerstone of his presidency. Such a student-oriented approach has assisted in the establishment of a new vision for FHSU as an institution of academic excellence which prepares both the traditional and non-traditional students to be engaged citizens civically and globally.

Having been a university president for greater than 5 years, President B is well versed in policy development and implementation. He bases most of his decision-making on the Academic Concerns corner of the accountability triangle. Although Market Forces play a role through which President B is able to critique a current policy, program or department, President B has been able to garner support for a majority of his policies and initiatives through a focus on Academic Concerns. Such an approach means that President B relies heavily on the cultural and collegial/professional nature of the institution when assuming the role of visionary or entrepreneur. Based on the interview results, President B understands that any successful change or creation has to occur by altering and/or controlling the culture of the university. Such a decision-making approach relies on a rational systems perspective and more on an open systems perspective in which the president collaborates with various internal constituencies whether they are faculty, staff, students or any combination thereof.
President C. Based on the model, President C would prefer to work within the ethical construct of care along with an open-systems perspective that focuses on collegial/professional relationships in response to Academic Concerns and Market Forces. Still, with the development of the state-wide system of higher education, President C must operate through the ethical constructs of critique and care within the administrative and political definitions of presidential roles. These roles respond to state priorities in which the state government mandates policies which are based on market forces. Therefore, President C’s roles rely less on the ethic of justice within a rational systems perspective but focuses more on the entrepreneurial role taking into account importance of the cultural and collegial/professional arenas of the university. This is not to say that such roles are never used. In fact, many of the examples that President C described entailed trying to implement state mandates through collegial/professional interactions so that the product of this collaboration would be a mandate which supports the culture (mission) of the university.

President D. President D, with less than 5 years of experience and positive state government relations was not able to readily identify his roles but defined his responsibilities as managerial and that of a fundraiser. Therefore, it is difficult to place President D in any one area of the conceptual framework created for this study. Still, as time moves forward and conflicts arise President D’s roles will likely become clearly defined and a pattern of preferred leadership styles may surface.
Academia verses non-academia. As was evidenced through this research, the theoretical framework of socialization and role theory was helpful in discerning the relationship between the president’s background and their roles. One can conclude that presidents from academic backgrounds become more effectively socialized in their roles and have longer tenure at their institutions than those that come from non-academic backgrounds. Furthermore, the expression of these roles, especially in a manner which informs presidential decision-making, are strongly related to internal variables such as the influence of the university governing board and external variables such as the influence of the state government.

President A and President B both with academic backgrounds and a negative relationship with the state government self-identified their primary roles, leadership styles, ethical constructs and decision-making processes using a multi-perspective/frames approach as described in Bolman & Deal (2007).

Conversely, President C and President D with non-academic backgrounds prior to assuming their presidencies both had a positive relationship with the state government and self-identified their primary roles, leadership styles, ethical constructs and decision-making processes within a particular perspective/frame.

Although the patterns that emerged as a result of this study support the conceptual framework it should be noted that the presidency by nature is fluid. These roles, leadership styles, ethical constructs and decision-making processes are not isolated; rather they are perceived characteristics among the presidents themselves. Just because presidents prefer to operate in one manner over another does not mean that they are
always able to do so. Situations may from time to time force the president to change roles and leadership styles however, a president’s ethical constructs as well as his decision-making would remain relatively unaffected.

In conclusion, this conceptual framework advances research beyond the pre-established description of presidential roles, leadership styles, and decision-making and allows for the interpretation and expression of each in consideration of social attributions and desirable behaviors.
Chapter VI

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

This chapter provides a summary of the analysis presented in Chapter V of this study, the implications of that analysis, and the conclusions derived from these findings and subsequent discussion.

The presidents interviewed each presented their perspective on higher education administration. They answered every question candidly and provided examples to illustrate their points. All of the presidents related their roles, leadership, and decision-making to the contexts in which they perform their responsibilities. Among all of the presidents, the most influential of these contexts were the economic climate of the state and federal government as well as the climate of education presently and as anticipated in the future.

Through the cross-case analysis the data from the four presidents complemented each other and yielded several consistent themes each with variables that accounted for their roles, leadership styles and decision-making. These variables included: (a) relationship with the state government. (b) academic and non-academic background and (c) personal values and ethical postures.

