The Pennsylvania State University
The Graduate School
College of Education

OPTING OUT OF THE PRESIDENCY:

PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICERS

A Dissertation in
Workforce Education and Development
by
Radecka Appiah-Padi

© 2014 Radecka Appiah-Padi

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

May 2014
The dissertation of Radecka Appiah-Padi was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Edgar I Farmer  
Professor Emeritus of Education  
Dissertation Adviser  
Chair of Committee

Wesley E. Donahue  
Associate Professor of Education

Craig D Weidemann  
Vice President for Outreach / Vice Provost for Online Education  
Associate Professor of Education

Edgar P. Yoder  
Professor of Extension Education

Kyle Peck  
Graduate Coordinator  
Department of Learning and Performance Systems

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School.
Abstract

This study explored the perspectives of community college chief academic officers (CAOs) on why they are opting not to pursue the college presidency as their next career move. The issue of CAOs opting out has been identified as a component of impending leadership crises in higher education, including a shortage of executive leaders in U.S. community colleges. This qualitative research study examined the lived experiences of nine CAOs (two males and seven females) from Pennsylvania community colleges to understand the reasons why community college chief academic officers in Pennsylvania are opting not to pursue the college presidency. An in-depth interview process was used to explore three research questions related to the topic:

1. What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?

2. Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by them?

3. How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?

The study revealed that CAOs come into higher education because of their personal passion for the academic functions of education: teaching and learning. CAOs make the decision to opt out of the presidency pipeline because the functions of the presidency are not aligned with their passions and interests. College presidents are externally focused and more engaged with the wider external community, than they are with day-to-day academic operations. The external nature of the functions and attributes of the presidency makes the role unattractive to CAOs.
# Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................ VIII 

LIST OF FIGURES ....................................................................................................... IX 

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................................................. X 

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................... 1 

  Historical Perspective ............................................................................................... 1 
    Graying and shortage of community college leadership ........................................ 1 
    The chief academic officer in community college leadership ......................... 3 
  The Problem ............................................................................................................. 4 
  Purpose of the Study ................................................................................................. 5 
  Significance of the Study ......................................................................................... 5 
  Research Questions .................................................................................................. 6 
  Limitations of Study ................................................................................................. 6 
  Definition of Terms .................................................................................................. 7 
  Assumptions ............................................................................................................. 8 
  Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................ 9 
    Grounded theory framework ............................................................................... 9 

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .................................................. 10 

  The Chief Academic Officer .................................................................................. 11 
    Profile of chief academic officers .................................................................... 11 
    The role of the chief academic officer in community colleges ...................... 13 
    Demographics of chief academic officers ...................................................... 15 
  Stepping Stone to the Presidency ......................................................................... 21 
    Pathway to the presidency .................................................................................. 21 
    Career aspirations and moves of chief academic officers ............................ 22 
  Opting-out Phenomenon ....................................................................................... 24 
    Opting out and women ...................................................................................... 24 
    Opting out in education profession .................................................................... 25 
    Opting out and chief academic officers ............................................................. 27 
  Grounded Theory Framework .............................................................................. 33
Chapter Summary .................................................................................................................. 36

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................ 38
Problem and Purpose ........................................................................................................... 38
Research Questions ............................................................................................................ 40
Data Collection .................................................................................................................. 41
  Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval ..................................................................... 41
  Research instrument ....................................................................................................... 42
  Subject matter experts .................................................................................................... 45
Study participants and access ............................................................................................. 46
Strategies for Ensuring Credibility and Rigor ................................................................... 49
  Researcher background ................................................................................................... 49
  Use of subject matter experts ....................................................................................... 50
  Pilot-test of research instrument .................................................................................... 50
  Triangulation of data sources ........................................................................................ 50
  Verification of data ......................................................................................................... 50
Limitations of Research Process ......................................................................................... 51
Qualitative Data Analysis: Grounded Theory Approach .................................................... 52
  Phase 1: Definition of the analysis .................................................................................. 53
  Phase 2: Classification the data ....................................................................................... 56
  Phase 3: Development of the narrative and/or theory ..................................................... 57

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS ............................................................................................ 60
Phase 1: Definition of the Analysis ..................................................................................... 61
  Ontology and epistemology interests .............................................................................. 61
  Assumptions .................................................................................................................... 62
  Unit of analysis ............................................................................................................... 63
Phase 2: Classification of the Data ..................................................................................... 67
  Initial coding ..................................................................................................................... 67
  Focused coding ................................................................................................................ 69
Phase 3: Theoretical Coding Development of the Narrative and/or Theory ...................... 71
Narrative of Themes and Categories for Research Question #1 .................................... 72
Career paths category ....................................................................................................... 72
Career moves category. ................................................................. 74
Professional development and preparation category. ....................... 77
Presidential aspiration category. ..................................................... 78
Themes and relationships. ............................................................. 85

Narrative of Themes and Categories for Research Question #2 .......... 86
President’s role vs. CAO’s role category. ........................................... 86
Desirability of presidency role category ......................................... 89
Issues affecting desirability of presidency category ......................... 92
Themes and relationships. ............................................................. 94

Narrative of Themes and Categories for Research Question #3 .......... 95
Institutional actions category ......................................................... 95
Potential changes to the presidency category .................................. 98
Themes and relationships. ............................................................. 98

Grounded Theory of the CAOs Opting Out of the College Presidency ... 99

Contexts. ....................................................................................... 100
Causes. ......................................................................................... 101
Consequences. ............................................................................. 102
Conditions ..................................................................................... 102
Contingencies. ............................................................................. 103
Covariance. .................................................................................. 103
Theory. ......................................................................................... 104

Chapter Summary ......................................................................... 105

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION .................................. 109

Summary of the Research ............................................................... 109
Discussion and Implications of Findings ......................................... 110
Research question #1. ................................................................... 110
Research question #2. ................................................................... 113
Research question #3. ................................................................... 115

Recommendations and Implications for Practice ......................... 116
Career Planning ............................................................................ 116
Succession planning ..................................................................... 117
Mentoring and grooming ................................................................. 118
Training and development. A number of this study’s participants recommended ........................................... 118
Job redesign ................................................................................. 120
Recommendations for Further Research ........................................ 120

APPENDIX A ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES ........................................ 123
APPENDIX B INTERVIEW GUIDE ............................................................ 125
APPENDIX C INFORMED CONSENT FORM .............................................. 127
APPENDIX D SAMPLE OF RECRUITMENT EMAILS ................................ 128
REFERENCES .................................................................................. 129
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.1 Dissertations on College Presidents and Chief Academic Officers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.2 Summary of Respondents by Institutions</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.3 Summary of Basic Demographic Indicators</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.4 Summary of CAO Tenure</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.5 Summary of Career Aspirations and Career Moves of CAOs</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2.6 CAOs’ Reasons for Opting Out of the Presidency</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3.1 Summary of Basic Demographic Indicators of Study Participants</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.1 Study Participants’ Identifiers</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>CAO Opting Out Phenomenon Research Concept Map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>Traditional Organization Chart for a Large Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>Pathways to the Presidency 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Grounded Theory Coding – Three Models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Data Analysis Process Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.2</td>
<td>Unit of Analysis Narrative Grid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.3</td>
<td>Initial Coding: Thought-By-Thought Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4</td>
<td>Initial Code Clusters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.5</td>
<td>Streamlined Codes to Theory Model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.6</td>
<td>Example of Themes, Conceptual Categories and Focused Codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.7</td>
<td>Alignment of Environmental Situation and Human Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.8</td>
<td>Schema of Theoretical Families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.9</td>
<td>Substantive Level Theory of CAO Opting Out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this doctoral journey has been one of the most significant academic challenges I have ever had to face. Without the encouragement, coaching, prayers and support of many individuals, all of whom I cannot mention in this limited space, I would not have succeeded. I am grateful for all the help.

First of all I thank you God, for the life, health, and energy that you have given me to reach my professional goals.

I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to my doctoral advisor, Dr. Edgar Farmer, without his guidance and persistent help this journey and dissertation, would not have been possible. Dr. Farmer you always encouraged me from when I first met you to discuss the possibility of pursuing my doctorate. Your wisdom, knowledge and commitment to the highest standards of education have inspired and motivated me.

I want to thank my dissertation committee members Dr. Wes Donahue, Dr. Craig Weidemann and Dr. Edgar Yoder for their constructive comments and suggestions.

Special thanks to the subject matter experts who took the time to offer insightful guidance: Dr. Peter Garland and Dr. Kathleen Howley of Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education; Dr. Linda McMillin of Susquehanna University and Dr. Francie Spigelmyer of Butler County Community College

To my invaluable support system of prayerful and loving sisters without whom I could not have survived the journey: Espie, Ewurakua, Jessie and Rachel, I say a big thank you and God bless.
DEDICATION

To my husband Stephen: My love and my rock

To my children Maafio, Mamekraa and Nana: My pride and joy

To my parents Solomon and Janet Sarfoh: The best parents a child can have
Chapter 1
Introduction

Historical Perspective

This study explored the perspectives of community college chief academic officers (CAOs) on why they are opting not to pursue the college presidency as their next career move. The issue of CAOs opting out has been identified as a component of the impending higher education leadership crises, including a shortage of executive leaders in U.S. community colleges (Cedja, 2008, 2010; Eckel, Cook, & King, 2009). In the past decade, various higher education stakeholders have raised concerns about the graying of community college leadership, the impending mass retirements of college leaders and the resulting leadership shortage (Ebbers, Conover, & Samuels, 2010; Shult, 2001). While the graying and retirement of leaders is occurring across entire institutions, that is across the executive leadership, administration, and faculty ranks, research into the issues have focused mainly on presidents and how to replace them (Duree, 2007; Piland & Wolf, 2003; Shultz, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). College presidents have become the symbol of the impending crisis: the shortening of their tenures as well as the expected mass exodus (ACE, 2007; Duree et al., 2008; Stanley & Betts, 2004).

Graying and shortage of community college leadership. The alarm bells on the issue of the graying and shortage of leadership have been sounded since the late 1990s and early 2000 (Kelly, 2002; Romero, 2004; Shultz, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). About 84% of community college presidents are expected to retire by 2016, an increase from 68% in 1996 and 79% in 2001 (ACE, 2007; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). The alarms led to studies exploring the problem from different angles: demographics
and characteristics of community college presidents (Shults, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007), presidential pipeline and career path (ACE, 2007; Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Cejda, McKenney & Burley, 2001), leadership gap as a consequence of pipeline deficiencies (Campbell, 2006; June 2007; Piland & Wolf, 2003; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007), and leadership development (AACC, 2005; Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2010). In 2004, in response to growing concerns about an impending leadership shortage in community colleges, the AACC released a report, *A Competency Framework for Community College Leaders* (AACC, 2005). This report and the research behind it invoked a call to action for community college leadership development.

In more recent years, another aspect of the leadership crisis has started to attract the attention of researchers: the fact that other senior administrators, who are the natural replacements of retiring presidents, are themselves choosing to retire or not pursue the presidency (Eckel et al., 2008; Kelly, 2002; Romero, 2004). It has been argued that the major leadership problem is not that the presidents are expected to retire in large numbers but rather the dwindling pool of replacements (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Evelyn, 2001; Shultz, 2001). The concern is that the traditional pipelines to the college presidency are shrinking rapidly; typical leadership development efforts are unable to meet the need for replacement leaders (Duree, 2007; Romero, 2004). This concern has led to increased research on other leadership roles in the community college that could possibly offer replacements for the president, and particularly the role of the chief academic officer (CAO), which is seen as the stepping stone to the presidency.
The chief academic officer in community college leadership. The typical executive leadership and management structure of community colleges is comprised of a president/chancellor and various vice-presidents, associate vice-presidents, as well as deans. These leaders oversee functions such as Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Business and Operations, Human Resources, Technology, etc. (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The titles of the leaders and their specified duties may vary from institution to institution, but the functions are generally the same. Within the executive leadership structure, the individual responsible for academic affairs—sometimes called the chief academic officer (CAO), the provost, or the vice-president of academic affairs—plays a very critical role. The CAO is responsible for providing leadership for the institutions’ core business: instruction and learning. Ferron and Stanton (2004) described CAOs as the voices for the campus’s academic purpose and a source of energy in supporting the activities of others. While this position is critical in the running of colleges, until recently researchers have paid relatively little attention to it (Keim & Murray, 2008).

The CAO is often regarded as the next in-command after the president and the position has been the stepping stone to the presidency for many college presidents (Amey, VanDer Linden & Brown, 2002; Keim & Murray, 2008). According to the American Council on Education (ACE), the percentage of chief academic officers who became college presidents rose from about 17% in 1998 to about 37% in 2006 (ACE, 2007). Studies on the career aspirations of CAOs have provided further support to the assertion that the office of the CAO is a typical path to the college presidency (Amey, VanDer Linden & Brown, 2002; Modem, Miller & Williford, 1987; Murray, Murray & Summer, 2000). Even though research supports the notion that the office of the CAO is
the pipeline to the college presidency, new evidence is emerging to suggest that occupants of the office are becoming less interested in the position of the presidency as their next career move (Cejda, 2008; Cejda, McKenney, & Fuller, 2001; Eckel, Cook & King, 2009).

The Problem

In 2009 the ACE released a national comprehensive study on CAOs, *The CAO Census: A National Profile of Chief Academic Officers*, which provided extensive quantitative evidence to support the notion of CAOs opting out of the college presidency pipeline (Eckel et al., 2009). *The CAO Census* report included data on 531 community college CAOs, which represents information on almost one-third of community college chief academic officers/provosts across the United States. The findings of the CAO Census study revealed that only 24% of community college CAOs accepted presidency positions; 26% retired; and 49% went on to do other things. This meant that about 75% of community college CAOs opted not to pursue the college presidency.

Given the nature of their work, CAOs are best positioned to provide leadership to community colleges (Eckel et al., 2009). Any significant contraction of the presidency pipeline as a result of the CAO attrition has serious implications for the impending leadership shortage in community colleges. A loss of CAO talent through attrition will result in a “brain-drain” of leadership support for the core functions of any campus. Consequently, if the problem of the shrinking pipeline to the presidency is to be addressed, it is important to understand the reasons why so many CAOs do not aspire to the presidency.
**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore, from the perspectives of chief academic officers, their reasons for opting out of college presidencies. Given that the CAOs are deciding not to pursue the presidency, the first step in understanding why they are opting out is to ask them. Using qualitative interview methods, the lived experiences of community college CAOs were explored to understand the reasons behind the shrinking of the CAO-to-presidency pipeline. Community college CAOs in Pennsylvania were interviewed for this study. Pennsylvania has fourteen community colleges throughout the State.

**Significance of the Study**

This study offered CAOs an opportunity to describe, in their own words, the reasons for opting out and to gain insights into some reasons for the leadership crisis; findings will offer solutions that may be offered from the inside. Since CAOs work very closely with the college presidents, they tend to have similar understandings of the missions of the community colleges, what the institutions need, as well as how the position of the president can be enacted to move the institutions forward. Having such individuals step into the role of the presidency provides much needed continuity for colleges. It is therefore critical to find ways to, first, encourage more CAOs to consider the presidency; second, determine how the presidency could be made more appealing to CAOs; and finally, find out how younger academic leaders could be encouraged to move into the CAO position earlier in their careers (Eckel et al., 2009). CAOs are best positioned to provide insider information on the issues.
In addition, study findings add to the growing research literature on other important leadership roles in community colleges, and particularly on the lived experiences of chief academic officers (Cedja, 2008, 2010; Kelly, 2011). The lived experiences of CAOs provide insights needed to address important issues facing community colleges.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?

2. Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by them?

3. How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?

**Limitations of Study**

A major limitation of this study was its limited scope: sample size and geographic focus. The study utilized purposeful sampling to study community college CAOs in Pennsylvania. This decision was made to make the study manageable within a doctoral study program. Consequently, the findings from this study will not necessarily be generalizable to other locales.

The self-reporting style of the qualitative interview process presented another limitation on the data collected as part of the study. There was a potential risk of study participants being guarded in sharing their perspectives.
Definition of Terms

American Association of Community Colleges: The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is the primary advocacy organization for U.S. community colleges. The Association represents about 1,200 two-year, associate degree-granting institutions and more than 13 million students (AACC, 2008).

Career Aspiration: Career aspiration is defined as the professional plans for one to four years and five to ten years for the chief academic officer (Eckel et al., 2009).

Career Path: The term refers to sequences of related positions that are common to a portion of the labor force and for which there was a high probability of movement from one position to another (Twombly, 1988).

Chief Academic Officer: This position is sometimes referred to as provost, vice president for academic affairs or instruction, or academic dean. The chief academic officer is next-in-line to the president, and serves as the administrative head of academic programs, with responsibility for all academic affairs at the institution (Murray et al., 2000).

Community College: This is an institution accredited to award the Associate in Arts or the Associate in Science as its highest degree. The definition includes the public comprehensive two-year colleges as well as many of the technical institutes (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Opting out Phenomenon: This term is used in this study to refer to the decision not to pursue the next logical career step. This term was first used in early 2000 to describe professional and executive women stepping of the career ladder and their high-status, well-paying jobs to stay home with their children (Vavrus, 2007).
Assumptions

The first assumption of this study was ontological (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), referring to the nature of the phenomenon of opting out of the presidency and what the research subjects, the CAOs, can know about it. The study assumed that because of the close working relationships between chief academic officers and college presidents, they, the CAOs, have unique perspectives on why the presidency may not be desirable to them.

The second assumption was epistemological and had to do with the nature of the relationship among the research subjects, the CAOs and what can be known about the phenomenon of opting out. Since the opting out phenomenon is experienced by the CAOs themselves, they are the ones best situated to provide the underlying explanation for it, what Creswell (2007) termed the *abstract analytic schema* of a phenomenon.

The third and final assumption of the study was that the phenomenon of opting out of the presidency is shaped by forces both outside as well as within the experiences of individual CAOs (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2011). Consequently, there would be some commonalities in the perspectives of the participant CAOs, as well as significant differences. This is because individual lived experiences are influenced by a variety of factors, such as social conditions, organizational culture, etc. The perspectives and social perceptions of the CAOs are defined, developed, and negotiated through daily social interactions (Straus & Corbin, 1998).

Taken together, these three assumptions influenced the selection of a grounded theory approach as the theoretical framework for this dissertation research.
Theoretical Framework

**Grounded theory framework.** The grounded theory framework adopted in this research was first proposed by Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser in 1967, as an interpretive paradigm to better address research in the human sciences (Creswell, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). The approach presents an organized, systematic, action-sensitive methodology for discovering the realities of research subjects (Creswell, 2007). Grounded theory assumes that individuals act or behave on the basis of meaning; to get at that meaning, one must engage the individuals (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Glaser (1978), the main goal of grounded theory is to discover:

> . . . the theoretical reflections and summarizations of the patterned, systematic uniformity flows of the social life which people go through, and which can be conceptually ‘captured’ and further understood through the construction of basic social process theories (p. 100).

