Student Impressions of Community College Presidents

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Eastern Illinois University

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BY

Megan Julia Corder

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores student impressions of community college presidents. Through conducting interviews with six involved leaders in parallel roles at two community colleges, the study investigated what shapes student impressions of college presidents. Nearly half of all undergraduate students in the United States attend a community college. These students all hold their own unique perspective, but each impression is shaped by different factors. The study explored what shaped and influenced student understanding of the presidency, what influenced student impressions of the president, how the president impacted individual experience at the institution, how students evaluated the presidency. It was found that participants who had a perceived connection on campus had a well formulated impression as well as were able to speak to their understanding of the president’s role.

Keywords: Community colleges, college presidency, and student impressions of the president
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

University and college presidents have busy and complicated jobs. Lee Gardner (2015), a reporter for the Chronicle of Higher Education, wrote that modern college presidents are “expected not just to run institutions but also be their public face, representing them to students as well as parents, government officials, and donors” (http://chronicle.com/article/New-Proving-Ground-for-the/228907/). They must exemplify the institution’s brand, while acting as a “promotional superhero who grabs lunch with students and dinner with potential donors, tweeting all the while” (Gardner, 2015, http://chronicle.com/article/New-Proving-Ground-for-the/228907/). Rita Bornstein (2004), former president of Rollins College, argues that presidents must act as the “embodiment of the institution” and because of this, they are no longer purely individuals (http://chronicle.com/article/The-AuthenticEffective/35426). For example, college presidents may attend social functions, meetings, dinners, and events. While these activities may foster relationships and build rapport, to their core, the president sees them as work (Bornstein, 2004). The president is focused on meeting the needs of the institution and furthering the mission. This may include balancing relationships with the communities the institution serves.

Presidents like Michael Sorrel from Paul Quinn College seek ways to connect with stakeholders like trustees, faculty, staff, community, and students. Sorrell (2015) argued “the truth is that in higher education too many of our leaders are out of touch with the lives of their students” (https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2015/08/31/essay-how-presidents-can-become-better-their-jobs-becoming-students-again). They may face
challenges when meeting the needs of a changing world. According to a study of presidential effectiveness, authors Michael, Schwartz, & Balraj (2001), found that relationships were key to presidential success. They argue that mastering these relationships requires a strong foundation of understanding the needs of both groups. When developing these connections with students, they state that presidents "form relationships with student groups and ensure that students perceive they have direct communication with their presidents and top administrators" (Michael, Schwartz, & Balraj, 2001, p. 345). This highlights a relationship between two institutional stakeholders that is important on a campus. A study of student leaders' perspectives of institutional leaders' ethical conduct during a campus controversy found that students are influenced by the leaders' actions and view them as mentors (Schwartz, 2001). Schwartz (2001) reported negative emotions and effects, such as frustration, during the controversy and shared that one student reported that the controversy caused him to rethink his view of authority because of the ethical implications of the president's actions. These students were directly influenced by the actions of the leader, and in some cases this dramatically shifted their view of authority. This demonstrates that students are influenced by the behavior of administrators on campus, notably presidents, and presents the idea that the impressions students have of leaders do matter.

There has been a shift in the role of an institution president from a primary fundraiser to a master of many relationships and trades (Hamilton, 2005). Authors Michael, Schwartz, and Balraj (2001), argue that the role of the president is a complicated, difficult to explain, and a prevalent role on a modern campus. The college president "is the most visible embodiment of institutional mission, vision and culture"
and the institution can be seen as “a ‘lengthened shadow’ of a president” (Michael et al., 2001, p. 332). This lengthened shadow concept demonstrates the complicated role of a university president. The president must ensure that the needs of community stakeholders, such as local government officials, and the needs of the campus community are met. At the same time, they must make sure the institution is achieving its goals, delivering on its promises, and meeting its mission.