**How have greater demands for accountability impacted the professional practice of a university president?**

Today’s university president is expected to be the epitome of leadership. S/he is expected to work diligently to improve the university through bold and ethical actions as well as make difficult decisions. This study found that although some of the presidents did not feel that accountability had an impact on their roles, leadership style and decision-
making the fact that they felt uncomfortable as public figures to external constituencies demonstrated the opposite.

*Roles.* The many roles that a president assumes require constant assessment. Pattentude, (2004) stated, “This balancing act is neither cynical nor cowardly. It can be done with great verve and decisiveness. It is a pragmatic stance, taken on behalf of the welfare of the university” (pg.16). The findings of this study however, found that this balancing act has become increasingly difficult for presidents.

This study clearly identified a correlation between the relationship of the state government with its institutions of higher education- both public and private in regard to the many roles and responsibilities of the academic presidency. When the relationship between the state government and the institution was negative, the presidents (President A and B) perceived their roles as largely entrepreneurial and did not feel that external demands for accountability had a direct impact on their presidencies. However, when such a relationship was positive, the presidents (President C and President D) perceived their roles first and foremost as administrative and managerial and did feel that external demands for accountability had a direct impact on their presidencies.

All these presidents stressed the importance of adaptability in their roles and leadership styles and equated this concept with the new definition of a successful university president, however their definitions of the presidency as a profession varied and such variance was equated to the organization of the university and configuration of its governance structure. The best example came from President D. Citing that the roles of the university president must be adaptive, President D’s interview demonstrated the struggle a university president faces when their roles are redefined through circumstances
that are not of their own making. Being the only president with tenure of less than five years in a private-land grant institution, President D exudes a sense of perspicacity and elitism similar to President B, which he believes safeguards him from some policies and accountability mandates. Conversely, like President C, President D felt as if his presidency had become more of a managerial position rather than a position of formal power and authority.

In their own words, each president indicated that he struggles with the management of issues namely the determination of which issues require immediate attention and which issues do not. “Negative things always seem to require immediate attention” President A stated. President B concurred, “What one group or person views as the end of the world as they know it, I see as something that I can address tomorrow.” Although the presidents felt that they tried their best to foresee any problems, they conceded that they do not invest a considerable amount of time and energy in “problem-seeking” (President C). “We are not problem-seekers, for the most part. We are problem-solvers” (President C).

Still, not all of a president’s immediate attention is taken by negative situations. President D best expressed sentiments echoed by the other presidents when he said, “It is just as important to give attention to the positive things that are happening in the university; things that go on everyday under your nose and you have no idea.” Similarly, President A also acknowledged the importance of giving attention to the positive things that occur in the university. Such a balance of “triage and praise” is not easy but effective presidents will be able to achieve such a balance as their experiences progress. “Bad things happen, yes but good things happen too. Acknowledging both is critical.”
Leadership. As stated in the previous chapter, all four presidents did not readily associate themselves with a particular leadership style yet they all classified their styles as contextual/situational with a predilection towards a distributed leadership style. Those presidents with a negative relationship with the state government (President A, President B) defined their leadership in terms of formal power and authority while those presidents with a positive relationship with the state government (President C, President D) struggled to define their leadership. Moreover, one cannot ignore the influence of tenure on the above relationship. Presidents A and B, each with tenure of more than 5 years, found it easier to influence the culture of their universities and knew how to “work the system” (President B) yet Presidents C and D found themselves influenced by the culture of the institutions or system of institutions of which they were a part.

The impact of internal and external variables on presidential roles and decision-making

Internal variables. Today’s university presidents are not as powerful as they once were or were believed to be. The presidency as a profession which was once embedded within the fundamentals of scholarship has been replaced with questions of direction, strategic planning and extensive policy implementation. In fact, all of the presidents in this study felt that their power and authority had become circumscribed both within the confines of their institutions as well as external entities to some degree.

The internal variables identified by the presidents were: institutional culture, governing board, faculty and staff, and students. (See Table 6A). All four presidents recognized that their roles and decision-making were bound in part by the culture and
governing boards of their institutions. Despite mentioning faculty, staff and students, only Presidents A and B identified these as additional variables that impacted their roles and decision-making while Presidents C and D felt that it was in their best interest to “leave the faculty to their own devices” (President C). President D concurred:

There are some things I can delegate and some I cannot. The direct responsibilities of the president do not necessarily include issues of curriculum and academics. Those things that are the direct responsibility of the president consume all of my time so I have to delegate the other stuff simply because I need to.