Following this explanation, the grounded theory approach was adopted for this study because it allows research to go beyond a general description of the phenomenon of opting out and to discover an analytical schema undergirding the situation. One can generate a general explanation for the “opting out phenomenon” as it is shaped by the interactions and social processes of the CAOs. The strength of this framework rest with the inductive approach as opposed to a deductive one; data collected as part of the research are not forced into an a priori framework.
Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

This chapter presents a review of literature relevant to the study of chief academic officers’ (CAOs) perspectives on the opting out of the presidency phenomenon. The review is organized around the three concepts embedded in the research questions for this study, as well as the theoretical framework used to analyze the questions:

- Profile of chief academic officers: who are these individuals who serve in the critical leadership role of CAO?
- Stepping stone to the presidency: how does the chief academic officer role factor into the presidential pathway?
- Opting out phenomenon: what is it and does it play out?
- Grounded Theory Research: how to develop an explanatory theory for CAOs opting out?

Following Hart (1998) and Kamler and Thomson (2006), a concept map was developed to show a diagrammatic representation of the relationships among the concepts reflected in the research question and how they connect to the output of the study (see Figure 2.1). The underlying principle of the concept map is the relationship among cause, effect, and problem solving. It shows a relationship among the elements of the CAOs’ lived experience (their profile and the office) and their perspectives on the opting-out phenomenon. Their perspectives were then analyzed within a grounded theory framework, to develop an explanatory theory of the phenomenon.
The position of CAO has been one of the least studied leadership roles in higher education (Cedja, Bush & Rewey, 2002; Kiem & Murray, 2008). Results from a search of the Proquest Dissertation & Theses A&I Database for doctoral research conducted over the past sixty years support the assertion of limited studies on CAOs. Using the key words chief academic officer, chief academic officers, provost, college president and college presidents, the search yielded a total of 490 dissertations (see Table 2.1).
Of the dissertations, 402 were on college president(s) and the remaining 88 were related to CAO(s)/Provosts. There is a clear disparity between the numbers of studies focused on college presidents versus those on CAOs. The ratio is about five to one. Even as the numbers of studies steadily increased over the decades, the disparity remained.

The increasing number of doctoral studies on higher education presidents and CAOs corresponded with the dominant narrative regarding the leadership crises facing U.S. higher education during the 1990s and 2000s. During that period, alarm bells were being sounded about the graying of senior leadership in higher education and the impending leadership shortage (Evelyn, 2001; Kelly, 2002; Romero, 2004; Shultz, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). Organizations such as the American Council on Education (ACE) and American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) led the charge to address the problem. Research was encouraged and leadership development programs
were developed. For example, in 2004, in response to growing concerns about an impending leadership shortage in community colleges, the AACC released the report, *A Competency Framework for Community College Leaders* (AACC, 2005). This report and the research behind it became a call to action for community college leadership development. The report highlighted the six core competencies that community college leaders needed to be able to meet the challenges they faced. With the explicit or tacit encouragement of the AACC document, a variety of leadership development programs have been developed (Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2010; Jeandron, 2006). The AACC promoted the competency framework as a tool to help "emerging leaders chart their professional development, provide leadership development programs with curricular guidelines, and guide college human resources department and board of trustees in recruitment, hiring and professional development" (Hassan et al., 2010, p. 182). Within this context, it is not surprising to see that between 2000 and 2009, large numbers of dissertation studies were produced, particularly focused on college president(s).

Compared to 1980–1989, the number of dissertations completed in the first decade of the 2000s has doubled. The disparity between the numbers of dissertations on presidents and CAOs underscores the need for additional research to increase the knowledge base on the critical leadership role of chief academic officers.

**The role of the chief academic officer in community colleges.** The typical senior/executive leadership structure of community colleges consists of a president/chancellor, vice-presidents/associate vice-presidents, assistant vice-presidents, and deans. The titles of the positions and specifics of the duties may vary from institution to institution, but generally the functions are the same. Figure 2.2 shows the
traditional organizational chart for a community college. This structure, according to Cohen and Brawer (2008), may vary for community colleges within a state community college system, a university-controlled community college system or multi-college district (also see Appendix A, Other Organization Structures of Community Colleges).

Figure 2.2. Cohen and Brawer’s (2008) Traditional Organization Chart for a Large Community College

Note: Adapted from Cohen & Brawer (2008), The American community college, Copyright 2003 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Pennsylvania community colleges tend to be locally controlled and have traditional organization charts. Within the leadership structure of the traditionally structured community college, the individual responsible for academic affairs is the vice-president of academic affairs, also sometimes referred to as “provost” or “chief academic officer”. Functionally, the CAO is often the next in-command after the
president and is responsible for providing leadership for the institutions’ core business: instruction and learning. This characterization of the CAO has been consistent in the research literature. Vaughn (1990) described the chief academic officer’s role as one that is internally focused in the institution, having responsibility to ensure that colleges stay true to their central mission of teaching and learning. CAOs operate as “middlemen in the college, linking faculty work to the educational goals of the president” (Vaughn, 1990, p. 18). A decade later, McKenney and Cejda (2000) reiterated this description of CAOs as leaders and managers of the academic mission of the institution, while Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) referred to them as the administrative officials responsible for the academic program of the institution. Ferron and Stanton (2004) also affirmed this view of CAOs by describing them as the voices for the campus’s academic purposes.

A recent comprehensive survey of CAOs offers empirical support to the academic emphasis in the CAO role, as well as its internal focus (Eckel, King, & Cook, 2009). In the survey of CAOs from regionally accredited, degree-granting colleges and universities, the respondents indicated that the two most important aspects of their jobs were “promoting academic quality” (56%) and “setting of the academic vision of the institution” (46%). In addition, 65% reported that the aspects of their jobs that consumed most of their time was “curriculum and academic program” while 57% indicated “supervising and managing personnel, including deans, etc.”. Given the relationship between the role of the CAO and the core business of colleges, it is necessary to know who these people are who fulfill this critical function.

**Demographics of chief academic officers.** Since the late 1980s a number of studies have examined the demographics on chief academic officers. One of the earlier
studies profiling CAOs was Moore, Twombly, and Martorana (1985). They studied CAOs ($n = 271$) as part of a larger study of eight administrative positions in public and private two-year colleges. The researchers examined the age, gender, educational attainment, and tenure as well as career paths/goals of CAOs. The findings indicated that CAOs were mostly male (84%), had an average age of 49 years, and served an average tenure of 6.2 years. Though Moore et al. did not directly address the issue of diversity among CAOs; the lack of racial/ethnic diversity in their representative sample pointed to the lack of racial/ethnic diversity in the general CAO population. The percentage of White administrators in the eight administrative positions studied was 90%.

Five years after the Moore et al. research, Vaughn (1990), using the Career and Lifestyles Survey, studied public community college CAOs ($N = 619$). Vaughn’s study yielded findings similar to those from the Moore et al. study, with a few variations. His study concluded that the CAO position was still predominantly male (79%) and White (93%). The average age and tenure of CAOs had not changed very much: 48 years and 6.1 years. In contrast to the Moore et al. study, Vaughn directly addressed the question of diversity and the findings provided direct empirical evidence demonstrating the limited racial and ethnic diversity among CAOs. Racial/ethnic minority constituted only 7% of CAOs.

The study by Vaughn (1990) made two important contributions to CAO research literature. It showed the gradual change in the gender balance in the CAO ranks. Women now constituted 21% of CAOs—an increase of five percentage points over Moore et al. study findings. Vaughn was also the first to propose the notion of a pathway to the presidency. He suggested that the office of the chief academic officer was the main
pathway to the college presidency, since one out of every two presidents had held the immediate prior position of CAO.

The profiling of CAOs continued into the 2000s, with work such as McKenney and Cejda (2000). Building on the work of Moore et al. (1985) and Vaughn (1990), McKenney and Cejda focused on CAOs from public community colleges listed by the American Association of Community Colleges. McKenney and Cejda wanted to: (a) identify any significant changes that may have occurred among CAOs since Vaughn’s study, and (b) expand the research literature on administrative careers in community colleges. With an $n$ of 369, the research reported the average age of CAOs to be 52 years, and the percentage of female CAOs had risen to 39% of CAOs, while minorities now constituted 12% of CAOs.

A comparison of the results from Moore et al. (1985), Vaughn (1990), and McKenney and Cejda (2000) showed the diversification and graying occurring among CAOs. From 1985 to 2000, there had been small but steady changes. First, there was a more than twenty percentage point increase in the number of women assuming CAO positions. Second, there had been a small but noticeable upward movement (a 5% increase) in the number of racial and ethnic minorities who were CAOs. Also, the average age of the CAO had risen from 49 years to 52 years. While all of the studies discussed offered excellent findings, their limited scope had critical implications for the generalizability of the findings. For example, McKenney and Cejda (2000) studied only CAOs in public community colleges affiliated with the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). This meant that the interpretation of the results could not necessarily be extended to CAOs in private or independent colleges, as well as
doctorate, master's and baccalaureate institutions. A 2009 study funded by the American Council on Education (ACE) addressed this limitation. The ACE released the first of its kind of national census data on chief academic officers, *The CAO Census: A National Profile of Chief Academic Officers* (Eckel et al., 2009). Based on a survey of more than 1,700 CAOs from five different categories of colleges and universities across the country, the study has provided the most comprehensive profile of CAOs to date (see Table 2.2). The highest number of respondents was from associate degree institutions such as community colleges, while the lowest number came from doctorate-granting universities.

Table 2.2

*Summary of Respondents by Institutions—Eckel et al. (2009)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's</td>
<td>531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Focus</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = 1,715. Adapted from Eckel, Cook & King (2009), The CAO Census: A National Profile of Chief Academic Officer. Copyright 2009 by the American Council on Education.*

Even though higher education in the last several years has made significant efforts to diversify the leadership of academic institutions, the office of the CAO is still very much male-dominated at 59.9% and White at 85.4% (see Table 2.3). Diversity and gender mix among CAOs had not changed since McKenney and Cejda (2000). With a
split of 60% males and 40% female, the gender balance had remained pretty stable. Likewise, the racial divide stayed about the same at 85% Whites and 13% minority. When the data are categorized according to institutional types, community colleges bucked the national averages in both gender and racial diversity. More women served as CAOs in community colleges than in the other institutions. Also at 18.6%, there were more minority CAOs in community colleges than in other institutions.

The average age and tenure of CAOs continued to demonstrate the leadership crises facing U.S. higher education: leaders growing older and serving for shorter durations. With the average age of a CAO being 56 years for all institutions and 55 years for community colleges, CAOs were three years older than in earlier studies (McKenney & Cejda, 2000). The average tenure of CAOs was now 4.7 years (see Table 2.4). This represented a 1.5-year decrease in the length of time that CAOs serve in their positions.

An aspect of the Eckel et al. (2009) data relevant to this current study was the relationship between length of CAO tenure and their lack of interest in the role of the presidency. The survey results indicated that the longer CAOs stayed in their roles, the less likely they were to be interested in a college presidency. Thirty-nine percent of CAOs with less than three years tenure were uninterested in the presidency, while 42% of CAOs who had been in their post for three to six years ruled out the presidency. The percentage climbed even higher to 62% when CAOs had a tenure of seven or more years. This raises the question: if the office of CAO is the stepping stone to the presidency, what in the CAOs’ experiences makes them less interested in the office of the presidency, the longer they served as CAOs?
Table 2.3

*Summary of Basic Demographic Indicators—Eckel et al. (2009)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>College</td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>College</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>59.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td>50.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race / Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 yrs. – 50 yrs.</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 yrs. – 60 yrs.</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 yrs. or older</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Eckel, Cook & King (2009), *The CAO Census: A National Profile of Chief Academic Officer*. Copyright 2009 by American Council on Education.
Table 2.4

Summary of CAO Tenure—Eckel et al. (2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Institutions</td>
<td>Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Institutions</td>
<td>Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of tenure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or less</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5 years</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average tenure</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from Eckel, Cook & King (2009), *The CAO Census: A National Profile of Chief Academic Officer*. Copyright 2009 by American Council on Education.

Stepping Stone to the Presidency

**Pathway to the presidency.** Historically, the office of chief academic officer (CAO) has been considered one of the most direct pathways and stepping stones to the college/university presidency (Keim & Murray, 2008; McKenney & Cedja, 2000; Vaughn, 1990). The term, pathway to the presidency, was first used by Vaughn (1990) when his study revealed that the immediate prior position of one in every two presidents he studied was that of CAO. According to a 2007 ACE report on the American college president (ACE, 2007), the percentage of chief academic officers who became college presidents rose from about 17% in 1998 to about 40% in 2006. Figure 2.3 shows the pathways mapped out in the report. In mapping out the pathway to the presidency for presidents who were serving in their first presidency, the Report suggested that the CAO
role was the most common immediate prior position at 40%, followed by other senior academic offices at 16% (King & Gomez, 2008).

**Figure 2.3 King & Gomez (2008), Pathways to the Presidency 2006**

Note: Adapted from King & Gomez (2008), On the Pathway to the Presidency: Characteristics of Higher Education’s Senior Leadership. Copyright 2008 by the American Council on Education.

**Career aspirations and moves of chief academic officers.** Studies of the career aspirations of CAOs have provided further support to the assertion that the office of the CAO is a typical path to the college presidency (Amey, VanDer Linden & Brown, 2002; Modem, Miller & Williford, 1987; Murray, Murray & Summer, 2000). Career aspiration is a complex concept that encompasses career commitments and positional goals (Young & McLeod, 2001). The attributes of career commitment include reason, motivation and purpose. These attributes are what draw individuals to a particular position/job. They may have either an economic or psychological basis (Pounder & Merrill, 2001).
Individuals translate these attributes into positional goals and based on their positional goals, they make certain career moves (mobility).

In the Murray et al. (2000) study of randomly sampled CAOs of American Association of Community College (AACC) member institutions, 62% of respondents ($n=120$) indicated an interest in pursuing college presidencies as their next career moves. Within this percentage, 34% preferred the presidency at their present institutions while 28% wanted a presidency at another college. In that same study, when respondents were asked to list their top three career moves after their tenure as CAOs, presidency at another college, presidency at current college, and retirement were listed in descending order as the top three preferences. Murray and colleagues concluded that these findings demonstrated that CAOs viewed their positions as stepping stones to the presidency and that in serving as CAOs, they were receiving on-the-job preparation for the presidency.

A later study of AACC presidents by Weisman and Vaughn (2007) revealed that 46% of the respondents ($n=545$) had left positions as either chief of academic affairs or a vice presidency with oversight of academic affairs, to assume college presidencies. This phenomenon is not limited to community colleges. Hartley and Godin (2009) reported that the most common immediate past positions of presidents of independent colleges and universities were provosts/chefs of academic affairs.

While these findings support the notion that the office of CAO is the pipeline to the college presidency, new evidence suggests that occupants of the office are becoming less interested in the position of the presidency as their next career move (Eckel et al., 2009). In terms of career mobility and next moves after tenure as CAO, looking at the predecessors of the study respondents, Eckel et al. reported that 21% retired, 20% went
into presidency roles, while 18% returned to the faculty ranks. These career moves exemplify the “lost knowledge challenge” faced by higher education leadership—the possible decreased capacity for effective action or decision making in a specific function or role due to conditions such as employee turnover, retirements and other forms of attrition (Berliner, 2009; Delong, 2004). This gives impetus to the need to study, understand, and address the problem of a lack of CAO interest in presidency positions. It is also important to go beyond describing the problem, and to be able to find answers if the shrinking pipeline to the presidency is to be stemmed.

**Opting-out Phenomenon**

Key assumptions about an individual’s career mobility and job choices are that: (a) career advancement equals upward mobility and (b) career advancement is actively sought by working individuals (Hall, 2002; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Based on these assumptions, researchers have generally attempted to explain why some individuals opted-out of careers or jobs, as well as the underrepresentation of certain groups like women and minorities in some job roles, by identifying the barriers and factors that impede their advancement in the workplace. There is, however, a growing body of evidence to suggest that this assumed narrative may not tell the entire story of underrepresentation or opting out. Initially, the popular and dominant narrative about opting out was that women tended to opt out of careers and jobs mostly for family reasons (Belkin, 2003; Gross, 2005; Vanderkam, 2005; Wallis, 2004).

**Opting out and women.** Belkin (2003) first drew attention to the *Opt out revolution* in an article in the *New York Times*. Her article was followed by several others supporting this idea. There were stories of Ivy-league educated women stepping
out of the career path for motherhood (Story, 2005); others wrote of professional women opting out to take care of aging parents (Gross, 2005). The phenomenon soon became a subject of scholarly research; evidence, from some studies, began to challenge the dominant belief that people were leaving the career track mainly for family reasons.

Research on women in corporate America indicated that some were choosing to opt out or step off the corporate ladder for a variety of personal and professional reasons other than family reasons or even due to barriers and impediments (Cabrera, 2007; Sullivan & Maniero, 2005). An analysis of the career transition decision and choices of 497 randomly selected women graduates of an international business school located in the U.S. suggested that only 35% of the women opted-out because of family reasons (Cabrera, 2007). Sixty-two percent indicated that they opted-out because their career focus had changed. Within that percentage, reasons cited included: “work/life balance is more important” (46.3%), “less interest in a corporate career” (13.7%), “enjoyable or rewarding job” (6%), “disillusionment with the corporate culture” (14%), “wanting to make more of difference” (8.5%), and “the desire to travel less” (6.2%).

Even though the popular narrative on opting out may not tell the whole story, it still highlighted a critical issue that could not be denied and which had been observed in other professions as well: individuals were purposefully opting out of careers and/or jobs paths for a variety of reasons. The phenomenon has been observed principals and vice principals in the K–12 arena.

**Opting out in education profession.** K–12 educational administration research also suggests a situation among vice principals. Studies have shown that some vice principals are opting not to pursue the principalship—this is particularly the case among
assistant principals / deputy principals (Hausman, Nebeke & McCreary, 2002; Lee, Kwan & Walker, 2009; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Germaine to the current doctoral research on CAOs are two earlier studies that looked at the job choice decisions and career aspirations of female deputy school heads in Israel (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009) and those of high school assistant principals and middle school principals (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). In the Israeli study, Oplatka and Tamir examined the career stories of female deputy heads who did not aspire to become heads of schools to determine their reasons. The findings suggested that the positions were undesirable to potential candidates due to the candidates’ own perceptions and feelings about the job’s attributes, as well as their individual economic and psycho-social needs and how they felt the jobs would help them fulfill those needs:

. . . female deputies’ positive role perception and high job satisfaction coupled with their images of headship that are believed to be contrary to selfhood, preferences and ways of life are brought up to illustrate their alternative constructions of career advancement and aspiration (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009, pp. 224–225).

The study participants cited the following reasons for their lack of interest in pursuing the headship: (a) low confidence in their abilities to perform the head role; (b) the time-consuming nature of the role of the school head; (c) the stresses associated with the role; and (d) incompatibility of head role to the personalities of the deputies. The findings of Oplatka and Tamir (2009) mirrored an earlier study by Pounder and Merrill (2001) on vice principals and principals. Pounder & Merrill analyzed the differences in the reasons why study participants opted out of principalship positions. They examined
and categorized the attributes that affected the attractiveness of the principal role in terms of objective, subjective, critical contact and nature of work influences.