No matter the type of institution a president leads, there are challenges to meeting the institutional mission, adapting to external forces, and pursuing institutional initiatives. Often the traditional view of a college is a four-year state institution with a large student population and competitive athletic team. However, there are many institutions that do not fit this traditional idea of education, one example of this is community colleges, which are often ignored by higher education scholars (Cohen & Brawer, 1982). In fall 2016, an estimated 20.6 million students started college at a higher education institution (Fast Facts, 2016, http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372). Of these students, 7.3 million would attend community colleges in credit programs, not including the 5 million individuals enrolled in non-credit programs (2016 Fact Sheet, American Association of Community Colleges). These institutions are unique in both the students they serve and the way they serve them. The functions of a community college education, as noted by Cohen & Brawer (1982), include continuing education, vocational training, and development and remedial education, and serving community needs.

Presidents of community colleges often come from other institutional presidencies or administrative positions at the same institution (Cohen & Brawer, 1982). A president of a community college must understand the unique challenges and experiences of the
institution in order to effectively lead the campus. In a recent *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, two current university presidents argued that student opinions are key to presidential success. Gee and Hart (2015), wrote presidents should “never underestimate the importance of building a relationship with your student body” (http://chronicle.com/article/Advice-From-2-Streetwise/229457/). The authors concluded that a “university will not be judged by its president, the beauty of its campus, or its football team – it will be judged by how seriously it has taken the education of its students and how well they perform in the world” (Gee & Hart, 2015, http://chronicle.com/article/Advice-From-2-Streetwise/229457/). Presidents must consider student impressions of them and their performance. These impressions can help presidents connect with students, develop intentional policies, and create long-term relationships between students and the institution.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore student impressions of institutional leaders and student evaluation of leader performance at community colleges. An understanding of this relationship provides an opportunity to explore the dynamic between students and institutional leaders. The purpose is to see what expectations students have of college presidents, and how that compares to the student view of presidential performance. Presidential awareness will be comprised of a mix of the following topics: student exposure to the college president, student impression of how one sees the college president and how others see the college president, student expectation of presidential job responsibilities, and student evaluation of presidential performance when compared to perceived responsibilities.
Research Questions

This study is designed to explore the impressions students have of their community college president. The study will look at student interactions with the leader and the performance of the leader. Presidential performance will be measured by understanding student awareness of the leader, student awareness of the positional responsibilities, and student impression of the leader’s performance compared to those duties. The study will seek to answer the following questions:

1. How do students describe the role of the college president? What influences this perception?
2. How does the college president impact the individual student’s experience at the institution?
3. Based on the student’s perception of the college president, how would they rate the performance?
4. How has the student’s impression of the president changed over time and why?

Significance of the Study

Through an exploration into student impressions of the institutional leader, this study will provide greater opportunities to evaluate the relationship between students and the campus leader. A study conducted by Bastedo, Samuels, & Kleinman (2014) highlighted that charismatic presidents can create a stronger reputation and sense of identity on a college campus. The study only included private and religious colleges, but the results indicated, “charismatic leadership has a positive relationship with organizational performance” (Bastedo, et al, 2014, p. 407). This demonstrates that
presidents are able to connect with the campus and successfully present themselves to the institution through developing relationships and shaping impressions across the campus.

This study will begin to determine the importance of the institution having an awareness of student impressions of the leaders. This will begin to help identify if student relationships as alumni are influenced by impressions of the leader and institution. Through an awareness of this topic leaders and institutions can begin to better understand the importance of student impressions.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This is a qualitative study, and while it may provide insights into a specific student and the impression that student has of the president; it will not provide results that are transferable to the general population. It will only begin to identify trends and insights that will need to be investigated further. The various methods of qualitative data analysis each have their own limitations and challenges that may skew the interpretation of the data (Maxwell, 2013).