**Table 6A**

*Internal variables influencing presidential roles and decision-making*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Institutional Culture</th>
<th>Governing Board</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President A</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President B</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President C</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President D</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*External variables:* Using Burke’s Accountability Triangle (2005) which illustrates part of the conceptual model used in this study and is explained in Chapter III, external variables were identified as: academic concerns, market forces, and state priorities. Presidents A, B, and C acknowledged that academic concerns and market forces were primary contributors influencing their roles and decision-making however, Presidents C and D also cited the influence of the state on their roles and decision-making.
Furthermore, President D did not feel that academic concerns affected either his role or his decision-making because he preferred to delegate such concerns to those with more expertise.

Lastly, all four presidents mentioned the reliance on federal funding for research initiatives to enhance their institution’s reputation both nationally and internationally. (See Table 6B).

**Table 6B**

*External variables influencing presidential roles and decision-making*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Concerns</th>
<th>Market Forces</th>
<th>State Priorities</th>
<th>Federal Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President A</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President B</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President C</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President D</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Personal values and ethics in professional decision-making.* Presidents A, B, C and D came into their presidencies with unique backgrounds and experiences. With this in mind, one cannot help but ask how much of a president’s roles, leadership style, and decision-making are determined by their individual values and/or expectations of internal and external constituents. The results of this study found that personal values influence professional ethical decision-making. As a result of the economic climate across the United States, these presidents experienced a fundamental shift in their agendas. They
had to re-conceptualize their roles, visions, and management of their universities at a time of ambiguity in higher education. Aside from the professional responsibilities associated with the roles identified by the presidents, personal values and ethics emerged as a priority in presidential decision-making. Notwithstanding that some of the presidents felt that they did not consciously think about ethics in their decision-making, all of them associate the incorporation of their personal values into their ethical decision-making.

The best evidence of this conclusion is derived from the process of problem-solving discussed by each president. Cross analyses revealed a similar strategy in problem-solving once it has reached the level of the president. This strategy included: assessment of the problem, identification of key players, mediation between players, and development of policy. Generally, for this approach to problem solving, the presidents relied on a decision that was bound by the principles of rationality and associated this principle with the “greatest good for the greatest number of people” or the ethic of justice (utilitarianism). Nevertheless, for those problems in which the aforementioned strategy was not applicable, the presidents demonstrated a greater awareness of reflection on their core values. Cross case-study analyses found that these core values were repeated by each president individually in their responses. A summary of these values is represented in Table 6C.
### Table 6C

**President Identification of Common Values Associated with Ethics and Decision-Making**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Ambition</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, all of the presidents conceded that their personal values and ethics sometimes conflicted with the professional expectations of the presidency as a profession, especially those presidents with a positive relationship with the state government.

Presidents C and D struggled with their presidencies because their presidencies were pre-defined. The type of president that they wanted to be was not the type of president internal and external constituencies would allow them to be. Therefore, Presidents C and D felt that a rational and conservative approach to decision-making was best given the extent to which they felt accountable to the state although their personal values and ethical postures made them feel otherwise. As noted by President C in a statement released via the university website in 2009:

> My friends, the decisions we have made in these last few months have been tough but with ambition comes sacrifice and it is with the end in mind that we move forward. I wish to thank the Governor and the state for their continued support as we continue to improve the quality of education.

Similarly, President D stated.
There have been circumstances where I did not feel the policy was the right thing to go by and that says something about the situation because I am a very “black and white” kind of guy. Looking back now, perhaps I should have expressed my concern over the policy….

**Implications for Practice**

The research and analyses presented in this study were meant to address the impact of internal and external variables of context as it pertained to presidential roles, leadership styles, personal values and ethical decision-making at a time in which demands for measurable accountability mandates have become increasingly popular in higher education. The overall purpose of this study was to be descriptive and not prescriptive. The review of the literature presented in Chapter II as well as the conceptual framework created in Chapter III attempt to shed light on an otherwise complex, vague and sometimes misunderstood profession.