Similar to Oplatka and Tamir (2009), Pounder and Merrill’s study showed that the desirability of the principal position could be negatively or positively influenced by both the attributes of the job as well as the psycho-social needs of potential job candidates. Pounder and Merrill’s study participants cited the following as possible factors that made the principalship role unattractive: (a) the time demands of the position; (b) the problems and dilemmas associated with the principalship role; and (c) the perceived inability to make meaningful contributions to the field. For many of the participants, the decision to pursue a principal position came down to how much they could afford to sacrifice in terms of personal life and overall quality of life to fulfill their desire to achieve or influence education and to make more money. Findings from Oplatka and Tamir (2009) and Pounder and Merrill (2001) on the vice principals aligned with those of Cejda (2008) and Eckel et al. (2009) on CAOs.

**Opting out and chief academic officers.** The results of Eckel et al. (2009) indicated that CAOs were purposefully opting not to pursue the college presidency. What reasons did the CAOs give for opting out, and are their reasons similar to those found in the opting out research literature? In the study, 45% of the CAO respondents reported no interest in the presidency, 25% were unsure, and 30% expressed interest in pursuing the presidency (see Table 2.5). Even though 30% were interested in the presidency, only 20% went on to become presidents. The percentage was equivalent to the percentage who retired (21%).
Another interesting point in this data set was that a very high percentage of CAOs who were interested in the presidency viewed the next immediate career move as pursuing the presidency (82%). Asked to select all applicable reasons for their decision from a multiple choice response, the CAO respondents five top choices were “Nature of work not appealing”, “Uncertain if I like nature of work”, “Ready to retire”, “Time demands of position”, and “Don’t want to live “in a fishbowl” (see Table 2.6).

These choices in Table 2.6 suggest that individual subjective factors as well as the nature of work factors were most influential in CAOs’ perception of the desirability of the presidency. The CAOs viewed the desirability in terms of how it fulfilled their psychological needs. Given that generally the office of the chief academic officer tends to be very much internally focused, while that of the president is externally focused, it is not surprising that these were some of the top reasons cited by the CAOs for not wanting the presidency. This means that, particularly for the 63.7% of CAOs who reported being very satisfied with the CAO position, a change for the presidency could be considered a career change. They will be moving into jobs that are not similar to what they currently enjoy doing. Is it possible that this disconnect between the role of the president and that of the CAO could account for the lack of career aspiration to the presidency on the part of CAOs? These questions were not answered in Eckel et al.’s study.
Table 2.5

*Eckel et al. (2009) Summary of Career Aspirations and Career Moves of CAOs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career aspirations of CAOs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to seek presidency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, next career move</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek a presidency</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek another CAO</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek different administrative position</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek work outside of higher education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know/undecided</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career moves reported by successors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to presidency</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned to faculty</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Took another position not CAO</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to another CAO position</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moved to position out of academia</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Adapted from Eckel, Cook, & King (2009), *The CAO Census: A National Profile of Chief Academic Officer*. Copyright 2009 by American Council on Education.
Table 2.6

*Eckel et al. (2009) CAOs’ Reasons for Opting out of the Presidency*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Opting Out</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAOs Unsure About the Presidency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain if I like nature of work</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about balance: family and job demands</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might want to return to the classroom/lab</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know if I have the skills to succeed</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about search process</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering possibly working outside of academe</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know enough about the position</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAOs Not Considering the Presidency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of work not appealing</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ready to retire</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time demands of position</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want to live “in a fishbowl”</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Want to return to classroom/lab</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too old to be considered</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t feel prepared to succeed in the position</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know if I am ready</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Already served as a president</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not comfortable with search process</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considering a position outside of academe</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient compensation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Adapted from Eckel, Cook, & King (2009), *The CAO Census: A National Profile of Chief Academic Officer.* Copyright 2009 by American Council on Education.
How do CAOs explain their rejection of the presidency? Even though no studies have been designed to specifically answer these questions, a number, such as Cejda (2008), addressed them indirectly. As part of ongoing research on women community college leaders, Cejda conducted a longitudinal study on the experiences of six female CAOs across the country in which he asked them about their future plans for the presidency (Cejda, 2008). He adopted a qualitative approach—a key difference between that study and Eckel et al. (2009). The qualitative approach allowed for an in-depth investigation of the reasoning behind the CAOs’ decisions regarding the presidency. The Eckel et al. study did not allow for that level of in-depth investigation. This is due to the nature of the research tool utilized in the study: a survey instrument. While surveys are effective in gathering evidence about attitudes, behaviors, beliefs and perceptions, one cannot use them to access explanations and rationales for concepts or situations.

Drawing mainly on phenomenology and symbolic interaction design, Cejda interviewed the six female CAOs over a one-year period to uncover the meanings of their CAO experiences from their perspectives. In 2006, Cedja asked the six about their future career moves. The main question was whether the CAOs wished to pursue the presidency. One intended to pursue a presidency, another was unsure, while the remaining four ruled it out. The follow-up questions regarding the rationale for their decisions yielded responses similar to those to the Eckel et al. survey. The reasons given by the five CAOs who were unsure or against the presidency, related mainly to the nature of the work of the president, as well as their own personal needs. Cejda’s respondents explained that the presidency would remove them from the instructional mission of the community college, which was not acceptable to them. In addition, they
were not interested in the external focus of the presidency, the heavy emphasis on community engagement. As CAO #5 stated, “I’m committed to academic administration. I don’t want to work with boards, go to rotary and chamber meetings, or raise money”. (Cejda, 2008, p. 182)

Interestingly not one of the CAOs attributed their lack of interest in the presidency to a lack of skills and abilities to perform the presidency role. According to Cejda (2008), all of the “CAOs believed they could be a community college president” (Cejda, 2008, p. 182). In keeping with their commitment to the instructional mission of their colleges, four of the six CAOs intended to return to faculty positions. Three years after the initial interviews, Cejda conducted follow-up interviews to determine the status of their career moves. Only one CAO had become a president, and it was not the one who had originally expressed interest.

This particular CAO had become inadvertently become a president. She had not actively sought the presidency; rather, she had been appointed interim president during a search for a new president. After a new one was found, she went back to a vice president role and turned down offers from executive search firms for other presidency positions. Another CAO had opted for an early retirement while a third chose to assume a faculty role so she could spend more time with family. The remaining two continued to serve as CAOs. Cejda’s study confirmed that opting out of the presidency was a real phenomenon for CAOs. Also, similar to the conclusions in Cabrera (2007) and Sullivan and Maniero (2005) about the variety of reasons for opting out of jobs, in Cejda’s 2008 study, the female CAOs were doing so not because of a lack of skills and abilities but rather for a variety of personal reasons related to what worked best for them.
In all of these studies (Cejda, 2008; Eckel et al., 2009; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Pounder & Merrill, 2001), one can conclude that the influences on individuals’ job choice decisions and aspirations generally tend to relate directly to the characteristics of the job or the needs of the individuals. This conclusion raises a number of questions. First, why do the CAOs and vice principals hold the reasons they give for not wanting the presidency or principalship? Second, how can one explain this phenomenon of opting out, so that measures can be developed to address it?

The earlier studies do not explain this phenomenon. Both the quantitative methodology of Eckel et al. (2009) and qualitative approach adopted by Cejda (2008) do not offer insights into the explanatory theory behind CAOs’ decision to opt out of top leadership positions in colleges. The phenomenological and symbolic interactions approach utilized by Cejda resulted in an inductive and descriptive analysis of the opt-out phenomenon rather than an explanatory analysis. To address this gap in the research, this doctoral research on CAO experiences used a grounded theory (GT) methodology to develop an explanation for why the presidency is not attractive to CAOs.

**Grounded Theory Framework**

As has been suggested by Stark and Brown Trinidad (2007), in qualitative research, choosing the interpretive methodology “that is best suited to the line of inquiry is vital to obtaining the desired results” (Stark & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p. 1372). They explained further that utilizing the appropriate research method also ensures that the end products of the research are useful and well received. Stark and Brown Trinidad demonstrated these assertions by applying three different qualitative methods to the same set of medical research data: an interview study that explored how 25 primary care
physicians (PCPs) used informed decision making in the context prostate cancer screening. They applied phenomenological methodology, discourse analysis methodology as well as grounded theory methodology. While each of these methods addressed questions of meaning and understanding of a phenomenon, they differed with respect to how the research question was framed. The phenomenological question focused on how the PCPs described their individual experiences with informed decision making. The discourse analysis question, on the other hand, looked at the nature of the language that PCP used in the informed decision-making process, and how that shaped the identities of the PCP and their patients in the doctor-patient relationship. Finally, the GT question examined how the informed decision making process happens between the PCPs and their patients.

The outcome of the phenomenological approach is a thematic description of the common elements of the physicians’ experiences. The discourse analysis method yielded a description of how the PCPs used language to engage their patients and achieve common objectives or desired outcome. With the grounded theory approach, Start and Brown Trinidad were able to generate a theory to explain “what circumstances lead to prostate cancer screening discussions in primary care setting and how and why physicians and patients engage in those discussions” (p. 1379).

When one applies Stark and Brown Trinidad’s discussion to the qualitative research on CAOs’ career aspirations and moves, it is apparent that the phenomenological approach has been utilized more often (Cejda, 2008; Kelly, 2011). Consequently the outcomes of the research have been thematic descriptions of CAO
experiences. This situation creates an opportunity for work in the area of explanatory analysis of CAO experiences. The current study attempts to bridge the gap.

The purpose of this study, then, was to both explore the meaning and develop an explanatory theory of the opting out process as experienced by CAOs. Following Stark and Brown Trinidad (2007), a GT methodology was adopted to accomplish this purpose. GT methodology allows for the examination of the “six Cs” opting out phenomenon experienced by CAOs. The six Cs are the causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances, and conditions of the opting out phenomenon. Similar to the intent of Stark and Brown Trinidad, GT was applied in this research to explain patterns and relationships.

Applying GT to this doctoral research add to the research literature expanding the application of grounded theory. GT was first proposed as an alternative approach to conducting human science research (Creswell, 2007; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). Over time, its use has spread beyond the traditional human sciences to applications in a variety of areas, including business (O’Reilly, Paper & Max, 2012; Sousa & Hendrix, 2006), management (Locke, 2001, 2002), and even information systems (Klein & Myers, 1999; Urquhart, Lehman & Myers, 2010). As an interpretive paradigm, the approach presents an organized, systematic, action-sensitive methodology to discovering the realities of research subjects (Creswell, 2007). The distinctiveness of this approach lies in the fact that data collected as part of the research are not forced into an a priori framework. Consequently, theory is developed systematically and directly from the data (Dey, 1999). The explanation for why CAOs
are opting out of the presidency pipeline will be generated from data on the CAOs’ own experiences.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented a review of the literature relevant to the study of chief academic officers’ (CAOs) perspectives on the opting out of the presidency phenomenon. Research studies reveal a number of key points about the office of the chief academic officer. Among them is that the chief academic officer is a critical leadership role in colleges. The CAO often serves as the next in command to the president and is responsible for the core business of the college (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Another revelation is that, historically, the CAO population has been predominantly White and male, as well as in the lower ranks of middle age (Moore et al., 1985). However, since the 1990s there has been a gradual diversification in gender and race as well as graying of chief academic officers.

In addition to the office of the CAO being pivotal to the daily administration of colleges’ core function, it is also the traditional stepping stone and most direct pathway to the college presidency. Forty percent of first-term presidents’ immediate prior position was CAO (Keim & Murray, 2008; Vaughn, 1990). Even though research supports the notion that the office of the CAO is the pipeline to the college presidency, new evidence suggests that occupants of the office are becoming less interested in the position of the college presidency (Cejda, 2008; Cejda, McKenney, & Fuller, 2001). The findings of *The CAO Census* study (Eckel, Cook & King, 2009) revealed that only 24% of community college CAOs went on into the presidency; while 26% retired, the remaining 49% went on to do other things. This meant that about 75% of community
college CAOs opt not to pursue the college presidency. This phenomenon has also been observed among women in the corporate world (Cabrera, 2007; Sullivan & Maniero, 2005), as well as among vice principals in K–12 administration (Hausman, Nebeker & McCreary, 2002; Lee, Kwan & Walker, 2009; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). In all circumstances, the opting out phenomenon is viewed as an issue that needs attention if potential human resource shortages are to be addressed.

Any significant contraction of the presidency pipeline as a result of the CAO attrition has serious implication for the impending leadership shortage in community colleges. Consequently, if the problem of the shrinking pipeline to the presidency is to be addressed, it is important to understand the reasons why so many CAOs do not aspire to presidency. To understand why this opting out phenomenon is happening, a grounded theory research methodology is adopted for this current study to generate a general explanatory theory of the phenomenon. GT methodology allows for the examination of the causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances, and conditions of the opting out phenomenon.
Chapter 3

Methodology

The methodology used to analyze the CAOs’ perspectives on the opting out of the presidency phenomenon was informed by both the grounded theory (GT) methodology laid out by Charmaz (2006) and Creswell (2007) and a general qualitative data analysis process described by Baptiste (2001, 2009). The goal was to construct a substantive-level explanatory theory for why some CAOs opt not to pursue the college presidency. The theory was at a substantive-level because it was being developed from the study of one small area of investigation and one specific population—chief academic officers in Pennsylvania (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Problem and Purpose

The office of the CAO has been acknowledged as the stepping stone to the college/university presidency (McKenney & Cedja, 2000; Keim & Murray, 2008; Vaughn, 1990). It has been viewed as the pipeline to finding replacement presidents. This dominant narrative has been based on two key trends: (a) most presidents, according to Vaughn (1990), report the office of chief academic officer as their immediate prior position, and (b) the percentage of chief academic officers who became college presidents increased from about 17% in 1998 to about 40% in 2006 (ACE, 2007).

However, since the late 2000s, the pathway to the presidency has been challenged by emerging research. The research suggests that CAOs are purposefully opting not to become college presidents (Cejda, 2008; Eckel, Cook, & King, 2009). The CAO opting out phenomenon has arisen at a time when American higher education is
facing a leadership crisis: the impending turnover of a significant number of senior leaders, particularly presidents, due to retirements. It is expected that about 50% of university presidents and chancellors, as well as 84% of community college presidents, are expected to retire by 2016 (ACE, 2007; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). At the same time, about 75% of community college CAOs are opting not to pursue the college presidency (Eckel et al., 2009). This opting out situation has created an impending problem of a shrinking pipeline of traditionally prepared candidates to the presidency. If the problem of this shrinking pipeline to the presidency is to be addressed, it is important to understand the reasons why so many CAOs who could be presidents, do not want to be presidents.

The concept of opting out occurs as when an individual makes a conscious decision not to pursue a given career path or step. In the chief academic officer research literature, the observable indicators of this concept is that 38% of community college CAOs reported that they had no intention to pursue the presidency, while 53% of CAOs of baccalaureate granting institutions have no aspirations for the presidency (Eckel, Cook & King, 2009).

The purpose of this dissertation research was to, nomoethetically, explain from the perspectives of chief academic officers why they are opting out of the college presidency. To fulfill this purpose, the current study approached the topic phenomenologically by exploring the attritions of meanings used by the CAOs to explain the opting out phenomenon. The unit of analysis was the perceptions of chief academic officers in Pennsylvania community colleges.
Research Questions

The outcome of this current study was to develop a substantive-level explanatory theory for the CAO opt-out phenomenon. To this end the following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?
2. Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by the CAOs?
3. How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?

Given that the research focused on explaining a phenomenon, the research questions needed to be framed in a way that guided how the explanation would unfold and the parameters of the operation (Rossman & Rallis, 2011). The initial research questions were framed as: “Why are CAO opting out of the presidency?” and “What steps can be taken to address the phenomenon of CAOs opting out?” When these questions were explored to determine their effectiveness in explaining the situation with CAOs, it became apparent that embedded assumptions needed to be unpacked. For example, the first question assumed that opting out of the presidency is a phenomenon recognized by all CAOs and likely being undertaken by them.

In conducting research, Maxwell (2004) cautioned researchers to be careful regarding “smuggling an unexamined assumption into the research question”. When this happens, one runs the risk of having such unexamined assumptions hinder the full development of theories or explanations. To unpack the embedded assumptions, three
new questions were developed. The first question was reframed as “What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?” This question opened the space for the CAOs to acknowledge whether the phenomenon was real to them and also to explore the circumstances and conditions that led them to it. The next question, “Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by the CAOs?”, would lead participants to articulate the rationale for not wanting the presidency.

By framing the research questions as what, why and how questions, this study allowed the CAO participants to tell their stories without restriction and in their own words. These phrases, “What lived experiences influence . . .”; “Why is the presidency not desirable . . .”, and “How might future academic leaders . . .” created an openness that enabled the picture of CAO experiences to emerge organically.

Data Collection

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. The study was designed to fulfill all Penn State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. The University’s review process required that the research instrument (the interview guide) and all supporting documents/forms used in the data collection needed to submitted for review and approval. This included the consent forms as well as the information to be provided to participants regarding the purpose of the study, as well as the process and the rights of the study participants (see Appendices B and C). After approval for the study had been obtained, contact was made with prospective CAO participants. The participants were contacted first by mail to solicit their participation in the study.
**Research instrument.** This grounded theory dissertation study was rooted in the constructivist inquiry tradition, which holds that reality is locally constructed by study participants (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Also, constructivists posit that to generate an understanding of reality, the researcher and study participants must mutually construct knowledge through dialogue (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Knowledge creation is therefore subjective and transactional. It requires the researcher and study participants to be actively engaged with one another. The researcher accomplishes this through in-depth interviewing. In-depth interviewing involves the use of open-ended questioning to reach an understanding of the lived experiences of people (Seidman, 2006).

Following Seidman (2006), as well as Dolbeare and Schuman (1982), an in-depth interview series method was adopted as the research instrument for this study. Dolbeare and Schuman’s method involves a series of three interviews covering about 90 minutes per session. This type of phenomenologically based interviewing is designed to explore the experiences of study participants and places those experiences in the context of the phenomena (Seidman, 2006). The first interview is the “Focused Life History” interview; the second, the “Details of Experience” interview; and the third, the “Reflection on the Meaning” interview. Seidman explained that:

The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experience.

The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experiences within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experiences holds for them (Seidman, 2006, p. 17).
According to Seidman, while the interview process may be relatively long, it is a necessary process if the researcher is to avoid treading on thin contextual ice.

While both Seidman (2006) and Dolbeare and Schuman (1982) suggested a three-interview series due to the time pressures on senior executives such as chief academic officers, the interviewing model for this study was modified into a two-interview series. This was done to ensure that prospective CAO participants did not opt out because they viewed the interviews to be time-consuming. Detailed semi-structured interview questions were generated based on the research questions (see Appendix A). The interview questions are anchored in the research literature, and particularly on the recent national comprehensive study on CAOs (Eckel, Cook, & King, 2009), as well as Cedja’s (2008, 2010) work on CAOs in community colleges.

The modified design had the three Dolbeare and Schuman (1982) interviews collapsed into one interview and a second interview for clarification. Both interviews were designed to be face-to-face sessions. The first interview for this study was to be a Life Experiences and Reflections Experience interview. The questions asked during this interview phase were designed to establish the landscape for the participants’ experiences: the professional history and context within which they operate as CAOs. Also, CAOs were able to relate the specifics of their lived experiences to the question of opting in or out of the presidency. It explored the emotional and intellectual connections between the participants’ lives and their choices regarding the college presidency. The questioning during the first interview also had a futuristic orientation in that it also allowed the CAO participants to posit suggestions on how future academic leaders might be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency.
The second interview was designed to be a *Clarification of Meaning* interview. This interview session enabled requests for clarification on issues raised during the first interview.