The study may be biased among the participants of the study from their exposure or relationship with the president. Presidential influence can be seen as leader effectiveness and change how the leader is evaluated (Michael et al., 2001). Influence must be “assessed constituent by constituent and on the basis of the overall resultant short-term and long-term benefits to the institution as a whole” (Michael et al., 2001, p. 344). The individual students came into the research study with different qualities and criteria they viewed as important. These different items of importance can influence how the student views presidential effectiveness. To combat this, the researcher gauged what
is important to students individually, and what overarching trends all participants consider important.

Students who volunteered to participate in this study were more engaged student leaders. Because of this, these students may have more opportunities to interact with the institutional leader, or hear about the leader from their peers because of their increased campus engagement. The involvement of students can change their view or awareness of the campus. As noted in Astin’s (1999) student involvement theory, “students vary considerably in the amount of time they spend on such diverse activities as studying, socializing, sleeping, daydreaming, and traveling” (p. 527). To evaluate this further, Astin argued it is important to assess “how frequently students interact with each other, with faculty members and other institutional personnel, and with people outside the institution” (p. 527). To do this, the researcher asked the student about involvement on and off campus, as well as if others influenced his or her perspective about the leader. It was important to have a variety of student participants with a difference in backgrounds. This helped ensure that students, who may be involved in different activities, do not all have the same experiences.

Students may be influenced by current events on campus and this could shift their impression of the leader. Because of this, students may feel differently towards the leader in topics related to the current issue. For example, if a school has had budgetary issues and an academic program is cut, students may associate the change with the leader. Previous research has found that leaders on campus, as well as students, “recognize that the support of faculty, students, administrative colleges, alumni, and trustees depends only on what happens inside the university but also know what external actors – in public
universities, primary politicians – want from the university” (Legon, Lombardi, & Rhoades, 2013 p. 27). One way to remove students from bias is to research current campus issues prior to interviews and understand them. That way during interviews students can be asked about the issue, but also other topics and impressions of the leader. This will help formulate an overall opinion of the leader from the student, not just an opinion surrounding one specific topic. In this study, the researcher focused on selecting participants with a range of backgrounds but paralleled experiences to have a variety of insight sin the study but see how the impressions of the president were shaped on each campus and across campuses.

The researcher’s interest in the topic was inspired by working in the office of the president as an undergraduate student. Through this position, the researcher was exposed to a different side of institutional leaders. As a student interested in learning more about the topic, the researcher began to gather information about the dynamic between students and presidents on a college campus. The researcher found extensive information about student engagement, presidents and faculty, presidents and trustees, but little about students and presidents.

During the researcher’s undergraduate career, the researcher completed a Senior Honors Thesis titled *Student Perceptions of University and College Presidents*, which included a survey about student perceptions of presidents and the influences that created those perceptions (Corder, 2015). A total of 80 respondents completed the survey and respondents were from a variety of institutions and institutional types (Corder, 2015). The researcher found several overarching themes that supported student perceptions of the leader, specifically the influences from peers, media, faculty, and personal connections.
This study only strengthened the researcher's interest in the topic. The researcher previously conducted a survey, but hoped to use a qualitative interview approach as a way to deepen the understanding of the topic, and offer new opportunities to learn about the subject.

**Definition of Terms**

**Community Colleges.** Nearly 50% of undergraduate students in the United States attend community colleges (2016 Fact Sheet, American Association of Community Colleges). Typically, community colleges are two-year institutions that offer associate degrees and help prepare students if they choose to attend four-year colleges later in their academic careers. These institutions typically offer tuition at a lower price and there are many programs for students to choose from (2016 Fact Sheet, American Association of Community Colleges).

**Involvement.** This term defines the level of investment, participation, or commitment someone may have to a specific organization, class, and institution (Astin, 1999). For example, a student with high involvement may be on the executive board of an organization, or have volunteered to help at a different event (Astin, 1999).

**Institutional Leader.** An institutional leader is a leader of an organization that provides balance between expectations, institutional mission, vision, and goals (Selznick, 1984). In this context, the leader is defined as the leader of a physical campus, such as a president or chancellor of a college or university.
Impressions. This term defines how students or other individuals view a certain topic, person, place, etc. based on their experiences, research, and other information they have received.