The review of the literature presented in Chapter II provides a synthesized overview of the university presidency including an array of descriptions and definitions focusing on the academic presidency, leadership, ethics, and accountability. It also includes several studies focusing on the university presidency through a broad spectrum of qualitative and quantitative approaches, all of which serve as a foundation for the interpretation of the results and analysis of this study.

The conceptual framework created for this study in Chapter III allows for the organization and visual representation of the many facets of the university presidency through various perspectives although it does not cover everything. Each component of the framework was defined by separate scholars and interpreted through the responses of
the presidents themselves. The result was an identification of key themes, variables and
relationships that address the research questions posed in this study.

The practical implications of this research are pertinent to university presidents,
theorists, state and federal policy makers, and future research. Presidents can benefit from
the analysis of the data by considering the impact their environment has on their decision-
making as well as identifying the need for a greater awareness of the influence of their
personal values and ethical postures on their professional roles, leadership styles, and
decision-making. Although the four presidents represented in this study were as different
as the institutions they represented, the findings show what each president individually
expressed similar characteristics and approaches pertaining to their profession. Theorists
can either accept these similarities and build upon them or attempt to disprove them.
Additionally, state and federal policy makers can consider the influences of contextual
factors when drafting or implementing legislation that is applicable to higher education.

**Implications for Future Research**

The vigor of this study was its ability to obtain information, interpret, and analyze
the Roles of the university president during an era of accountability. The delineation of
the roles, leadership styles, personal values, ethics, and decision-making of today’s
university president through the perspectives of current presidents provided rich data.
This study answered all of the questions it was intended to answer however many
questions that were beyond the scope of this research should be noted so that they may be
addressed in future studies of the university presidency, leadership, values, ethics, and
decision-making. These are discussed below.
For the purposes of this study, timing was critical. Meeting with the presidents required scheduling appointments months in advance. As such, it was difficult to get on the calendars of these presidents within the two-year limited time frame of this study. The collection of data took a little over one year to complete. In future studies about the university presidency with the knowledge generated as a result of this study, it would be very insightful to interview more presidents over a longer period of time to generate a longitudinal study that would identify additional trends, relationships, and themes. In addition, studies conducted at universities with differing classifications than the ones presented in this study may provide additional perspectives and analyze the degree of influence that the internal and external variables of context presented in this study have on those presidents. The results and analysis could then be compared to the presidents in this study.

Future research that explores the influence of additional variables not found in this study such as gender and race might provide a differing perspective on presidential roles, leadership styles, values, ethics, and decision-making that could supplement the findings of this study.

**Implications for Theory**

The theories expressed in Chapter II led to the conceptual framework presented in Chapter III which provides a figurative representation of the presidency as well as assists in the identification and explanation of which variables were most consistent among the presidents. This conceptual framework captured a snapshot of today’s university president and provided practical evidence which supported/opposed pre-existing
espoused theories of the presidency. As other theories are considered, the conceptual model may be modified to reflect those theories.

The use of ethics in this study extended from studies primarily conducted in the fields of elementary and secondary education. When one thinks of ethics in higher education, one generally considers the written professional codes of conduct with little attention to personal values even though values are just as important in the study of administrators in postsecondary education. This study drew upon the literature found in the field of business ethics as a link between the two. Authors such as Begley (2006), Stefkovich and Shapiro (2006), and Staratt (2007) have written extensively on issues of ethics and values in a variety of K-12 contexts. Their research provided a greater understanding of the impact of values on presidential roles, leadership styles, decision-making and policy development. Any one of the models generated by these authors is relevant and applicable across disciplines and educational classifications.

**Conclusion**

The findings derived from this study show that similar contextual factors/variables were associated with the presidents’ perceptions of their roles, leadership styles, and decision-making. Although not considered by the presidents as contextual, the influence of ethics and values was also linked to the aforementioned perceptions.

In spite of the common themes identified among the four presidents each presidency was a unique experience influenced by the culture of the institution, the president’s personal values, ethical postures, and the relationships of the president to
internal and external constituencies. Therefore, one should not make any generalizations about the presidency as a whole.

The reason why it is difficult to study university presidents is because of their demanding schedules. Oftentimes, surveys sent out to the presidents are either not completed or not filled out by the presidents themselves. This makes it difficult to quantify responses and generate valid results. Therefore, although more time consuming, presidents should be observed and interviewed in their natural environments.