However, upon entering the field, the mode and duration of the interviews had to be modified to allow greater flexibility. Not all interviews could be face-to-face because many CAOs were not available for two face-to-face sessions. Some of the first rounds of interviews were conducted by phone; for the second interviews the participants requested either another phone interview or questions via email. Four of the participants agreed to the first face-to-face sessions, while the remaining five agreed to phone interviews. The downside to the phone interview was the lack of access to body language to observe non-verbal cues as they answered questions. Given that non-verbal cues are central to individuals’ perceptions and construction of meaning, it is possible that some critical information about the CAOs’ views may have been missed (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Singer & Goldman, 2008).

In addition to modifying the mode of the interviews, their duration was shortened from ninety minutes to sixty minutes. Again, this was a consequence of the very busy schedules of the CAOs. The gatekeepers of the CAOs’ schedules, their secretaries or office assistants, often suggested one thirty- to forty-five minute block for the interview. It took some negotiations to obtain sixty-minute interviews. As an indication of how time-constrained the CAOs were, the interviews were all sandwiched between other work meetings or commitments. It was not uncommon for a secretary to come in during the interview to remind the CAO of the location of the next meeting.
The interviews were recorded, with participants’ permission, using a Digital Voice Editor 3 recording device. In addition, field notes were collected. The recordings were transcribed for data analysis.

**Subject matter experts.** A number of subject matter experts guided the research. These individuals were Dr. Linda McMillin, Provost and Dean of Faculty of Susquehanna University; Dr. Kathleen Howley, Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE); and Dr. Peter Garland, Executive Vice Chancellor of PSSHE. Their role included review of the research and interview questions to see if they were aligned. Their role was critical in improving the research instrument by identifying gaps and rephrasing some questions. An example is clear in an email communication from Dr. Garland:

```
-----Original Message-----
From: Garland, Peter [mailto:xxxxxxx@xxxxxx.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, January 30, 2013 9:08 AM
To: RADECKA APPIAH-PADI
Subject: RE: Dissertation Research

Radecka--

... When we spoke, I thought it would be important to inquire about experiences/insights from peers and colleagues as possibly an important factor in shaping decisions to move forward. I tested that out with a couple of senior people in the system and they confirmed that it is an important factor (both favorable to becoming a president and not). Also, those who participate in the ACE Fellows program and to a lesser extent other leadership development programs (AASCU has one and I am community colleges do also) experience substantial influence from their peers.

Peter
```

These subject matter experts were selected because of their long work experiences in Pennsylvania’s higher education community and access to the chief academic officers. For example, Dr. Howley as Senior Associate Vice Chancellor for
Academic and Student Affairs of PASSHE worked closely with the presidents and CAOs of Pennsylvania community colleges. She was willing to provide me with introductions to the CAOs for this study.

**Study participants and access.** In qualitative research, because the measure of success is not the generalizability of study findings, in selecting study participants, researchers are not concerned with randomness and representativeness but rather with relevance (Popay, Rogers, & Williams, 1998). The key to having a good study sample is to identify individuals who can provide the data that deeply reflect the phenomenon being studied. Consequently, for this current study, study participants were identified from the CAO population in Pennsylvania community colleges.

The original study design involved identifying and recruiting seven participants based on their availability and willingness to participate. Letters were to be sent to CAOs in the nine community colleges located in the Northeastern and South Central regions of Pennsylvania to solicit participation. This decision was made mainly on the basis of geographic proximity and accessibility to the researcher. If an adequate response was not received, then the invitation was to be extended to CAOs in the four community colleges in the Southwest region of the State.

Given the iterative nature of qualitative research, it became clear that changes were necessary after conversations with the subject matter experts who were to help me gain access to the chief academic officers. A key concern going into this study was how to gain access to these CAOs given the researcher’s lack of connections with Pennsylvania community colleges—prior related professional experiences had been in Iowa and Michigan community colleges. A professional colleague introduced the
researcher to two vice chancellors of the PAASHE System who worked very closely with CAOs and presidents of Pennsylvania community colleges.

After consultation with these subject matter experts, it was determined that the best way to approach the CAOs and to ensure a likelihood of co-operation was to ask one of the CAOs who was a thought-leader in the Pennsylvania community college community and also had very good working relationships with colleagues to help make the introductions to other CAOs. One of the subject matter experts helped to connect the researcher with the “thought-leader” CAO who in turn talked to a number of CAOs about this study. Based on her conversations, email requests were sent to the CAOs to try to get on their calendars. A sample of the emails is included in Appendix C, Sample of Recruitment Emails. Once participants agreed to take part in the study, they received and signed consent forms created as part of the Penn State IRB process. Sometimes due to time constraints, the CAOs gave verbal consent prior to the interview and signed the actual document on the day of the interview or after the interview.

In the original study design seven study participants were to be recruited and interviewed—interviews were eventually conducted with nine participants. This was because one of the original seven participants decided after several attempts to schedule an interview appointment to drop out. Even though this individual had expressed a willingness to participate, interview meetings were scheduled at four different times; before each occasion her assistant called to cancel and reschedule. Her schedule was very tight and meetings had to be cancelled due to work commitments.

Another of the CAOs to be interviewed was approached for an introduction to other CAOs, as a replacement. She introduced the researcher to three individuals, who
all agreed to participate. A decision was made to interview them all. Table 3.1 provides a summary of the demographic information on the study participants.

Table 3.1

Summary of Basic Demographic Indicators of Study Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race / Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EdD</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Current Institution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or less</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5 years</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years in Current Position</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year or less</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 5 years</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10 years</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rossman and Rallis (2012) stated that “negotiating entry is a process and seldom happens quickly and smoothly” and that “the process of negotiating entry can be insightful about people or setting” (pp. 152–153). In this research process, these
statements were very true. Even though by mid-February 2013 IRB approval had been received and the study was in the field, it took until the end of April to get onto the calendars of the first CAO participants, about two months after initially contacting them. The negotiation process reflected how extremely busy study participants were and the possible impact on obtaining needed data. While the CAOs were pleasant and willing to participate in the interviews, the interviews were not priorities to them and consequently adjustments had to be made to get onto their schedules and to engage in their preferred interview format.

**Strategies for Ensuring Credibility and Rigor**

The credibility and rigor of the dissertation is grounded in the background I bring to the study as a researcher, as well as the strategies I employed to conduct the study. Following Maxwell (2005), as well as Rossman and Rallis (2012), I employed a number of strategies to enhance the credibility and rigor of the research. These strategies included the use of subject matter experts, pilot-testing of research instrument, triangulation of data sources, member check of transcript, as well as corroborating findings with research literature.

**Researcher background.** I started this research with ten years of work experience in community college academic affairs. I have worked, with progressively increasing responsibilities, in a variety of instructional leadership capacities at three community colleges. All of these experiences have given me an understanding of and passion for the academic mission of community colleges. The study of the CAO function in this dissertation is rooted in my community college professional background.
Use of subject matter experts. Three subject matter experts (SMEs), who have experience with the chief academic officer function, provided guidance on the research. At the beginning reviewed the research instrument to determine if the right questions were being asked. They served to keep me honest by asking hard questions regarding research method. Based on their input, I refined the interview guide. At the end of the study, one of the SMEs reviewed the study findings and recommendations to determine if they aligned and were realistic.

Pilot-test of research instrument. To ensure the appropriateness and effectiveness of the research instrument for collecting the right data, the interview questions were pilot-tested. The subject for the pilot-test was a CAO/Provost of a university. This individual had served in the role for about ten years. A review of the results of the pilot test enabled me to further refine the interview questions.

Triangulation of data sources. To develop a broader understanding of the CAO opting out phenomenon, I used multiple sources of data. These included interview transcripts, observations, and field notes as well as journal entries. The triangulation of multiple data sources enabled me to reduce biases associated with specific data collection methods (Maxwell, 2005)

Verification of data. In qualitative research, verification of data is critical to establishing the validity of a given study (Golafshani, 2003; Morse et al., 2002). Ensuring the validity of the data collected for this study involved member-checking of the data collected, as well as corroboration of the current study findings with research literature. Reference to and comparison with research literature in the field underlies much of the analysis of data in this study.
**Member Check.** Study participants were given the entire verbatim transcripts of their interview data to review to ensure that their thoughts and comments had been accurately captured. None of the participants took issue with the general content of the transcripts. Two asked for a redaction of some portions of the interviews that referred to specific incidents at their institutions since its inclusion could make it possible to identify their institutions. To address their concerns, those sections were redacted. Three other participants came back with questions regarding anonymity. They wanted to know if all self-identifying information had been redacted from quoted data. Once they were assured of anonymity, they gave their approval for the data to be used in the study.

**Corroboration of findings.** I also corroborated the study findings against the survey results from *The CAO census: A national profile of chief academic officers* (Eckel et al, 2009). This process involved cross-checking of the research findings to determine if the experiences and perceptions expressed by the CAOs in this research, aligned with the survey results of Eckel et al (2009).

**Limitations of Research Process**

As part of the design of this study, a number of major limitations of the study were identified and acknowledged. These limitations included the study’s limited scope: sample size and geographic focus; as well as the self-reporting style of the qualitative interview process. However while conducting the research, additional limitations emerged as a result of the changes that had to be made to the research process.

The original research designed indicated that Dolbeare and Schuman’s 1982 in-depth interview method involving a series of three interviews covering about 90 minutes per session, would be adapted for this study. The adapted method was to consist of two
90-minute, face-to-face interviews. However, upon entering the field, the mode and duration of the interviews had to be modified again because of the limited availability of the study participants. The busy work schedules of the CAOs limited the interview sessions to one interview per person. In addition, not all of the CAOs were able to meet with me face-to-face and I had to interview some of them by phone. This situation resulted in a lack of prolonged stay/engagement in the field, a key strategy for enhancing the credibility and validity of a qualitative study (Maxwell, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The outcome of the lack of prolonged engagement is that the findings of this study represent a snapshot in time of the phenomenon.

Another limitation of the modified process was my inability to observe body language for non-verbal cues during phone interviews. Consequently, it is possible that some critical information about the CAOs’ views may have been missed, given that non-verbal cues are central to individuals’ perceptions and construction of meaning (Rossman & Rallis, 2012; Singer & Goldman, 2008).

To mitigate the effect and impact of the limitations on the study, participants were provided opportunities to validate the data through member checks. By this process, the participants provided additional information as well as clarified their comments. The member check process enriched the quality and depth of the data.

**Qualitative Data Analysis: Grounded Theory Approach**

The GT data analysis approach adopted for this research followed the general qualitative data analysis process laid out by Baptiste (2001, 2009). In GT, data analysis is a clearly defined process, starting with basic descriptions of the elements of the analysis (the codes and categories), to conceptual ordering of those elements and finally,
theorizing about the relationships between the elements (Patton, 2002). Baptiste (2001, 2009) suggests that there is no functional distinction between qualitative and quantitative data analysis. In both types of analysis, one draws on central tendencies of the data to make inferences. Quantitative data analysis draws on measures such as mean, median and standard deviation to draw inferences while qualitative data analysis draws on themes and categories to make inferences. In conducting qualitative data analysis, the researcher identifies meaning units from the participants’ narratives and then tags those meaning units with codes. Next the codes are categorized into themes. This dissertation research on CAOs opting out followed the three phases of analysis identified by Baptiste (2001, 2009):

1. Phase 1 Definition of the analysis: unit of analysis and interests
2. Phase 2 Classification of the data: tagging, labeling and grouping
3. Phase 3 Development of the narrative and/or theory: making connections

It is important to note that these phases are not linear but rather interactive and iterative. Thus, analysis required going back and forth between the different phases until theory saturation was reached.

**Phase 1: Definition of the analysis.** The definition of the analysis phase entails defining the unit of analysis as well as the substantive, epistemology, ontology, and axiology interests that underlie the research being undertaken. When one defines the analysis, one is able to identify the ideological and philosophical orientations that structure what one does as an analyst (Baptiste, 2001). In essence, this phase allows the researcher to refine the goals of the analysis (Baptiste, 2013).
**Unit of analysis.** The unit of analysis for this dissertation research was the perspective of each individual CAO. These perspectives are captured in the thought-by-thought utterances. While many CAOs may experience the phenomenon of opting out, there are individual variations. The goal here was to capture similarities and differences in each of their experiences and how they can be used to explain the phenomenon of CAOs opting out of the college presidency.

**Ontological interests.** The ontological interests of a research study deal with questions of what is real and the consistency of that reality. While positivist researchers deal with the issue of reality through notions of objectivity, reliability, and reliability, within the constructivism tradition, one addresses the issue of reality through the lens of dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To define ontological interests in the phenomenon of CAO opting out, two overarching questions needed to be addressed (Baptiste, 2001):

1. What do I mean when I say that the phenomenon of CAO opting out of the presidency pipeline is real?
2. How does my use of analytic tools, shape what is captured about the phenomenon?

The researcher’s ontological interest indicates that CAOs opting out of the presidency pipeline is a real phenomenon in as far as it can be identified and described by the CAOs themselves. The use of the open-ended questions in the interview process enables the capturing of CAOs’ articulation of this reality without interference.

**Substantive and epistemic interests.** The researcher’s substantive interest in the CAO opting out phenomenon is in the fact that, to date, limited qualitative research
work has been done on the experiences of chief academic officers particularly regarding their career decision related to the college presidency (Cedja, 2008). There is a need to fill the qualitative knowledge gap that surrounds chief academic officers’ lack of interest in the college presidency. The first step in filling this knowledge gap is to have individual CAOs share how their experiences have shaped their interests in the college presidency and how that may have led them to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline. Consequently, the researcher’s epistemic interest in the research questions is explanatory: what factors give rise to the phenomenon of CAOs’ opting out of the college presidency pipeline? A substantive-level theory is needed that will explain the why of the opting out process as experienced by CAOs.

**Axiological interest.** Axiological interest is the domain of values and ethics: how does the analyst regard his and the participants’ roles and place in the research process? In addition, axiological interest speaks also to how the researcher intends to use the research findings (Baptiste, 2001). As the researcher in this dissertation study, I view my role as an observer of the phenomenon because I have no past or current experience in the role of CAO. I am there to record and analyze the descriptions of the CAOs regarding the phenomenon. The research participants are the subjects and experts on the phenomenon. They do not have an active decision-making role in all aspects of the study.

Findings from this research serve as a limited potential explanation of the CAO opting out phenomenon. It may be considered a starting point for further research. As indicated earlier in this chapter, in qualitative research, the generalizability of study findings is not critical. Rather, one is interested in credibility and dependability
of methodology, so that the findings generated, truly reflect the data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2003).

**Phase 2: Classification the data.** Baptiste (2001) defined this phase as a two-step process of tagging and labeling data followed by grouping the tagged data. In the tagging process, the researcher selects and labels sections of the data that (a) inform the researcher’s curiosity, (b) answer the research questions, and (c) support the purpose of the study.

According to Baptiste, the labels used may either come from the data itself, or may be imposed from outside. The final step of the classification process is to group the tagged data according to their characteristics into same categories or groups. This phase in GT is referred to as *coding*. There are three main models in the coding process (see Figure 3.1): Straussian, Glaserian (Walker & Myrick, 2006) and Constructivist GT (Charmaz, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3.1. Grounded Theory Coding – Three Models*

Adapted from Baptiste (2012, June). Notes on a lecture on grounded theory. The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA

Even though the proponents of the three models disagree on how data must be coded and analyzed, there is one fundamental similarity among the models with regard to the purpose of coding. Coding is viewed as the key vehicle that moves researchers
and their data from transcripts to theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006). This research followed the coding process outlined by Charmaz (2006). Three steps of coding were used: initial, focused, and theoretical.

**Initial coding.** Initial coding was selected to identify meaning units within the opting out data. This was done by a thought-by-thought analysis of the data. The analysis at this stage focused on choosing codes that best categorizes the emerging categories and themes (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz recommended working quickly and using gerunds (action words) in initial coding. Throughout the processes of coding, analytical memos were used to set aside and examine any preconceived notions, as well as to define and describe various codes.

**Focused coding.** During this step of the coding process, the most significant relationships among categories, properties and dimensions were specified. The codes that best categorized the emerging themes and patterns were identified. Focused coding was used to sort the most salient categories and themes from the data. Constant comparison was used to examine relationships within and across codes and categories (Charmaz, 2006).

**Phase 3: Development of the narrative and/or theory.** The focus of this third phase in qualitative data analysis was to develop a cohesive narrative or theory of the relationships between the concepts and categories developed in Phase Two. This phase was critical to achieving the purpose of qualitative research: not to only record participants’ narrative but also to construct a deeper and broader understanding of issues (Baptiste, 2001). It was the “posing a parsimonious, integrated set of associations and relationships between and among the various concepts . . . relationships that were
previously undocumented, obscure, or unknown” (Baptiste 2001, para. 32). This third phase in GT is referred to by both Glaser (1992) and Charmaz (2006) as Theoretical Coding.

**Theoretical Coding.** During this step the previously developed themes, categories, and codes were integrated into an analytical story/theory. As the theoretical coding process was followed to develop an explanatory theory for the CAO opting out phenomenon, the following questions laid out by Baptiste (2001) were considered:

1. What relationships can be identified between and among various concepts, categories and themes in the CAO narratives?
2. What relationships are subordinate and which ones are superordinate?
3. Which relationships are associational, causal, consequential, contingent, etc.?
4. What data (transcripts, observations, field notes, memos, memory, etc.) supports the relationships that have been identified?
5. What existing theories can be used construct and support these relationships?
6. Is there a parsimonious and cohesive theory being developed?
7. Does the theory present a holistic picture of the phenomenon under investigation?
8. How does theory confirm (and/or) challenge existing theory?

Answers to these questions included attempts to integrate the different relationships between and among categories, subcategories, their properties, and dimensions into a theory or explanatory account of the CAOs’ opting out phenomenon. By using the comparative analytic process of reflecting on and challenging the emerging themes in the data, a substantive level theory was developed.
The constant comparative process also ensured that this theory and the data had fit, relevance, and trustworthiness. Charmaz (2006) argued that the fit, relevance, and trustworthiness of the theory with the data should be sought through credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness. The credibility of the theory was established through the use of actual participants’ language in the analysis, and by maintaining the original data (for inspection if needed), keeping written memos and interview notes, as well as providing an accessible audit trail for the research. To ensure originality, theoretical sampling and constant comparative methods of data analysis were used. Finally, resonance and usefulness were established by having the study participants verify the data, and also by providing descriptions of the theory supported verbatim by the data.
Chapter 4

Data Analysis

The research process for this particular study was rooted in a constructivist inquiry tradition based upon the data analysis framework of Baptiste (2001, 2009). The analysis was designed to answer three research questions on chief academic officers’ decision to opt out of the college presidency role. The questions were as follows:

1. What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?
2. Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by them?
3. How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?

The data analysis was conducted in three phases. These phases were not linear but rather interactive and iterative; which meant that as an analyst, I had to go back and forth between the different phases until theory saturation was reached. The process model in Figure 4.1 illustrates the analytical process conducted to answer the three previous research questions.