President. These are leaders of a specific institution of higher education. An overarching term for these individuals in this document is institutional leader. However, the term president may not be used at all institutions. Some institutions use the term chancellor to describe the leader of a specific campus or entire campus system. For example, the University of Missouri has one president for the four major state institutions. This is called the University of Missouri system (Curators of the University of Missouri, 2015). Other institutions, like Kent State University, have one president who oversees the main campus and branch campuses (President’s Biography, 2015). The titles of the leader, responsibilities, and individual vary based on public/private status, state expectations, student demographics, and institutional makeup. For the purposes of this study, the term president will be most commonly used.

Presidential Evaluation. This term gauges the performance of the institutional leader. Evaluations often include formal processes and have set criteria that compare what the leader is doing with what the leader is expected to or was hired to do (Basinger, 1999).

Stakeholders. This term defines community members, students, faculty, governing boards, trustees, staff, government, and other populations that are invested or important to the success of an institution (Tekniepe, 2013). For example, alumni are stakeholders to the campus community and may have
specific needs, interests, and opinions that an institutional leader must consider (Tekniepe, 2013).

**Trustees.** Trustees are defined as members of a governing board that has oversight or power of the leader of an institution. Typically, these members sit on a board that hires the leader, conducts evaluations, has meetings, and gives the leader tasks to complete (Legon et al., 2013).

**Summary**

Overall, this study seeks to understand what influences student impressions of institutional leaders and how those impressions shape student evaluation of performance, and expectation of the president. The students are the life of the campus and the president is the leader. Through a balance of understanding how one views the other, this research can enhance and explore this area of the academic landscape.
CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

College presidents are integral to the campus environment. As the leader of the institution, they provide guidance and insight, attend events, and speak on the behalf of the institutional interests (Gardner, 2014). The literature review begins with an analysis of the role of the president, the major constituency groups on campus that the president serves, and ends with the theoretical and conceptual framework. Due to the importance of students and their relationship with presidents, the researcher felt this deserved a section of the literature review as it contains more information than a subsection would. Through an analysis of the literature, this study hopes to identify the student perspectives of the role of a college president, how students interact with these presidents, how students view and understand the leader, and how students evaluate the performance of the leader.

The Role of the College President

When thinking of a college or university president, one may think of a married white male in his 50s with a doctoral degree who has spent his entire career in academia (Mckenzie, 2010). This picture of a president has not changed much in the last 25 years (Cook, 2012). This idea of a president may include a person who spends time interacting with visitors to campus, donors, alumni, and government officials. College and university presidents have a job that never makes for a boring day in office. According to Gardner (2014) presidents spend their days being pulled in “different directions — fundraising, athletics, a fraternity scandal” and that has become “a daily reality for contemporary college presidents” (http://chronicle.com/article/New-Proving-Ground-for-the/228907/). A study of college presidents from the American Council on Education (ACE) reports
that presidents spend most of their time fundraising, budgeting, managing relationships with the community, and strategic planning (Cook, 2012). As the advocate for the institution, the president balances a complicated, often exhausting role. Some presidents even discuss the role as becoming a burden and the individuality of the president is lost to the magnitude of the role (June, 2007). The president connects the campus to the groups it serves, as well as represents the mission, vision, and beliefs of the institution (Michael et al., 2001). Gee & Hart (2015) identified that being a university president is “perhaps one of the most challenging leadership roles” and those who hold these roles must learn to “balance its many components” to find success (http://chronicle.com/article/Advice-From-2-Streetwise/229457/). Balancing these many components may be challenging for an individual yet it is all part of the job. The job may include many smaller pieces, such as working with alumni to generate donations, or meeting with the media to discuss a campus initiative. This section will continue to explore the role of president, the experiences of individuals in the role, and the impact the role has on the institution overall.