The nature of the presidency as a profession will always be portrayed as a complex and dynamic interchange of variables and influences that shift over time. As presidents continue struggling to find a balance among these variables and influences they will also continue to rely on their fundamental values and ethics in their pursuit to define legacies which will leave their institutions stronger than they were before.
References


*Educational Record*, (Spring), pp. 146-168.


*Journal of Business Ethics*, 67:2, 125–137.


Appendix A

Interview Questions

RQ1) In what ways do you feel that the expectations for the role of university presidents have changed in the last decade?

- What do you anticipate will be necessary in the coming years to maintain and enhance [name of institution] as an excellent land-grant university?
- How have policy and accountability mandates changed your role?
- Talk to me about your understanding of the presidency as a profession.
- What are the qualities you think will be necessary of you as the president to achieve these results?
- Are there specific actions that could be taken that would significantly strengthen your role and the institution?
- What aspects of your presidency are the most difficult for you? Explain why.
- What aspects of your presidency are the most interesting and rewarding to you? Why?

RQ2) Are particular leadership styles evident in their personal and professional roles?

- Do you see yourself as modeling a particular leadership style?
- In your opinion, what makes a situation potentially problematic? How do you as the president identify problems? Do you feel that you are able to identify problems before they escalate into crisis?
• When problems do arise how are they effectively handled? Do you use an explicit approach to analyzing a problematic situation?

• How do you as the president articulate goals of excellence for the university and inspire commitment to these goals on the part of the university community?

RQ3) What is the impact of their personal values on their professional decision making?

• What do you identify as ethics/ethical behavior? How do you define ethics?

• What behaviors do you feel a university president should possess to demonstrate that s/he is part of an ethical profession?

• Which of these behaviors can you relate to?

• How often do you use ethics to make decisions and/or guide your daily actions? Can you provide an example?

• What strategies do you employ when making decisions?

• What personal values and attributes guide your awareness of the implications of your decisions as well as your ability to assume responsibility for those decisions?

• Since you entered the presidency, do you feel your values have changed at all? Why/why not?
RQ4) What internal and external variables of context impact the university president’s decision making?

- How do you feel the interrelated nature of factors such as budgeting, curriculum, social and political realities, group interests and pressures, laws, rules and regulations influence your decision making and management of the university?
- What activities have contributed to your personal development since assuming the presidency of [name] University?
- To whom do you feel you are accountable to and why?
- Do you feel that governing boards (university and state) have an influence (strong or otherwise) over your decision-making? Why or why not?

RQ5) How do university presidents decide which leadership approach they will use?

- How would you describe your leadership style?
- Do you feel that certain circumstances require different styles of leadership? Why/why not?
- Describe any modifications you have made to your leadership style (if any)? Discuss the reason(s) for the modification, the difficulties encountered in making the modification and the significant results of the modification.
**Conclusion**

Summarize and revisit topics already discussed.

- How have greater calls for accountability impacted your professional practices as a university president?
- What influences your decision-making?
- Other questions here based on dialogue.
- Do you have any more information that you would like to share that we have not already shared?
Appendix B

Recruitment Letter to Participants

<<Salutation>> <<First_Name>> <<Middle_Initial>> <<Last_Name>>
<<Date>>
<<Work_Address>>
<<City>>,<<State>>  <<Zip>>

Dear <<Salutation>> <<Last_Name>>:

My name is Hector L. Sambolin, Jr. and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership Department at Penn State. I am seeking research volunteers for my dissertation thesis and am hoping you will consider participating in my study. The purpose of the study is to examine how university presidents perceive their role in a context of accountability as well as how they invoke ethics into their professional decision-making. This project will help others understand how university presidents define their roles and help university scholars identify how these roles have changed in an era of accountability.

The study will include qualitative research methods allowing me to interview approximately ten university presidents one-on-one.

The data is being collected for the purposes of a Ph.D. thesis and may be used for subsequent research articles. Your university and city will not be associated with any publications or presentations from the research. The study will be carried out under the supervision of Professor Paul Begley, Professor of Education in the Department of Educational Policy Studies. Dr. Begley can be reached at (814) 863-1838 and pbegley@psu.edu.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of participation and assistance, which is greatly appreciated. If you are willing to participate, it would help my data collection methods if you would please (1) read and sign the enclosed informed consent form (a copy is enclosed for your records and (2) return the consent form in the enclosed postage paid business reply envelope.