1. Phase 1—Definition of the analysis: unit of analysis, assumptions and interests
2. Phase 2—Classification of the data: tagging, labeling and grouping
3. Phase 3—Development of the narrative and/or theory: making connections
Phase 1: Definition of the Analysis

The definition of the analytical phase consisted of three major considerations. First, I had to articulate my ontology and epistemology interests in this research. Next, I outlined the assumptions brought to the study. Finally, I defined my unit of analysis.

Ontology and epistemology interests. My ontological interests in the phenomenon of the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) opting out of presidential positions lies in the fact that the reality of the phenomenon is anchored in the survey results of Eckel, Cook and King (2009). Their results suggested that CAOs were purposefully
opting not to pursue college presidencies. In their first comprehensive national survey of CAOs, about half (45%) of the study respondents reported no interest in the presidency, while a quarter of the CAOs (25%) were unsure if they would pursue the presidency. Only 30% expressed interest in pursuing this position. My ontological interest was in exploring how individual CAOs characterize and explain this reality. To this end, I employed open-ended, in-depth interviewing to collect data from the CAOs. The use of the open-ended questions in the interview process allowed one to capture the CAOs’ articulation of this reality without interference.

My epistemic interest in the research, the outcomes, was explanatory. I was interested in identifying the likely causes, contexts and conditions of CAOs’ opting out phenomenon. I was interested in developing a substantive level theory that would explain the how and why of the opting out process as experienced by CAOs.

**Assumptions.** In conducting a qualitative analysis, a researcher is encouraged to identify assumptions and bracket assumptions, judgments, biases and preconceived ideas that could influence the research process, the Epoche process as described by Husserl, 1997 (in Moustakes, 1994). While I acknowledge that I may have judgments and biases, it was initially difficult for me to recognize them and set them aside as I conducted the analysis. Moustakes suggested a process of “unusual sustained attention, concentration and presence” (citation). To follow this process and identify my assumptions, I spent several days before starting my analysis, thinking about and reflecting on the subject. I also listened to the recorded interviews and read the transcripts, all the while asking myself what ideas and notions I was bringing to the topic. I recognized that my assumptions stemmed from the research literature. My main
The assumption was that the study participants were going to have different reasons for their decisions because of the differences in their experiences. I also assumed that issues such as time commitment, family life and politics would be part of the perceptions of the study participants. I listed these assumptions as seven predetermined codes. The codes were derived primarily from the American Council on Education (ACE) study on chief academic officers (Eckel et al., 2009):

1. Work and life balance
2. Work life cycle
3. Nature of work
4. Consuming nature of work
5. Time pressure: too much time commitment
6. Needed skill-set: preparedness for the job
7. Unappealing lifestyle

**Unit of analysis.** The unit of analysis for this particular research was the perspective of each individual CAO as expressed in his/her narrative. Initially, I equated the perspectives to individual sentences in the transcripts. However, after my first reading of all of the data, I attempted to initiate the first level of coding by doing a line-by-line coding as suggested by Chamaz (2006). It quickly became evident that I was coding portions of the transcripts that were not answering the interview questions or the research questions.

To address this issue, I stopped coding and started chunking the portions of the transcripts that were direct responses to the interview questions and formed the basis of the CAOs’ perspectives. As I created the grid, I paid close attention to three of the four critical sets of information noted by Baptiste (2013) as requiring attention during the initial coding phase: (a) people, (b) contexts, and (c) the phenomenon under investigation. This process resulted in the creation of a *Unit of Analysis Grid* (Figure
This diagrammatic process of the unit analysis laid the foundation for the first step of Phase Two, Initial Coding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>P1</th>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
<th>P5</th>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P7</th>
<th>P8</th>
<th>P9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years in CAO role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 1: Interview Components</td>
<td>Participant responses: key phrases &amp; line #s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Path</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move to Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move to CAO position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for Presidency</td>
<td>Support for Presidency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timing of Decision</td>
<td>Reasons: Not Wanting Presidency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for the Presidency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepping Stone to the Presidency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 2: Interview Components</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of the President &amp; CAO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference between roles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAO relationship with president</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference in others perception of CAO Role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAOs Who Made Presidency</td>
<td>Perceptions of effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of perceptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desirability of Presidency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unattractive Aspects of Presidency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question 3: Interview Components</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging administrators to CAO position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging CAOs to college presidency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to role to make presidency attractive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career preparation advice for potential presidency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drastic issues impacting the presidency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of Color</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues of Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2. Unit of Analysis Narrative Grid

Summary of unit of analysis grid. The *Unit of Analysis Grid* enabled me to understand and capture the scope of the unit of analysis as well as develop a general overview of the patterns in the narrative expressed by the participants. To ensure the anonymity of the study participants, they were each assigned a letter and number identifier (see Table 4.1). Even though the participants were considered the chief academic officers at their institutions, their official titles varied. These included but were
not limited to: Provost, Vice President Academic Affairs, Vice President Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

Table 4.1

Study Participants’ Identifiers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gender, race/ethnicity and age.* Seven (88%) of the participants were females and two (22%) were males. In terms of race, seven were White and two were African American. Six of the participants were in their 60s; one was about 50; and the final two were in their early 40s.

*Chief academic officers’ hiring and tenure.* The tenure of the CAOs varied. The longest-serving CAO had been in the position for 20 years, and the shortest-serving CAO, had been in the role for 1 year. Another CAO had served for 3 years; another three had served for 5 years and a seventh had been CAO for 7 years. The eighth and ninth participants had served 10 years and 13 years respectively.

Similar to the findings of the ACE study, 45% of the participant had been in their position for 2-5 years (Eckel et al 2009). They reported that CAOs are twice more likely to be internal hires. The ACE survey results indicated that nationally about 52% of CAOs were hired from within. In this current research study 78% (7 out of 9) of participants were internal hires. All study participants reported to college presidents.
Chief academic officers’ career paths. Two of the study participants began their academic careers as administrators. The remaining seven started their academic careers as faculty. Of that number, five were part-time faculty before becoming full-time faculty. Six had backgrounds rooted entirely in Academic Affairs, while the remaining three had experiences in both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.

Five of the seven CAOs who started careers as faculty described their move into administration as accidental, by default or not purposeful. They moved into administration because they had been asked by a superior, such as a vice president (VP) or president. The three study participants who described their move into administration as intentional were also the CAOs who started in Student Affairs.

Six of the CAO participants came from dean positions to the CAO role, while one moved from department chair, another from faculty and the ninth from an assistant VP position. Regarding their move to the CAO role, four of the participants described it as unintentional, while another four indicated that it was purposeful—they had actively sought the position. The last CAO moved to the position as a result of a promotion offered by her president.

Chief academic officers’ career aspirations and presidential intentions. Four of the CAOs, who started their academic careers as faculty, indicated having had no career aspirations to be an administrator prior to switching to that path. For the three with the student affairs background, an administration path had been their intended career path. Once the CAOs were on the administrative path, four had aspired to the CAO role and actively sought the position.
In terms of aspirations to the college presidency, three of the CAOs indicated no interest and never having had any interest in pursuing the presidency. Four of the remaining CAOs had considered the presidency at some point in their career. Of the four, one had actively pursued it and had been shortlisted twice for presidencies. On both occasions, the CAO had to withdraw due to health reasons. The last two of the nine study participants expressed tentative interest in the presidency.

*Desirability of presidency.* Six of the CAOs viewed the presidency as a desirable role, even if they did not personally aspire to it. The remaining three CAOs viewed it as undesirable. Aspects of the presidency that made it desirable included the power and level of responsibility that came with the role, as well as the compensation. On the other hand, the aspects of the presidency that made it undesirable included the emphasis on fundraising, the time commitment required, involvement of boards in the governance of colleges as well as the external political commitments of the president.

**Phase 2: Classification of the Data**

*Initial coding.* Once the *Unit of Analysis Grid* was completed, Phase 2 of the analysis process, the initial and focused coding steps, began. With the initial coding, using a highlighter I identified the thought-by-thought meaning units from the each of the participants’ transcripts and coded them (see Figure 4.3).
Although Chamaz (2006) advocated line-by-line coding at this stage as the best way to deal with detailed data, I opted to conduct a thought-by-thought coding as suggested by Baptiste (2013). This was because in reading the data it became apparent that often the participants would make complete assertions or propositions that would start in one sentence and end a number of sentences away. The codes used either came from the data itself, or had to be imposed from outside (Baptiste, 2001). The final step in the initial coding process was to cluster the codes into broad categories using relevant properties (see Figure 4.4).
**Legend for color codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal Functions</th>
<th>External Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting vision</td>
<td>Positioning institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a visionary</td>
<td>Representing college to public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping in mind the vision of college</td>
<td>Representing the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living out the mission</td>
<td>Involvement in external relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never losing sight of mission of college</td>
<td>Involvement in marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring institution focus on mission</td>
<td>Focusing on external relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Involvement in promotion of college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting tone for the college</td>
<td>Forming partnership in community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting stage for relationships</td>
<td>Knowing how satisfy community needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having ultimate responsibility</td>
<td>Knowing what the community wants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being responsible for everything</td>
<td>Knowing community &amp; surrounding areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having ultimately responsibility</td>
<td>Being involved with community &amp; region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing leadership team</td>
<td>Advocating with communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring quality education for student</td>
<td>Working well boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring quality academic standards</td>
<td>Having the confidence of the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining academic integrity</td>
<td>Focusing on boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing on budgeting</td>
<td>Being heavily involved with board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being master of budget</td>
<td>Forming relationships with politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being fiscally responsible</td>
<td>Being master of legislative agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building resources</td>
<td>Working with politicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding political climate</td>
<td>Being a lobbyist for your cause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with the legislature</td>
<td>Doing more fundraising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focused coding.** During the next step of the coding process, I compared and contrasted the codes within individual participant data, as well as between participants. I identified codes that best described the emerging categories (Charmaz, 2006). The constant comparisons allowed me to examine relationships within and across codes. Based on the relationships, I developed the final conceptual categories and identified themes in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Figure 4.5 shows how the theory development...
process moves through multi-layered steps from concrete data to abstract theory; from the sub-focused code and focused codes, to sub-categories and categories; and finally to themes and theory:

![Diagram showing the process from concrete data to abstract theory through sub-focused codes, focused codes, sub-categories, categories, and themes.]

*Figure 4.5. Streamlined Codes to Theory Model*

Note: Adapted from Saldana (2009). Showing relationship development between codes, categories, themes/concepts and theory.

Throughout the processes of coding, analytical memos were used and set aside and preconceived notions were examined; efforts were also made to define and describe various codes and categories. At the end of the process, a total of nine conceptual categories emerged from the data to answer the research questions. Within these categories there were twenty seven subcategories of focused codes. A grid was developed to organize the final conceptual categories, its related subcategories and focused codes (Figure 4.6). The grid in Figure 4.6 summarizes the themes. It formed the basis for the development of the narrative on the relationships between the themes and
categories in Phase 3 of the analysis process. Phase 3 is referred to by Charmaz (2006) as *Theoretical Coding*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R. Question 3</th>
<th>How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Categories</strong></td>
<td><strong>Institutional Actions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subcategories</strong></td>
<td><strong>Focused Codes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grooming</strong></td>
<td>• Provide hands-on-experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring</strong></td>
<td>• Have institutional mentoring system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Succession Planning</strong></td>
<td>• Having system of succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
<td>• Providing training opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td>• Sending people to presidential training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td>• Send people to national leadership programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focused Codes</strong></td>
<td>• Opportunities for development off-campus: visiting other campuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring</strong></td>
<td>• Have in-house mentoring institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Succession Planning</strong></td>
<td>• Board awareness of succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td>• Training internally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td>• Provide exposure to national conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focused Codes</strong></td>
<td>• Move individuals into different positions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mentoring</strong></td>
<td>• Provide positive role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Succession Planning</strong></td>
<td>• Campus being involved in succession planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
<td>• Have in-house leadership institutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td>• Provide exposure to national conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td>• Get a national mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focused Codes</strong></td>
<td>• Provide job shadow opportunities with corporate leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
<td>• Have strong in-house professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
<td>• Let faculty experience administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Themes**

1. There are institutional actions and personal actions required
2. Professional development is important
3. There are different types of professional development that have to be offered

*Figure 4.6 Example of Themes, Conceptual Categories and Focused Codes*

**Phase 3: Theoretical Coding Development of the Narrative and/or Theory**

The focus of this third phase of the analysis was to develop a cohesive narrative to explain why chief academic officers were opting out of the college presidency pipeline. The narrative is organized around each of the research questions in this study:

1. What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?
2. Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by them?
3. How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?
Narrative of Themes and Categories for Research Question #1

The first research question for this study was: *What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?*

Participants were asked to describe their career experiences that led to their decisions on whether to consider the presidential path. To answer this research question three categories of codes emerged from the data: *Career Path, Career Moves, Professional Development and Preparation* as well as *Presidential Aspirations*. The three categories included a total of nine subcategories of focused codes.

**Career paths category.** The study participants described the type of positions they had held prior to becoming CAOs. The data yielded two subcategories of focused codes under the Career Paths category: *Faculty positions* and *Administrative positions*.

Seven of the participants started their academic careers in the Academic Affairs area as faculty: Participant 1 (P1), Participant 2 (P2), Participant 7 (P7), Participant 4 (P4), Participant 5 (P5), Participant 6 (P6), and Participant 9 (P9), while the two others, Participant 3 (P3) and Participant 8 (P8), started as directors in Student Affairs.

*Faculty positions.* Four of the faculty (P1, P2, P7, and P4) who started in Academic Affairs reported being full-time and/or tenured faculty, while three (P5, P6, and P9) were adjunct faculty who later became full-time faculty. Both participants from the Student Affairs background also served as adjunct faculty at some time.

*Administrative positions.* The types of administrative positions held by the study participants varied. They had served in roles such as academic program directors, student affairs program directors, department chairs, academic deans, campus deans, assistant vice-presidents, associate vice-presidents, and provosts. Several had held
leadership positions that at some point included a combination of academic and student affairs responsibilities. For example, P7 was a faculty member, became a dean of students affairs, and then later an academic dean. In a subsequent role, the portfolio included a combination of responsibilities from both student affairs and academic affairs:

> I started as a full time faculty member at a four year institution. I was at the institution when its branch campuses became a community college. So I went with the community college and became the chief student affairs officer. Eventually the title was made the dean of students . . . I had to move city wise so I needed to find a different position so I applied at xxxxxx and . . I was hired again back in the academics as the dean of liberal arts and sciences.

(P7)

A number of the participants felt that their varied backgrounds had prepared them well for their roles as CAO:

> Now, why I never thought I would be a provost, because at a research institution, I have never been a fulltime, tenured, full professor, so I wouldn’t be able to be considered. But at a community college where they lump everything under the sun under the provost position, the fact that I had such a background was advantageous.

(P3)
Career moves category. In the Career Moves Category participants each described three critical career moves: Entry into academia, Switch to administration, and Move into CAO role. They shared information on the nature of the moves they had made on their career path.

Entry into academia. Young and Mcleod (2001) suggested that motivation and purpose are factors that draw individuals to particular jobs or careers. The narrative of the participants in this study aligned with Young and Mcleod’s suggestion. Regardless of the area of the college in which the participants started their careers; they characterized education as being a career aspiration, a goal and a passion. They made purposeful decisions to enter academia. They used descriptors such as “wanting to teach” and “belief in education” to describe their motivations and purposes for getting into higher education:

*I really wanted to get a master’s degree because I wanted to be a teacher. So my plan was really higher education, to be an educator.* (P2)

*So I actually had since that time graduating as an undergraduate had always wanted to somehow get back into higher ed, but specifically teaching was my goal.* (P5)

Once they got into teaching, the CAOs described their experiences as positive because they liked what they were doing. For example, some described their experience as “loving to teach” (P4) or “enjoying the teaching experience” (P1).

Switch to administration. Five of the participants (P1, P2, P4, P5 and P6) described their move from faculty to administration as accidental, by default or not
purposeful. They became administrators because their superiors, often college
presidents, offered them positions. For these CAOs, administration had not been a career
aspiration:

So I don’t think I had ever thought about going into an
administrative position. So the fact that they needed someone to do
administration and they asked me and I said yes . . . So it turned out
to be a serendipitous opportunity. (P1)

And then eventually without any intention, purposeful intention,
was able to get into administration. So I made the shift from
teaching to administration. (P5)

These narratives reflect a key characteristic of academic administration in that very few
people aspire to academic leadership (Strathe & Wilson, 2006).

For the study participants, the switch from faculty to administration can be
described as due to an alignment of two types of factors: environmental situations and
human influence (see Figure 4.7). The environmental factors related to changes in their
work environment that resulted in opportunities becoming available. The human
influence involved their supervisors or leaders recognizing their abilities and skills, and
then either offering them new positions or encouraging them to pursue a position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Situation</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>Human Influence</th>
<th>=</th>
<th>Administrative Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department chair left college for health reasons</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>President of college offer P1 the position</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>Department Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program up for accreditation but program had no leader</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Faculty asked President to appoint a leader</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>Program Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failed dean search</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>President asked P5 to apply</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>Academic Dean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.7. Alignment of Environmental Situation and Human Influence and Its Resulting Administrative Position*
Move into CAO role. The theme of lack of intentionality and purposefulness continued to run through the narrative of the study participants regarding their moves into the CAO role. Four of the participants (P2, P5, P6, and P7) described their switch to the CAO role as unintentional. They had been appointed by their presidents, when the position became vacant or after there was reorganization at their colleges, while P9 became CAO as a result of a promotion offered by the college president:

*I only became part of the reorganization that the president wanted at that time . . . So I didn’t really have to apply for anything like that. It was just done. . . . So it’s, I was, I was in the administrative role, the president said I looked at your background, I looked at the background of others and this is the structure I want to go with because for students to be successful there cannot be a divide between academics and student services.*

(P7)

The other four participants (P1, P3, P4, and P8) said the move into the CAO position had been a purposeful decision on their part. They had actively sought it. For example, P4 wanted a different position and applied for the CAO role:

*And at that time, just about that time we were hiring a new president and I was on the search committee for him. And when this job, this, when he opened up this job, the vice president . . . at that time it was a vice presidency, I applied. I thought I would like to work for him. I really wanted to get out of the department chair job.*

(P4)
Professional development and preparation category. This category of codes, Professional Development and Preparation, focused on the nature of professional development and preparation the study participants engaged in. There were two sets of focused codes: Mentoring and Leadership Training. While none of the participants had received formal preparation to become administrators, there was general agreement that once on the administration track, they participated in formal and informal professional development activities to make them successful in their roles. Professional development was viewed as an ongoing process. There was limited or no academic preparation for administration (Strathe & Wilson, 2006). The study participants indicated that they had to learn how to be administrators on the job:

* I was in graduate program where you had to teach before you graduated with my doctorate. So you were being prepared to do research and to teach, not to do administration. * (P1)

Mentoring. The data confirmed the importance of mentoring in academic leadership development. P1, P5, P6 and P8 indicated being mentored by both past and current presidents, as well as other senior leadership individuals, while P4 had been mentored by a board member. In all situations, the study participants acknowledged that their successes in the various administrative roles were due in part to having good mentors and supportive leaders:

* I had no, no training in it and kind of was thrown into it but had some great mentors and that's key . . . * (P5)

This acknowledgment highlights the importance of having good mentor-mentee relationships in academic leadership. According to Van Der Linden (2004), the
Mentorship relationship is critical to the success and career trajectory of senior college administrators.