**Fundraiser in Chief.** College presidents are often associated with the financial performance of the institution. Impressions of the campus budget, positive or negative, can instantly change perceptions of the leader. As institutions increase in “size and importance, there are more groups in which a president must communicate,” and they must communicate for increased funds and support (Bok, 2014, p. 53). According to Legon et al. (2013), “if the budget is good, the president authorizes new projects and breaks ground for new buildings” (p. 28). If the budget is bad, “the president persuasively articulates the challenges presented by the lack of funds, decries lost opportunities, and
appoints a number of faculty/student/administration task forces to consider necessary measures” (Legon et al., 2013, p. 28). According to Wong (2007), Harrisburg Area Community College President Edna Baehre never had to worry about fundraising, but due to financial restraints and needs of the institution, she was required to begin fundraising. Baehre identified the transition into a fundraiser for the institution was not as difficult as she thought, because her job as president made her a spokesperson for the institution (Wong, 2007). The role of presidents may vary from institution, but there are overarching responsibilities and skills like fundraising which will be required for all in this role.

**Master of Relationships.** Cook (2012) presented key findings of ACE’s study of American college and university presidents and identified that presidents must balance the interests of the different groups they serve. Cook reported the findings of this study stating, “presidents not only wear many hats, but serve many constituents. Students continue to be the group presidents say provides the greatest reward, followed by administrative and faculty colleagues” (http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/The-American-College-President-Study.aspx). Presidents have reported that while working with students is rewarding, working with other constituents, like faculty, can be challenging (Cook, 2012). Through these relationships with different populations, presidents can enact change on campus, advocate for the institution, and make connections with various stakeholder groups. For example, presidents can “ensure that students perceive that they have direct communication with their presidents and top administrators” (Michael et al., 2001, p. 345). Students, like other stakeholder groups, may not see all of the different responsibilities of the president on campus, but the
different expectations and appearances of the leader can influence student awareness and perceptions of the leader.

**Public Figure.** As a campus public figure, presidents must often make difficult decisions, frame change, and present organizational information to the greater community (Eddy, 2003). A study conducted by Eddy (2003) explored how presidents frame change on campus and included interviews with professionals from two institutions where each president framed change differently. One president used visionary framing and the other president used operational framing. Eddy (2003) identified that visionary framing was collaborative and “highlighted campus members work together to achieve an obtainable vision” (p. 457). Operational framing focused on the present moment and “sought to achieve solutions to campus issues via establishing processes and operations” (Eddy, 2003, p. 457). The study identified four steps to framing change on campus. The results indicated that campus leaders frame change differently and this must be considered as part of the leadership process. The way information is framed may result in different interpretations of the changes on campus, as well as varying levels of confidence and awareness of the leader. It is important for presidents to advance their agendas and goals while balancing the political climate of the institution (Michael et al., 2001). Without this balance, presidents may shift the perceptions of their image and reputation on campus.

As the leader of the campus, a college president may not always frame or make changes that yield positive results on campus (Eddy, 2003). Or, college presidents may present a public image that garners support, not resentment. Former president of Burlington College, Christine Plunkett, was met with student protests and outcry for her resignation as a result of a controversy about campus finances; she later resigned and was
met with student cheers at the announcement (Thomason, 2014). This is an example of a president as a disliked public figure on campus and shows the impression students had of the leader, who may or may not have had specific control over the finances in question. Another example of a president resigning amidst student protests is the very public resignation of the University of Missouri system president and flagship campus chancellor (Eligon, & Pérez-peÑa, 2015). The controversy stemmed from students upset over constant and persistent racism that students believed the administration ignored (Eligon, & Pérez-peÑa, 2015). The irony of these recent incidents is that there is little research regarding student impressions of presidents, however, these examples demonstrate that student impressions can have an impact on campus. It highlights that student impressions and awareness should be examined as it relates to student evaluation of presidential performance.