Sincerely,

Hector L. Sambolin, Jr.
Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Policy Studies
Appendix C

SIGNED INFORMED CONSENT FORM
FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project:  The Changing Role of the University President During an Era of Accountability

Principal Investigator:  Hector L. Sambolin, Jr.
Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Educational Policy Studies
Address: 300 Rackley Building, University Park, PA 16801
E-mail: hls193@psu.edu  Phone: (814) 863-9440

Advisor:  Professor Paul Begley
Professor of Education in the Department of Educational Policy Studies
Office: 207B Rackley Building, University Park, PA 16801
E-mail: pbegley@psu.edu  Phone: (814) 863-1838

1. Purpose of the Study:  The purpose of this research is to examine how university presidents perceive their role in a context of accountability as well as identifying what role ethics plays in their professional decision making.

2. Procedures to be followed:  You will be asked to do two items to participate in the study.  First, participate in a personal interview with me at a location convenient for you or over the telephone.  The length of the interview will vary depending on how much you have to share but it is anticipated to take approximately one hour.  With your permission, the interview will be recorded.  Lastly, after the interview has been transcribed, you will be given the option of reviewing the transcription to verify the information is accurate and your intent was correctly captured.

3. Benefits:  You might learn more about yourself by participating in this study.  You will have the opportunity to reflect on your perceptions and how you invoke ethics.
You will also have the opportunity to reflect on how your position has changed over the years as a result of internal and external variables of context.

4. This research might provide a better understanding of the roles of the university president. This information could help university faculty, scholars and administrators develop a better understanding of how the role(s) of the university president have evolved. This information might bring challenges that university presidents face in the context of accountability.

5. **Duration:** The two phases of the study will take approximately one hour.

6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. All data will be stored and secured at in a locked file container and on password protected computer. All audio recorded data will be destroyed by August 2011. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** You can ask questions about this research. Please feel free to contact the principal investigator, Hector L. Sambolin, Jr., at (814) 863-9440 or his dissertation supervisor, Dr. Paul T. Begley at 814-863-1838.

8. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

9. **Age Requirement:** You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

10. **Voice Recordings:** Please choose two preferences for audio-records and associating personal identifiers with your responses.
    a. **Preference 1**
       - □ Yes, my name may be associated with my responses.
       - □ No, please do not associate my name with my responses.
    b. **Preference 2**
       - □ Yes, I agree to be digital and/or audio-recorded during the face-to-face or telephone interview.
       - □ No, I do not agree to be digital and/or audio-recorded during the face-to-face or telephone interview.
Use of Quotes: Please check one of the following:

_____ I \textbf{do give} my permission for portions of this interview to be directly quoted in publications/presentations.

_____ I \textbf{do not give} my permission for portions of this interview to be directly quoted in publications/presentations.

If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent for your records.

_________________________________________________________________________ Date ___________
Participant Signature

_________________________________________________________________________ Date ___________
Person Obtaining Consent
EDUCATION
Ph.D. Educational Leadership (Expected May 2010)
The Pennsylvania State University
Thesis Title: The Role(s) of the University President During an Era of Accountability

M.Ed. Educational Leadership
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania

B.S. Biological Sciences/ Genetics
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick, New Jersey

PROFESSIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE
2008-Present Counselor, College Assistance Migrant Program, Penn State
Currently serve as a retention counselor. Duties include: the supervision of Program Assistants, coordinating activities for students, academic advising, personal counseling, and mentoring of first-year and upper class students.

2005-2008 Editorial Assistant, American Journal of Education
Served as an editorial assistant. Duties include: maintaining data base, editing submissions, coordinating perspective reviewers for journal submissions, and preparing accepted manuscripts for publication to the Chicago Press.

PROFESSIONAL AND HONORARY AFFILIATIONS
American Educational Research Association (AERA)
Association of Professional Latinos (APL)
University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA)
Pi Lambda Theta Honor Society and Professional Association in Education
Phi Delta Kappa International Professional Fraternity in Education