**Leadership Training**: The participants also acknowledged participating in a variety of leadership development training opportunities:

> *I got lots of leadership training... So professional development is kind of ongoing*  

*(P8)*

They identified two types of trainings, off-campus programs and in-house programs. The off-campus programs included national, state-wide or regional training programs such as National Institute for Leadership Development (NILD), Pennsylvania Education Policy Fellowship Program, and American Association of Community Colleges’ Future Leaders Institutes. Some of the colleges also had in-house leadership development programs in which study participants were encouraged to participate:

> *When I started there was... we actually have a center for business and industry where we have a leadership development sort of wing of that. So when I started that, the president enrolled me into a I think it was a three or four day course if I’m not mistaken which other leaders in the community and there were all sorts of leadership and inventories we took like Myers Briggs, etc., a few other things.*  

*(P5)*

**Presidential aspiration category**. The last category used in answering the first research question focused on the presidential aspirations and intentions of the study participants. Under the Presidential Aspiration Category three subcategories of focused codes emerged: **Have/Had Aspiration, No Aspiration, and Undecided/Tentative**
Aspiration. Asked about their aspirations to the college presidency, the participants’ responses were split. Two of the CAOs (P2 and P3) had actively considered pursuing presidencies at some point in their career. Another three (P1, P4 and P7) indicated that they had no interest in pursuing the presidency and had never had an interest. The last four participants (P5, P6, P8 and P9) were tentative or undecided about the presidency.

**Have/Had Aspiration.** P2 and P3 had considered the presidency at some point in their career. P3 actively pursued it and had been shortlisted twice for presidencies, but had to withdraw from the competition due to health reasons. P2 had participated in a national training program with the intention of seeking out a presidency but did not pursue it because it was too late in the career cycle. As described:

**I guess I was reluctant, had I been five years younger.**

*You are in a different plane in your life, and if you are your late fifties, if you are like 55, your kids are now getting out of college. . . . And that’s when you have to, because then you have ten really good years. Then you can try to be a vice-president. Try to be a vice-president or dean, and then you are 58, 59 you can go into that presidency.*

(P2)

In line with the reasons for which the CAOs generally became educators, the desire to be president was a result of passion to contribute in a unique way to the mission of the college. As described by P3:

**And ahm I think, in all the years I’ve been in higher education I do have something to offer and I thought the presidency was a way to put some of the pieces of the puzzle back together in a different way.**
An interesting revelation in the narrative of the two participants is how they responded to difficult choices and continue with their careers. After making what appeared to be tough decisions not to follow through on their presidential aspirations, they both refocused their energies toward performing the CAO functions. The participants did not consider not being president as a loss or “unrequited” thing:

I was a finalist in two presidencies, but had to withdraw to take care of some health issues. **It was not an easy decision, but I did. I said I would rededicate myself to being provost and I will retire from this position. . . . I didn’t take this position; I didn’t become provost thinking in any way that it was a stepping stone to a presidency. I took the job because it sounded interesting.** (P3)

I saw the hazards but part of you always thinks, well, I would have liked to have ended there, you know. I don’t look at it and say it’s terrible. Is this is where I would have liked? No. Is this where I would have wanted to be? No. Could I have done it? If something happened tomorrow and I had to do it, I could do it. **That would sort of be the cherry on top of the career cake . . . Yes so, it’s not one of these unrequited things.** (P2)

**No Aspiration.** Participants P1, P4 and P7 indicated no interest in the presidency. An interesting element of their statements was the firmness of their position. Not only were they definite about their disinterest in the presidency position, but they also knew very early in their career that it was not something in which they were interested:
... one of the board members asked him if I wanted to go to the Harvard School for prospective presidents and I said no. . . . I was not interested. I saw immediately that the job was completely different from my job. (P4)

I decided that ahm, probably at the point I became Vice-president of Academic Affairs. That was around the time people started asking me. And ahm! Dr. XXXX asked if I would be interested in having some leadership opportunities for the presidency, because he was going to make opportunities available to me if that was a goal of mine. So it kind of forced me to think about it early to see if it was something that I really wanted to do, and I told them early that it is not something that I wanted to do. (P1)

For all of these participants, their lack of interest was not a consequence of a lack of support or opportunity. It has been suggested in the research literature that women in academia often receive little or no encouragement to pursue higher leadership roles (Anonymous, 2012; Growe & Montgomery, 1999). Even though all participants were female, this had not been their experience. They all had received support and encouragement to aspire to presidencies. For example, P1 was encouraged and supported by both her current and former presidents:

I have to say both my current boss and my previous one were very encouraging, in that they thought I could be a college president.

But I just never had the desire. (P1)
The lack of presidential aspiration also did not stem from the participants’ belief that they could not perform the role of the presidency. All three were emphatic that if they were required to do it, they could successfully execute the role:

So that has not been something I have wanted to do. It is not that I don’t think I have the skill-set to do it, but I just don’t want to do something ahm, that is not as appealing to me. 

(P1)

Lastly, the participants had not been influenced by the success or difficulties of CAOs they had known who had gone on to become presidents. The participants believed those fellow CAOs just different passions and interests.

I think that the people who have a passion for that kind of position, I think it is fine for them. They just have a different interest than I have.

(P1)

The reasons given by the three participants for not being interested in the presidency related to the perceived difference between their work or personal interests and the functions of the presidency:

It’s not the kind of job that ahm, I like everything about the academic side of colleges. I don’t want to have to worry about the cafeteria, and the bathrooms, not as excited about fundraising. Can I do it? Sure, but is that really how I want to spend my time? . . .

You know the responsibility for the entire college as opposed to the responsibility of the quality of the academics of the institution that has always been my interest. So that has not been something I
have wanted to do. . . . but I just don’t want to do something ahm, that is not as appealing to me. (P1)

As I said back in the 80s, early 80s, late, late 70’s, early 80s, I was actually in what was called a higher education identification program for women who would be following or could be following a path to be a president. I pulled out. . . . I could, I could see the handwriting on the wall that funding was going to become more and more pressing. (P7)

Undecided/Tentative Aspiration. The last four study participants (P5, P6, P8 and P9) were either undecided or tentative about the presidency. They had been interested at various points in their careers but were not sure any more:

*When I started my doctorate I said definitely the presidency.*

*That’s, that’s where I saw myself ultimately being. I’m not quite sure now but I’ve kind of gotten into this, gotten to this level.* (P9)

For these CAOs, the main reason for their hesitation related largely to the nature of the presidency role as they saw it. Only one (P9) indicated a sense of a lack of adequate preparation as one reason for not considering the presidency:

*And so me, personally when I move into something I want to know that I have everything that I need to be successful.*

*And I’m not quite sure it’s. . . if I have everything that I need to be successful in that you know in the presidency* (P9)
Generally, though, their reasons related to concerns about the compatibility of their personal/family needs and the commitments/requirements of the presidency role. The participants’ reasons reflected their psycho-social needs:

*I think it’s the all-consuming job.* I mean I, my schedule is, is very, very busy, very chaotic. And I’m used to that and I can handle it. But when I look at the presidency and you know I’ve worked with two presidents now and I see the immensity of that job and I see the . . . you know for me personally I think that you have to invest a lot in your career. *But, you know there are many other things that are important to me: my family and my personal time, the ability to think and to reflect.* And I, I think that when you’ve . . . when you get to the point where you’ve got more than 100 meetings a month and everything else that goes into that, sometimes I really wonder like what, you know is it really worth the time and the effort to, to do that you know? *It takes a huge commitment. One that is beyond huge. It’s a 24/7 commitment. And you know that commitment level, it’s not that I’m not committed. But that commitment level is, is so large that I think you really have to be ready for that. And you really have to want it and be able to define why it is that you want a lifestyle that is that demanding. And I don’t think I’ve reached the, the point in my career where I can honestly answer the fact or the question of I want a presidency because . . . you know.* (P5)
Like the CAOs who had no presidential aspirations, the hesitation of the four CAO participants was not due to a lack of encouragement or opportunity. Further, their hesitation was not due to their observation of the success or failure of CAOs who had gone into the presidency. The CAOs they had known had been successful as presidents. The participants used adjectives such as “phenomenal” and “very effective” to describe the performance of the former CAOs who became presidents.

\[ I \text{ am very blessed that I have a lot of mentors who are, are very encouraging and want me to or expect me to become a community college president. I’m 45 so, so still fairly young compared to presidents, especially for many of them who are reaching retirement age. But you know at this point in my career it depends on the day. There are days I say you know what? I would like to do that. But I would say that there are more days than not where I say I don’t want to do that. I don’t want to be a college president. } \]

(P5)

**Themes and relationships.** For CAOs, the faculty role tends to be a predominant entry point into academia. Viewed through the lenses of the pathways to the presidency, it appears that that most participants (seven) had started their academic careers from what is deemed the traditional primary entry point to the presidential career pathway (King & Gomez, 2008). In addition, while there were variations in the nature of positions held by each participant, those positions tended to be ones that could be considered in line with those found on the traditional presidential pathway.
A number of trends emerged from the career moves of the CAOs. They were in higher education because of a passion for education, particularly teaching. They made intentional decisions to look for positions in higher education institutions. Once in higher education, their switch from faculty to administration tended to be unintentional. Being an administrator was never a career aspiration.

As CAOs, their moves into that role were often unintentional—a consequence of both work circumstances and the influences of others. CAOs were most likely to be internal hires and tended to be hired by the presidents to whom they reported. This finding aligned with the survey findings of Eckel et al. (2009).

Additional themes arising from this category relate to relationships between the role of the nature of the work of the presidency and the CAOs’ presidential aspirations, as well as the nature of the work of the presidency and the passions/interests of CAOs. Working closely with presidents, CAOs are aware of the nature and functions of the presidency. Generally there tends to be a dissonance between their professional interests and the types of work presidents are required to do. This leads some CAOs to express a lack of interest in the presidency or to hesitate in pursuing it.

**Narrative of Themes and Categories for Research Question #2**

The second research question for this study was: *Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by them?* The following categories of codes emerged from the data to answer this question: *President’s Role vs. CAO’s Role, Desirability of Presidency, and Issues affecting desirability of presidency.*

**President’s role vs. CAO’s role category.** Participants made distinctions between their role and that of the president. In their narratives, they spent more time
describing the things presidents did and they, as CAOs, did not. Consequently, while there were only three subcategories of focused codes, under the CAO role, there were six subcategories of codes for the presidency. The subcategories for the CAO role were *Academics Function, College Operations Function and Role Descriptors*. The president role subcategories were *Leadership Function, Fundraising Function, Board Function, Community Relations, Legislative Function and Role Descriptors*. The Role Descriptors Category referred to the words used to describe the nature of both roles.

The participants viewed the CAO role as internally focused and operational. They used descriptors such as “more the inside person” (P3), “working in the trenches” (P6), “more operational” (P8) and “dealing internally almost exclusively” (P7). The type of work in which they were involved included ensuring academic quality, working with faculty and students, working on accreditation, coordinating college deans as well as dealing with labor issues. These activities align with findings in the Eckel et al. (2009) study. In that study, the CAOs rated “curriculum and academic programs”, “supervising and managing personnel”, as well as “accountability, accreditation and assessment” as the three top things that consumed most of their time.

College presidents, on the other hand, were viewed by the CAO participants as being externally focused and at a strategic level within the college. Most functions of their roles contrast with and complement what CAOs do. The research participants described the president’s role as “becoming an outside job” (P3), being “more externally focused” (P8), having “a 30,000 foot view” of academics (P6) and “not involved in operational academics” (P1).
The president’s work within the college is at strategic leadership level: setting the vision, leading the mission, being fiscally responsible and promoting the institution. Their other activities on behalf of the college were externally focused. These included an emphasis on fundraising, and working closely with the college’s board as well as the elected members of the legislature, local, state and federal governments. The president was increasingly becoming the chief fundraiser for the institution. It is considered a big part of the president’s job involvement.

This differentiation was summed up in the narrative of P4:

*I think in, in the role that I’ve experienced the president, the differentiating factor is our president is working a lot in institutional advancement, in fundraising, working with politicians in, in the community and then to speak. And so that’s the difference I think job wise compared to mine. I’m making lots of decisions every day for this institution, but it’s not as external is my biggest differentiating piece here. It’s not as external, though I’m out there in the community. It’s not to the extent that the president is. I think also secondly the biggest piece is that the president’s work with the board is different than mine. And the president has to really know that board and how they function and make sure that they work with the board in such a fashion that the board is able to do their job at the level that they’re supposed to.* (P4)
Desirability of presidency role category. This research explored the desirability of the presidency role. The CAO participants were asked to “objectively” evaluate the desirability of this role. The “objectively” qualifier meant they were to make their determinations without reference to their personal preferences or interests. Three subcategories of focused codes emerged from the data: Overall Desirability; Desirability Components; and Rational for Desire. The themes that run through the desirability of the role are that: (a) the presidency is desirable in certain contexts, (b) the presidency has both desirable and undesirable aspects, and (c) there are a wider variety of undesirable aspects.

Overall desirability. Six participants viewed the presidency as desirable, while one viewed it as undesirable. It was apparent that the former participants were not fully committed to that perspective as indicated by their responses:

“desirable to those outside of higher education” (P1)

“desirable if it is a career goal” (P2)

“outsiders think of the presidency as cool” (P5)

“very desirable in an ideal world” (P6)

Interestingly, the one participant who described the role as undesirable had strongly negative views about it:

Highly undesirable. I would go further. I would say I think you have to be a little crazy to want to be a president right now . . . Well you know there are so many no win situations out there. There’s so many pitfalls and so much wasted time and wasted effort. (P4)
Aspects of desirability. When asked to describe the desirable aspects, an interesting situation arose. While many of the participants (six) rated the presidency as desirable overall, they identified more undesirable components than desirable ones. The desirable components related to the influence and power of the position. The codes for these functions could be clustered under three topics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Nature of Work</th>
<th>Commitment Required</th>
<th>Impact on Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focused Codes</strong></td>
<td>• Increasing fundraising aspect</td>
<td>• Being always on</td>
<td>• Difficulty balancing family and work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Politics impacting work</td>
<td>• Not having time freedom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increasing involvement of boards</td>
<td>• Being over-extended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Keeping board members happy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of undesirable aspects, participants listed several functions of the presidency as things that made the role undesirable, such as the increasing need for presidents to conduct fundraising initiatives, the influence of external political pressures and the increasing involvement with boards. For example, on board involvement:

*I think that the whole shift boards becoming more engaged in the institution, on one hand, it is good in terms of the oversight because they have the responsibility. On the other hand, it makes very difficult, challenging I think, for the president to do what he or she is trying to do in terms of leading an institution.*

(P1)
On demands and time commitment:

So I think that that is one of the things that is undesirable because you are constantly going and when I read that schedule I thought my schedule was bad being a CAO. But I think that that’s the most undesirable part is just kind of not having a lot of time, a lot of time because you are you know every day it’s something where you’re meeting donors or you’re you know meeting with faculty or students or you know some . . . attending some events. So I think that that definitely would be the undesirable parts. (P9)

Rationale for desire. In evaluating the desirability of the presidency, another subcategory of focused codes was the rationale for desiring the presidency. Four participants raised it as an issue that needed to be considered. The general theme was that there were right and wrong reasons for desiring the presidency. The participants indicated that it was important to want the role for the right reasons.

Some of the right reasons included having a passion for the position, as well as having ideas about education and wanting to be able to do something about it. The wrong reasons, on the other hand, included wanting the position for power, title or prestige. This distinction indicated that while power and influence were desirable aspects of the president’s role, they were not enough by themselves for one to pursue the presidency.
**Issues affecting desirability of presidency category.** The last category of codes that emerged to answer the second research question was about the current issues that affected the desirability of the presidency role. From the perspective of the study participants, three subcategories of codes emerged: Regulations/Accountability, Finances/Funding, and Online Learning/MOOCs. Regulations/Accountability as well as Finances/Funding, were the areas with the greatest impact on the presidency, according to most participants. Seven cited them as issues of concern. Three also viewed online learning and massive open online courses (MOOCs) as critical issues. These were critical because the president is held accountable for everything:

\[ \ldots \text{the president is the one who has to be} \ldots \text{the president is the one that's the lighting rod. You know if, if your school goes bankrupt} \]
\[ \text{they announce the name of the president if the school is bankrupt.} \]
\[ \text{They don't go find the chief fiscal officer. You know in a newspaper well that might be on page three you know 14 paragraphs down. So the, the, the lightning rod for your institution is the president. You know if, if a nursing program loses its accreditation they don't list the dean of nursing. You know the first name that appears? It's the president's name. And if you get a budget cut like our county cut our budget last year by 2.5 million dollars. Who, who is quoted in the newspaper? The president. How are you going to handle your finances with the county cutting your funds?} \quad (P7) \]

**Regulations/Accountability.** Seven participants cited institutional compliance with regulations and compliance issues as one factor impacting how the presidency is
viewed. This increase, coupled with increased accountability demands, had made the presidency undesirable. Institutions are being required to account for student learning outcomes, graduation rates, as well as the allocation of resources:

\[
\text{. . .compliance and government issues I would maybe rank number two. There are so many regs and so many compliance issues that are very serious and could be very dangerous for the institution that . . . and we’re not adding staff to take care of them. You know that those regulations are falling on existing staff and it makes me really nervous because some of them are.} \quad (P4)
\]

**Finances/Funding.** In terms of funding, study participants were concerned about decreasing state and federal funding as well as an increased reliance on private funding. Consequently, institutions are running structural deficits:

\[
\text{. . .money is the primary one. e’re, we’re always running . . . }
\]

\[
\text{schools like us, well most schools are always running a structural deficit. Our revenues are always, are always behind our expenses, are not rising to keep up with our expenses. Our expenses go up based on labor contracts and inflation and technology and you know the usual stuff, infrastructure. And our revenues just don’t keep up.} \quad (P4)
\]

**Online Learning/MOOCs.** Both online learning and MOOCs were viewed as having a big impact on the presidency. One participant described it as a game changer and a challenge. Both were expected to have an impact on tuition revenue. Community
colleges would need to compete more effectively in both areas to stay competitive. P6 described online/MOOCs as having the capability to make or break a presidency:

*I literally think it can destroy presidencies because I actually think in some areas it’s going to shut down schools if they don’t step up and offer quality on-line learning and you have to be able to manage it through the academic integrity process and make sure that that student who says is taking that class is actually taking that class. And so I think that that has a huge impact on our future. I think MOOCs, those open on-line . . . those can have a huge impact on, on the presidency in terms of how they can be handled or used or not used or whatever that may be*  

**Themes and relationships.** The themes that emerged from this analysis were that both the roles of the president and the CAO have internal and external foci. In addition, the external focus is the dominant aspect of the president’s role, while the dominant aspect of the CAO role is the internal focus. The themes confirmed the internal/external divide of work between the two positions as identified in Eckel et al. (2009) study. One sees that the external functions of the presidency play a key role in its desirability. For example, presidents increasingly need to engage in fundraising initiatives, as well as be involved with politicians and boards. These aspects do not make the role attractive.

In examining the relationship between the Desirability Category and the President’s Role Category, one recognizes a relationship between the functions and attributes of the presidency and the desirability of the role. For example, the external
nature of the job makes it unattractive. This aligns with Oplaka and Tamir’s (2009) research findings which suggested that individuals’ perceptions and feelings about a job’s attributes and functions influence the job’s desirability to them.

It is apparent that what the study participants viewed as most impacting the presidency and thus making that role undesirable relate to mainly to aspects of the president’s external role. Regulations, Accountability, Finances, Funding, Online Learning and MOOCs are all issues that require the presidents to relate more with external stakeholders of the institution.

**Narrative of Themes and Categories for Research Question #3**

The third research question was: *How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?* To answer this question, research participants were asked to share their ideas on how the community college presidency pipeline can be expanded. In responding, participants did not distinguish between what was needed to increase the CAO pool and the presidency pool. Two categories of code emerged from the data: *Institutional Actions* and *Potential Changes to the Presidency*. The Institutional Actions referred to what colleges as an organization could do to expand the presidency pipeline. The second category, *Potential Changes*, dealt with the aspects of the presidency role that needed to change or be adjusted to make the presidency desirable to individuals.

**Institutional actions category.** Under the *Institutional Actions* category, four sub-categories of focused codes emerged: Succession Planning, Grooming, Mentoring, and Training.
Succession Planning. Three participants raised the need for succession planning. The argument was that it would enable the institution to create an internal replacement pool. The institutions would be able to identify individuals with potential and groom them for higher leadership roles:

*I think every campus needs to be actively involved in succession planning. And that doesn't mean that you’re not going to open up positions and look for broad, broad fields of candidates for any number of reasons. But I think all . . . at, at the same time also we should be training people internally even if it only is to fill interim positions you know for, for the CAO and other leadership positions.*

*(P4)*

Grooming: referred to the growth opportunities given to people on the job to get hands-on-experience. The idea was that if given work experiences of increasing responsibilities, potential academic leaders will know if they could do the job and would be more willing to consider both the presidency and CAO role as possible career goals. Participants were specific about the types of grooming that could be implemented. Suggestions included the following:

- Moving individuals into different positions
- Providing job shadow opportunities with corporate leaders
- Letting faculty experience administration

Looking at some of the participants’ own experiences, it is clear that exposure which led to success was a factor that had made them willing to continue on in administration. In other words, this had increased their interest in pursuing a career
trajectory. For example, P1 was offered a department head position as her first administrative position. The success she experienced made her inclined to look for other administrative positions:

So I became the head of the department and I found that I liked it so I was having successes as department head, and I enjoyed it. . . so I did that for a number of years, and then I decided that I wanted to move more into administration. It was hard to move up into administration at that school . . . So I told them I was going to start looking for some other possibilities.  

(P1)

Mentoring. Three participants also suggested the need for a mentoring system to support potential leaders. Such a program would enable mentors to provide insights to the mentee about the nature of different aspects of executive leadership. The participants advocated for both internal (in-house) as well as external (of-campus) mentors. External mentors could be from other higher education institutions or from the corporate world. One participant viewed this as a way to build bridges between academia and the business world.

Training. Participants also identified training as another needed system for expanding the presidency pipeline pool. They advocated for different types of trainings: in-house training on campus, national trainings programs, as well as national conferences. For example, P4 indicated,

For the presidency pipeline . . . I only know the way it’s traditionally been done, which is from my knowledge through
the VPs you know. *That you send people to presidential training that you give them jobs to do.* *(P4)*

These programs were cited by participants as beneficial in their own development:

*I went to Future Leaders from the League of Innovations. I went, this president sent me to NILD, for women presidents* *(P2)*

**Potential changes to the presidency category.** Asked if there were potential changes that could be made to the role to make it more attractive to potential candidates, the study participants were not sure if that was possible. The areas identified as needing change related to the nature of the job. In other words, the attributes of the president’s role (the nature of the job) were very critical to their decisions regarding the pursuit of presidency. The three types of attributes identified by participants were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time commitment</th>
<th>Constraints on work</th>
<th>Rejuvenation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Manage time commitment</td>
<td>• Limit intensity of job</td>
<td>• Allow time for rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limit immensity of job</td>
<td>• Allow time for reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Change attitude towards need for rest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Themes and relationships.** It appears that participants’ views on how to attract more people into the presidency pipeline were closely related to their own experiences. Only three indicated having been offered encouragement and support to pursue the presidency if they desired to do so. While the others had not been
discouraged, there was institutional silence on the issue. Therefore, an enabling
environment had not been created to encourage such a pursuit.

In addition to the proposed types of institutional actions are ones that would expose potential presidential prospects to the nature of the presidency role. This implies that as individuals get hands-on exposure to the work of the presidency, they may develop a comfort level that will increase the likelihood of becoming interested in the position. While these institutional actions are likely to make some difference, they must not be seen as the only solution to the opting out phenomenon. Individuals’ personalities also play a role in their career decisions. Statistical modeling shows that the personalities of job candidates influence their attraction to jobs (Johnson, Winter, Reiro, Thompson & Petrosko, 2008). The CAOs in this study acknowledged that the presidency would not suit some of their personalities.

**Grounded Theory of the CAOs Opting Out of the College Presidency**

The grounded theory shows the analytical schema undergirding the phenomenon of chief academic officers opting out of the presidency pipeline. Following Strass and Corbin (1998), the theory on CAOs opting out is discussed in terms of the six Cs of the theoretical coding (conceptual) families that emerged from the data: contexts, causes, consequences, conditions, contingencies and covariance. Figure 4.8 provides a schema for theory development. The use of the six Cs enabled queries of the data and clarified relationships among categories, as well as their relationship with the phenomenon.

To understand the theory development schema, it is important to define the six Cs. Contexts refer to the environment and ambience of the opting out phenomenon, while causes present the reasons or explanations for the occurrence of the phenomenon.
Contingencies refer to any conceptual categories that serve as moderating variables of a phenomenon. Consequences describe the anticipated or unanticipated results of the phenomenon. Conditions refer to the different conceptual categories that serve as intervening variables of a given phenomenon. Finally, covariance reflects any correlation between conceptual categories in the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounded Theory Coding Families (Categories)</th>
<th>Relationships between Categories</th>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Equivalents in Nomothetic Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contexts</td>
<td>is-context-for</td>
<td>Within what context does this occur?</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes</td>
<td>is-cause–of; is-trigger-for; is-source-of</td>
<td>Is this a cause of another category?</td>
<td>Independent variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>is-outcome-of; is-function-of</td>
<td>Is this a consequence of another category?</td>
<td>Dependent variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditions</td>
<td>is-intervening-condition-for</td>
<td>What are the intervening conditions between causes and consequences?</td>
<td>Intervening variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contingencies</td>
<td>is-change dependent-on</td>
<td>Does this category have a bearing on another category?</td>
<td>Moderating variables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covariance</td>
<td>has-effect-on; lead-to</td>
<td>Is there a correlation between this and other categories?</td>
<td>Correlation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.8. Schema of Theoretical Families used in Theory Development

Note: Adapted from Kan & Parry (2004), Selvaraj & Fields (2009), and Strauss & Corbin (1998)

Contexts. The data from conceptual categories of Presidential Role vs. CAO Role and Issues Affecting the Desirability of the Presidency Role suggest that the phenomenon of “opting out of the college presidency” is occurring within a higher education context for two main reasons: first, the roles of the CAO and that of the president are increasingly diverging, and second, the college presidency is impacted greatly by external factors. Working closely with presidents, CAOs are keenly aware of how different the nature and functions of the presidency are from what they as CAOs do. As data suggest, the presidency is becoming an externally focused role, where the
president has a mainly strategic-level engagement with the college and a “30,000 foot view” of academics. On the other hand, the CAO role has become more internally focused on the academics and allied operations of the institution. These individuals are engaged in the day-to-day activities that relate to the academic mission of the institution.

The divergence between the role of the president and that of the CAO is being deepened by the socio-economic environment in which higher education is operating. With community colleges facing increased regulations and accountability demands, limited finances and funding, as well as the need to serve more students with the latest forms of online learning technologies, presidents are required to engage more with external stakeholders. This means that as presidents spend more time with board members, local and state politicians, as well as external funders than they do on the day-to-day operations of the college, the focus on the academic mission of the institution generally falls increasingly on chief academic officers.

**Causes.** The external nature of the functions and attributes of the presidency’s role is one of the root causes of why the presidency is unattractive to CAOs. Data from the Presidential Role vs. CAO Role Category show that CAOs have a negative perception of the presidency role because of the external focus of the role which distances the president from the core functions of higher education—the academics. This negative perception can be attributed in part to the fact that, as suggested in the data from the Career Path Category, CAOs are attracted to higher education because of a passion for and interest in working internally in the trenches of higher education. For CAOs, “working in the trenches”, as a number of the study participants called it, involves being part of the day-to-day academic operations of the college. This then
implies that there is disconnect between the CAOs’ passions/interests and the functions of the presidency role, and consequently a lack of desire to pursue the presidency.

**Consequences.** More chief academic officers are generally not aspiring to the college presidency. As Eckel et al. (2009) suggested, 75% of community college CAOs are becoming less interested in the position of the presidency as their next career moves. They are making deliberate career choice decisions to opt out of the presidency pipeline.

**Conditions.** There are a number of intervening variables in the relationship between the desirability of the presidency and the presidential aspiration of the CAOs:

1. the professional passions and interests of the individual;
2. the psycho-social needs of the individual as related to their job choices; and
3. the individual’s personal perceptions of the attributes of the presidency functions.

These variables are causal links between the desirability of the presidency and the presidential aspirations of CAOs. First, the data from the Career Path Category suggest that CAOs generally look to perform roles or functions that satisfy specific passions for education. Chief academic officers generally enter the higher education career track because of a passion for teaching and learning. If there are disconnects between the CAOs passions/interests and the presidency role, they are less likely to be attracted to the presidency role.

Second, there are psycho-social needs such as personal life balance, being able to meet family commitments and not having to sacrifice, that are important to CAOs. The
ability of a given role to fulfill these needs impacts CAOs aspirational decisions regarding the college presidency. This means that the more the functions of the presidency impedes on CAOs’ ability to fulfill these psycho-social needs, the less likely they are going to aspire to the presidency.

Lastly, the CAOs’ perceptions of functions of the presidency also impact their decisions on presidential aspiration. For example, negative perceptions of the presidency such as viewing the presidency as a no-win situation, or something that requires immense, out of balance time commitment make the presidency undesirable to CAOs.

**Contingencies.** Examining the Issues Affecting Desirability Category, it is apparent that the external socio-economic environment in which higher education institutions have to operate has a moderating effect on the relationship between the desirability of the presidency and the presidential aspirations of CAOs. The demands of this environment are requiring college presidents to be extremely externally focused (e.g., fundraising; meetings with local and state politicians). The president is becoming the public face of the institution. These demands, coupled with increasing levels of board involvement in the governance/leadership of the institution, are causing college presidents to become further removed from the academic mission of institutions. The more removed presidencies are from academics, the less likely it is that CAOs whose passions and interests are in academics are going to be attracted to the presidency.

**Covariance.** There is a correlation between the nature of the work of the presidency and the desirability of the presidency by CAOs. When asked about potential changes needed to make the presidency role attractive to CAOs, the data that emerge in the Potential Changes to the Presidency Category suggest that the desirability of the role
is tied to the nature of work factors related to the presidency. These factors include time commitment, external nature of job functions and constraints of the job. Study participants referenced the fact that as the presidency becomes more externally focused, time-consuming and a 24/7 commitment, the less desirable it is.

**Theory.** CAOs make their presidential aspiration decisions primarily based on subjective factors that are congruent with their passions and interests as well as specific psycho-social needs and their perceptions of the presidency role. For individual CAOs there must be congruence among their professional passions and interests, psycho-social needs and the job requirements of the presidency. The individuals in CAO roles tend to be in education because of their passion for academics and a desire to work internally “in the trenches” of higher education. Consequently, the external nature of the functions and attributes of the presidency’s role negatively impacts the desirability of the presidency role for CAOs. This means that CAOs make the choice to opt out of the presidency pipeline because they have a negative view of the functions and attributes of the presidency role and believe those functions and attributes fail to fulfill specific psychological and sociological needs for them. Figure 4.9 diagrammatically shows the relationship between the coding families and the grounded theory.
Chapter Summary

This qualitative research study explored the lived experiences of nine CAOs from Pennsylvania community colleges in order to gain insights into the reasons these individuals were opting not to pursue the college presidency. Study participants consisted of two male and seven female participants. Together, they had served a total of sixty-eight years in CAO roles. Their individual terms varied from one year to twenty years. An in-depth interviewing process was used to explore three research questions related to the topic. A summary of the findings follows:

Research Question #1: What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?

Figure 4.9. Substantive Level Theory of CAOs Opting Out of the Presidency Pipeline
Summary of Findings

1. CAOs generally pursue careers in higher education because of a passion and interest in the academic functions of education: teaching and learning.

2. CAOs’ switch from faculty to administration as well as their moves into the CAO roles tended to be unintentional and not as a consequence of career planning.

3. CAOs’ career moves were often a result of both work circumstances and the influences of other people.

4. CAOs tended to have limited or no academic preparation for administration. They had to learn to be administrators and CAOs on the job.

5. CAOs generally made decisions on the desirability of the presidency based on psycho-social needs:
   a. CAOs’ perception of presidential job functions and attributes;
   b. A congruence between the CAOs’ passions and interests with the job requirements of the presidency; as well as
   c. The nature of fulfillment that the CAOs sought from the jobs they chose.

6. CAOs generally do not choose to opt out of the presidency pipeline because of a lack of skills or abilities to perform the presidency role.

7. CAOs make the decision to opt out of the presidency pipeline because:
   a. the functions of the presidency are not aligned with their passions and interests; and
Research Question #2: Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by them?

Summary of Findings

1. There is a clear distinction between the nature of the functions for the CAO role and those of the president’s role.
2. The current socio-economic environment in which higher education institutions have to operate is increasing the divergence between the CAO and president’s roles.
3. CAOs are internally focused on the academic operations of the institution, while presidents are externally focused and more engaged with functions involving external stakeholders.
4. The external nature of the functions and attributes of the presidency’s role makes the role unattractive to CAOs.
5. There is a correlation between the functions and attributes of the presidency role and the desirability of the role to CAOs.

Research Question #3: How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?

Summary of Findings

1. Institutional actions can be taken to encourage more people in higher education to aspire to the presidency.
2. The key types of institutional actions are: *Succession Planning*, *Grooming*, *Mentoring*, and *Training*.

3. Very limited changes can be implemented to the actual role of the presidency to make it attractive to CAOs.
Chapter 5
Discussion and Conclusion

Summary of the Research

In 2009 the American Council on Education (ACE) released a national comprehensive study on chief academic officers (CAOs), *The CAO Census: A National Profile of Chief Academic Officers*. This report provided extensive quantitative evidence to support the notion of CAOs opting out of the college presidency pipeline (Eckel, Cook &King, 2009). The findings from the CAO Census study indicated that about 75% of community college CAOs were opting not to pursue the college presidency for a variety of reasons. This means that community colleges are facing significant contraction of the traditional presidency pipeline. It is therefore important to understand the reasons why so many CAOs do not aspire to the presidency, if the problem of the shrinking traditional pipeline to the presidency is to be addressed.

The purpose of this current grounded theory study was to develop a substantive-level explanation for why CAOs are choosing to opt out of the college presidency pipeline, according to the CAOs’ perspective. Using qualitative interviewing, nine CAOs from community colleges in Pennsylvania were asked to share their perspectives on the phenomenon. A grounded theory approach was adopted because it enabled the research to go beyond a general description of the phenomenon of opting out and to discover an analytical schema undergirding the situation. The study was guided by three research questions:

1. What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?
2. Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by them?

3. How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?

Discussion and Implications of Findings

Research question #1. The first research question explored the career path experiences of community college chief academic officers, and how those experiences impacted their presidential aspirations. According to Young and McLeod (2001), job or career aspiration is a complex concept that encompasses career commitments and positional goals. The attributes of career commitment, reason, passion, interest, motivation and purpose collectively are what draws individuals to a particular position/job. These attributes may have either economic or psychological basis (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Analysis of the CAOs’ narrative in the current study supports Young and McLeod’s assertion about job or career aspirations. The CAOs chose careers in higher education because of their passions and interests for the teaching and learning functions of education. Similar to the findings of Cedja’s (2008) research on CAOs, the CAOs in the current study were attracted to the community college because of the instructional mission of colleges.

The career aspiration and mobility literature assumes a degree of intentionality and career planning on the part of the individual. This intentionality appears to be missing in the career moves of CAOs once they are in the higher education field. While the CAOs may have been intentional and purposeful in the choice of higher education as a career, their moves and mobility in the field were not always intentional or pre-planned. This lack of intentionality may be partially attributed to the fact that CAOs in
their academic and professional preparation are not primarily oriented towards academic administration. Also, one can allude to the general lack of career planning on the part of CAOs as another source of the lack of intentionality. Cedja (2008) reported that CAOs generally do not enter community college employment with a primary career goal of administration.

Corollary to the lack of intentionality, is the academic culture that seems to encourage the reluctant leadership. As indicated by a number of the study participants, there is a perception, particularly among faculty that to aspire to, or move into academic administration is to move to the dark side. Consequently, there appears to be a quiet accepted narrative that one must not be seen to actively aspire to academic administrative leadership. This situation raised the question of whether in the academic context, it is culturally-normed that one should not aspire to administrative leadership. If this is the case, could it be compounding the crises of the attrition of the CAO-presidency pipeline?

The issues of lack of intentionality and reluctant leaderships have implications for higher education career planning and preparation of individuals for the CAO roles and ultimately the presidency. Given that most CAOs tend to be internal hires and often start their academic careers as faculty, it is important, as a number of the study participants suggested, to make education about academic administration and leadership components of all graduate programs. Doctoral programs especially need to prepare individuals to teach in content areas and also develop an understanding of the administration of higher education institutions. Such preparation will plant the possibility of administrative positions in the minds of graduates. In addition, it would
also encourage the development of a different and more positive narrative regarding administrative leadership.

The external nature of the functions and attributes of the presidency makes the role undesirable to CAOs. This study’s findings are aligned in a number of ways with those from two earlier studies that looked at the job choice decisions and career aspirations of high school assistant principals and middle school principals (Pounder & Merrill, 2001) and female deputy school heads (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). In both studies, the researchers found that the headship position in the academic institutions were undesirable to the vice principals and deputy heads because of their own perceptions and feelings about the job attributes of those positions. They cited attributes such as time demands of the position, the problems and dilemmas associated with the headship role, as well as the perceived inability to make meaningful contributions to the field, as possible factors that made the headship role unattractive.

One finding in which the current study differs from Oplatka and Tamir (2009) as well as Pounder and Merrill (2001), is the CAOs’ perceptions of their skills and abilities to perform the presidency role. While reasons such as low confidence in their abilities to perform the head role were consistently cited by the vice principals and deputy heads this was not the case for CAOs in this study. Low confidence was not impacting the CAOs’ decision-making regarding the presidency. The implication of this finding is that, in attempting to encourage more CAOs to develop presidential aspirations, strategies that focus only on skills development may not be effective. It would be important to focus rather on strategies that would influence CAOs’ perceptions and feelings about the presidency job attributes.
According to a June 2013 report on community college leadership from the Aspen Institute and Achieving the Dream, leadership preparation programs for community college presidents tend to focus on technical skills such as budgeting, finance, organizational development, as well as institutional planning and assessment. While the focus on technical skills is important, it is not enough if one seeks to prepare highly effective presidents. The report suggested an approach of being grounded in the context of improving student outcomes and qualities of exceptional presidents (*Crises and Opportunities*, June, 2013). The report outlined five core qualities that need to be taken into account in developing any leadership preparation program for potential presidents:

1) Deep commitment to student access and success;
2) Willingness to take significant risks to advance student success;
3) The ability to create lasting change within the college;
4) Having a strong broad, strategic vision for the college and its students, reflected in external partnerships
5) Raise and allocate resources in ways aligned to student success.

**Research question #2.** The second research question explored aspects of the presidency role that made the role undesirable or unattractive to chief academic officers. The research findings highlighted a clear distinction between the roles of the CAO and that of the president. While both roles have internal and external functions, they differ in the dominance of the functions. The president’s role is dominated by its external functions, while the dominant aspect of the CAO role is its internal functions. It is this difference that accounts for the disconnect between the two roles.
Even though the CAO office is supposed to be “training ground” for the presidency, a stepping stone to the presidency, in many higher education institutions, the roles have little or no overlap. The findings of this study agree with the findings of Anderson, Murray and Olivarez (2002), Keim and Murray (2008), and McKenney and Cedja (2000) on this subject. This means that for most community college CAOs, switching to the presidency could be considered a career change. They will be moving into a job with roles that are not similar to those they currently enjoy doing.

This situation has implications for how the CAO role could be structured in community colleges. Is it possible to redesign the role so that the CAO in a community college functions in ways similar to academic deans in masters-granting institutions or CAOs in doctoral-granting institutions, who, as described by Eckel et al. (2009), function more like college presidents? In that study, a comparison of the percentage of CAOs from doctoral-granting and baccalaureate institutions revealed that doctoral-granting CAOs, who tended to spend moderate to significant time on typical presidential functions such as fundraising, fiscal management, strategic planning, alumni relations, and economic development, were more likely to move into the presidency (43.5%) than CAOs from baccalaureate institutions (15.7%), who typically did not perform those functions. Consequently, a redesign of the CAO role could bring about some overlap between the role of the president and the CAO. This will ensure that as CAOs go about their duties, they would also be acquiring a comfort level with primary presidential functions and roles.

Even though the CAO participants in the current study did not feel unprepared skill-wise for the college presidency, skill development is still an issue that needs to be
taken into account when one seeks to expand the presidency pipeline. This is because as suggested by the results of the Eckel et al. (2009) study, up to 21% of the CAOs nationally reported not feeling prepared to succeed as presidents. If the current job descriptions of the CAOs do not overlap in some respects with the president’s, CAOs who may be even slightly inclined to consider the presidency may not have opportunities to acquire or improve on the necessary job skills needed for successful presidencies.

**Research question #3.** The third research question explored ways in which individuals with the potential to be CAOs and ultimately presidents, may be encouraged to nurture presidential aspirations and ultimately consider the presidency as a possible career step. Reflecting on their own career development experiences, the research participants offered suggestions aligned with some of the best practices discussed in the research literature on higher education leadership development (Cedja, 2008; Curtis, Gay, Griffin, Johnson, & Tobia, 2003). Their suggestions included succession planning, mentoring and grooming, as well as both formal and informal training opportunities. The suggestions highlight the need for both institutional and individual actions, when it comes to the development of the leadership pipeline.

The proposed institutional actions are ones that would expose potential community college leaders to the nature of the presidency role. As individuals receive hands-on exposure to the work of the presidency during leadership opportunities, they may develop a comfort level with the notion of the college presidency. This will in turn increase the likelihood of these individuals becoming interested in the presidency. The individual actions encompass a willingness to take part in leadership development. The
problem with CAOs opting out of the presidency and the expansion of the pool of potential presidential candidates can be more effectively addressed with a meaningful integration of both institutional and individual actions.

**Recommendations and Implications for Practice**

Given that the factors relating to interest, passion, and perceptions regarding the nature of work have the most influence on the presidential aspirations of CAOs, it is important to develop solutions that target those factors. Some solutions could include career planning, succession planning, mentoring and grooming, training and development, as well as job redesign.

**Career Planning.** One identified issue was the lack of intentionality in some CAOs’ career moves. Is it therefore possible that accidental ascendancy into the CAO position has a correlation with some CAOs’ lack of desire or unwillingness to consider a college presidency?

In the study of vice principals, Oplatka and Tamir (2009) found a positive correlation between the patterns of career entry and future career orientations. Vice principals who had not intentionally planned and executed their career moves into a vice principalship tended not to aspire to a principalship. Similar to the findings from the vice principal study, Cedja (2008) suggested a possible correlation between CAO moves and their aspirations towards the college presidency. His study revealed that CAOs who had not actively sought the CAO position tended to show no interest in the presidency.

The results from this study support Cedja’s assertion. The unintentional nature of study participants’ career moves reflects the findings in Cedja (2008). They also suggest a lack of career planning. This fact was directly articulated by two of the current study
participants. Given this situation, career planning should be encouraged very early in the career preparation of individuals looking at employment in higher education. This would be particularly helpful in graduate programs that prepare individuals to be faculty or administrators in higher education. Such a career planning program should be developed to incorporate a long-range view, one that includes a career ladder that potentially ends with the college/university presidency. The incorporation of a career ladder and planning will encourage potential CAOs to be intentional and realistic about their career development and moves.

**Succession planning.** One issue raised by participants in this study is the lack of succession planning in most of their institutions. There was often no internally prepared pool of potential leaders upon which to draw. It is important for community colleges to develop and have a strategy for succession planning systems that address the development as well as expansion of internal leadership pipelines.

Succession planning is an effective way for higher education institutions to identify leadership gaps, as well as identify, recruit, and nurture potential academic leaders. Succession planning provides community colleges with effective systematic means to increase the number and quality of presidential aspirants among the CAO ranks. In addition, the process also positions current upper-level administrators to become role models and mentors to potential future leaders. By passing on their institutional knowledge to potential leaders through the mentor-mentee relationship, current leaders may help preempt the “lost knowledge challenge” facing community college leadership: the possible decreased capacity for action and effective decision making due to retirement and other forms of attrition (Berliner, 2009; Delong, 2004).
Mentoring and grooming. In addition to succession planning, community colleges need to have in place mentoring and grooming systems to encourage more people to aspire to the presidency. Mentoring focuses on the overall development of the individual, while grooming (coaching) helps the individual develop specific job related skills (Sims, 2002). All participants in this current study acknowledged the importance and value of both mentoring and grooming in their own professional development and advancement.

The research literature documents extensively the role and importance of mentoring in leadership development of college presidents and other senior leaders (Switzer, 2006; Valdata, 2006). The importance of mentors lie in the fact that the mentors will be able to nurture leadership aspirations through what Fotch (2010) called “courageous conversations”. The concept of courageous conversations as developed by Fotch refers to presidents and senior academic leaders sharing their experiences as part of leadership development for prospective leaders. The purpose of courageous conversations is to help potential leaders “cultivate a better understanding and practice of leadership” (Fotch, 2010, p. 141).

Grooming will involve the provision of hands-on opportunities that would enable potential leaders to develop the skills and confidence to pursue higher office. Grooming will allow institutions to incorporate into development opportunities, the job attributes of the presidency role which CAOs find unattractive and for which they are unprepared.

Training and development. A number of this study’s participants recommended training and development, suggesting the provision of both campus-based and off-campus training opportunities. In addition to having training opportunities, it is critical
for institutions to ensure that potential leaders access them. If the issue is access to training programs, they must be situated such that regardless of where CAOs are, whether in rural, urban or suburban areas, they can reach them. On the other hand, if the issue is one of motivation, that is, if CAOs or other potential leaders are not being motivated to participate, then their institution should put in place systems to encourage and incentivize individuals’ participation.

Various national off-campus leadership programs provide opportunities for potential leaders to broaden their professional horizons and develop professional networks that would further support their development as leaders (Cedja, 2008). The professional development activities and programs provided by national organizations, such as American Council on Education (ACE) and American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), ACE Institute for New Presidents and ACE Institute for New Chief Academic Officers, tend to focus on helping new or incumbent CAOs and presidents improve their skills for their current roles.

It is also important for community colleges to have on-campus leadership training program. Such programs are a proactive way for preparing leaders for specific leadership roles relevant to a given college (Amey, 2006). Specifically, for CAOs, the development programs should help them acquire the competencies needed for the externally-oriented duties of the presidency. This will help address the “perceived skills gap” and boost the confidence of potential aspirants who feel dissuaded by their belief that they lack the skills to be successful. Within the institutional context, on-campus leadership training programs can be tailored to prepare CAOs and other administrators who are location-bound for senior academic leadership positions and the presidencies.
Job redesign. Another factor that needs to be considered is the nature of work issues and how they factor into the job descriptions of both the presidency and CAO roles. In both the current study as well as the Eckel et al. study, CAOs consistently pointed to the nature of the presidency role as the main reason for its lack of attractiveness. While recognizing this problem, study participants were hesitant to suggest changes to the presidency role. This is because CAOs also acknowledged that to a large extent, the nature of the work of the president is dictated by external forces and the socio-economic environment in which higher education operates. It was therefore unrealistic to expect the nature of the presidency to be changed to make the role attractive to more CAOs.

An alternative option to addressing the nature of work issue would be a reconsideration of the nature of the CAO role. In community colleges where the president and CAO roles do not overlap, there is a need to consider some form of job redesign to allow the two positions to overlap and become truly sequential. This will make the CAO role a true pathway to the presidency. A job redesign that leads to an overlapping alignment between the CAO and president roles will help in reducing or even eliminating the perception of “career change” that is sometimes negatively associated with the move from CAO to presidency.

Recommendations for Further Research

This current study provides additional evidence of the CAO opting out phenomenon first described by Eckel et al. (2009). However, additional issues were identified in this study that would require further research. The findings of these
inquiring will help in the design of targeted solutions to the problem of CAOs opting out of the presidency pipeline.

It is important to explore the gender difference in CAOs’ presidential aspirations and job choice decisions regarding the presidency. Eckel et al.’s study suggests that up to 75% of the women CAOs have no intentions to engage in or are undecided about the presidency. In the current study, even though purposeful sampling was not used in selecting study participants, seven of the nine study participants were female. The three participants who were not interested in the presidency were all female, and two of the four who were unsure about the presidency were also female. When one considers the fact that at the community college level, women constitute about 50% of CAOs, the urgency to understand gender differences in the problem cannot be overemphasized. If this problem is not more carefully studied and addressed, it will negatively impact attempts by higher education institutions to achieve diversity and gender parity among senior executives.

Further examination of the nature of specific work attributes of the presidency role and the degree to which each attribute influences job choice decisions. Knowledge of the nature of the attributes and their influences will be beneficial in the creation of targeted professional development opportunities.

Another issue that needs further research is the difference between higher education institutions. It is important to identify what makes CAOs in doctoral-granting institutions more attracted to the college presidency than those in community colleges. Such a study could yield possible best practices that could help the other types of higher education institutions make the presidency more desirable to their CAOs.
Finally, there is a need for further research into the narrative of reluctant leadership that appears to be pervasive on college campuses. It is important to understand the causes this narrative to develop and how it can be changed to ensure that more people are not deterred from pursuing administrative leadership.
Appendix A

Organizational Structures

Adapted from Cohen and Brawer (2008), pp. 109, 114 and 115
Figure 4.3. Organization of a State Community College System

Figure 4.4. Organization of a University-Controlled Community College System
APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

Interviewer: ____________________  Interviewee: _______________________________

Date: ______________  Location & Setting: ________________________________

Research Question 1: What lived experiences influence the Chief Academic Officers to opt in or out of the presidency pipeline?

Interview Questions

1.1 Can you share your life journey – how did you get here?
   
   Probe: What was your career path?

1.2 What meaningful experiences led you to decide to become a CAO?
   
   Probe: How do your past educational and occupational experiences shape your career decisions?

1.3 What professional development strategies or plans helped you reach your current position?
   
   Probe: What kind of conscious choices did you have to make to get here?

1.4 What are your future career plans?
   
   Probe: What experiences are shaping or influencing these career plans?

1.5 Have you ever considered pursuing a presidency position?
   
   Probe: When in your professional career did you decide to pursue/not to pursue a presidency?
   
   Probe: Why did you reach that decision (reasons for no presidential aspirations or being undecided)?

1.6 What peer observations and peer reactions have shaped or influence your interest or perceptions of the presidents?

1.7 If considering the presidency, what has been your career preparation towards the presidency?
   
   Probe: Are there other preparatory activities or things you think you still need?
Research Question 2: Why is the presidency not desirable to CAOs as indicated by the CAOs?

Interview Questions

2.1 Tell me about your perceptions about the role of the college president?
   
   *Probe:* - As related to work environments in the university?
   - As related to workplace relationships with colleagues?
   - As related to personal experiences (e.g. support from family, work/life balance etc)?

2.2 How would you compare the work you do as CAO and what the president does?
   
   *Probe:* What are the similarities and the differences?

2.3 How would you evaluate the presidency role in terms of its desirability?
   
   *Probe:* What aspects of the role make it desirable or undesirable and why?

Research Question 3: How might future academic leaders be encouraged to move into the CAO position and eventually into the presidency?

Interview Questions

3.1 What advice would you give to college administrators on how they encourage more potential academic leaders to move into the CAO position?

3.2 What should change or remain the same to make the presidency attractive to future CAOs?

3.3 What can be done to encourage more CAOs to consider the college presidency?

3.4 If considering the presidency, what has been career preparation advice would you give to potential academic leaders who may aspire to the college presidency?
Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Title of Project: Opting Out of the Presidency: Perspectives of Community College Chief Academic Officers

Principal Investigator: Radecka Appiah-Padi, Graduate Student
0121 Outreach Building
University Park, PA 16802
(570) 322-5221 raa5206@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Edgar Farmer, Professor of Education
0315 Keller Building
University Park, PA 16802
814 863 2596; eif1@psu.edu

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this dissertation study is to explore from the perspectives of chief academic officers on why CAOs are opting out of the college presidency.

2. Procedures to be followed: You will participate in two – three semi-structured, face-to-face interviews lasting up to two hours.

3. Duration: Up to 180 minutes face-to-face interview
   Session 1: 60 - 90 minutes Focused Life History and Details of Experiences in-depth interview
   Session 2: 60 - 90 minutes Clarification and Reflection on Meaning interview

4. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured at 109 Peachwood Drive, Lewisburg in a password protected computer file. The only person with access to the file is Radecka Appiah-Padi. No publication or presentation will result from this research.

5. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Radecka Appiah-Padi at (570) 322-5771 with questions or concerns about this study.

6. 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.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. 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 form for your records.

____________________________________________  ____________________
Participant Signature Date

____________________________________________  ____________________
Person Obtaining Consent Date
Appendix D

Sample of Recruitment Emails

From: "RADECKA APPIAH-PADI" <raa5206@psu.edu>
To: xxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxx.edu
Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2013 2:43:48 PM
Subject: Dissertation Research

Hello Dr. xxxxxxx,

My name is Radecka Appiah-Padi. I am a Workforce Education doctoral candidate at Penn State University and live in the Lewisburg area. I shared my research interest and need to connect with provosts of Pennsylvania Community Colleges with Dr. xxxxxxxxxxxxx of xxxxxxxxxxxxx. She graciously agreed to help me make contact with you, and gave me your contact information.

I am emailing you to request your participation in a research study on the perspectives of provosts/chief academic officers (CAOs) on why fewer CAOs are interested in the college presidency as their next career move. This research study is being conducted as part of my degree requirements for a Ph.D. in Workforce Education – Postsecondary Leadership at the Pennsylvania State University. I am conducting a qualitative study that will involve two interviews that should not take more than 45 minutes each. The purpose of my study is to answer the question of why more and more chief academic officers are opting not to pursue the college presidency as their next career move. The study is premised on the concern that the traditional pipelines to the college presidency (the office of the provost/CAO) are shrinking rapidly and the typical leadership development efforts are unable to meet the need for replacement leaders. I have attached a brief overview of my project for your review. This proposed study has been reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board at the Pennsylvania State University. All responses provided by participants will be kept confidential. Neither the names of the participants nor their institutions will be revealed. I was hoping that I could get on your calendar to discuss my research with you, answer any questions you may have and provide additional participation details. I plan to send the questions to you ahead of the interview, if you decide you are able to participate.

Thanks Dr. xxxxxxx for your consideration and I appreciate any time you can give me. I can be reached at raa5206@psu.edu or (517) 896-4157. I look forward to being able to meet with you.

Radecka Appiah-Padi

Director of Continuing Education
Penn State Williamsport Learning Center
The Pennsylvania State University
Water Tower Square, 1020 Commerce Park Drive, Suite 2B
Williamsport, PA 17701
References


Anonymous, (2012). Motivational factors influencing women's decisions to pursue upper-level administrative positions at land grant institutions. *Advancing Women in
Leadership, 32, 1–34. Retrieved from
http://search.proquest.com/docview/1241912222?accountid=13158
http://www.aspeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/content/docs/pubs/CEP_Final_Report.pdf


Pennsylvania State University and the Center for the Study of Higher Education.

(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 264 922)

Morse, J. M., Barrett M., Mayan, M., Olson K., & Spiers J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 1*(2), 13–22


Oplatka, I., & Tamir, V. (2009). 'I don't want to be a school head' women deputy heads' insightful constructions of career advancement and retention. *Educational Management Administration Leadership, 37*(2), 216–238.

doi: 10.1177/1741143208100299


doi: 10.1177/1094428111434559


Managing leadership change (pp. 83–96). Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.


Curriculum Vitae for Radecka Appiah-Padi

EDUCATION
PhD. Workforce Education and Development, The Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pennsylvania, 2014
M.S., Speech Production & Perception, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, 1994
B.A. (Hons.), Linguistics and French, University of Ghana, Accra, Ghana, 1989

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Administrative Experience
Director of Continuing Education, Penn State University Williamsport Learning Center, Williamsport, PA 2011- Current
Project Manager/Member College Principal Investigator, Midwest Community College Health Information Technology Consortium Grant, Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI, 2010 -2011
Director of Training & Market Development, Business & Community Institute, Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI, 2008 to 2010
Director of Instruction, Business, Media & Information Technology (BMIT) Division, Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI, 2003 to 2008
PAL Grant Coordinator, Business & Community Institute, Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI, 2002 to 2003
Program Coordinator, Project Adult Literacy Society – PALS, Edmonton, AB, 1993 to 1999

Teaching Experience
Instructor – ESL, Lansing Community College, Lansing, MI, 2002
Instructor – ESL/TESL, Northwestern College, Orange City, IA, 2000 to 2002
Adult Literacy/ESL Instructor, Northwest Iowa Community College, Sheldon, IA, 1999 to 2002
Adult Basic Education Instructor/Coordinator, Western Iowa Tech Comm. College, Sioux City, IA, 1999 to 2000