**Person of Many Skills.** A president’s skill set may include a variety of administrative, professional, leadership, and networking skills. A study conducted by Mckenzie (2010) of perceptions of leadership attributes of South Carolina technical college presidents asked presidents and their subordinates to rank leadership qualities and skills they thought were beneficial to a successful president. Mckenzie found that both groups thought visionary, ethical, personal integrity, energetic with stamina, and committed to the common good were attributes successful presidents possessed. Conversely, attributes like communication and decision-making were not highly ranked by both groups and provided an opportunity for future improvement and exploration (Mckenzie, 2010). Fincher (2003) discussed the importance of personal traits in institutional leadership, writing “personal traits and characteristics often influence the
leader’s effectiveness in meeting the situational demands that are implicit in group or organizational characteristics and affected by environmental or sociocultural conditions” (p.17-18). Fincher (2003) argued that there was statistical significance in the findings; yet, the qualities may not always influence those who hire the leader. The leadership qualities and skills that one group may identify as necessary, may not be deemed equally important by another group. It is important to consider that different stakeholder groups may have different expectations for the presidents (Fincher, 2003). For example, students may have different needs and interests than faculty. The needs and interests of groups may shape the impression groups have of the leader and the focus individuals place on the work the leader does.

**Positional Requirements.** While the positional requirements of institutional leaders may vary by campus, there are some overarching trends for the role (Gnage & Drumm, 2010). To begin a search, institutions must think of the way the job description is written and how that conveys the role. The job description, for any position in higher education, should be written to attract the best candidate (Gnage & Drumm, 2010). An evaluation of a current public institution position description from a recent search has identified some key requirements and position responsibilities. The University of Iowa recently searched for a new president. The published position description listed responsibilities as conveying the university’s “vision, mission, and values with the internal and external stakeholders,” support and further the academic mission of the university, expand upon traditions and university individuality and strength, oversee the budget and secure outside support, and work “with the Board of Regents, Governor, elected officials, alumni, donors, and the broader community to advance the mission of
the university” (Wilder & Williams, 2015). Conversely, Marquette University, a private Catholic institution, had a different focus for the position description of its presidential search. Marquette’s ideal leader’s responsibilities included serving as the institutional spokesperson, expanding university resources, soliciting donations and fundraising, connecting with a variety of constituencies, and supporting academic success (Barden, Dowdall, & Yates, 2014). It is clear that the two descriptions, for what could be described as the same job on two campuses at first glance, share a complicated and varying set of expectations for the same role. One college president stated that “the best description I heard is that a university president is like a cross between a CEO of a company and a mayor of a small town with a strong city council” (Immerwahr, Johnson, & Gasbarra, 2008, p. 16). The president must find a way to support the needs of the campus, instill trust, maintain stakeholder support, and secure funding for the institution. This is not the same for every institution, like many small towns, they are all different. The campus needs and culture dictate the role and expectations of the president.

Pathway to the Position. There are many pathways to the presidency at a college. Leaders may come from academic leadership positions, student affairs related leadership positions, or non-academic/external leadership positions (Hartley & Godin, 2009). The majority of college presidents have come from academic positions in colleges, such as provosts and vice presidents (Mckenzie, 2010; Hartley & Godin, 2009). Hamilton (2005) interviewed experts regarding an increase of student affairs professionals entering the presidency. Hamilton’s interview with Dr. Walter Kimbrough, previously president of Philander-Smith College and now president of Dillard University, emphasized an increased trend in student affairs professionals moving into the presidency, “if you come
through the traditional route, there are things you’re not prepared for” and that “through student affairs you learn more about the intricacies of running a campus than you do in any professional area” (Hamilton, 2005, p. 4). This trend of more student affairs professionals rising into top-level administrative roles is shifting the focus of the importance of relationships with students. Putman (2011) conducted a study about nontraditional pathways to the college presidency. This study found there may be skills to teach graduate students in student affairs, as well as aspiring professionals, programs to prepare them for the presidency. Some of the skills were flexibility, multitasking, time management, crisis intervention, interpersonal skills, and oral communications (Putman, 2011). This highlights some of the skills and experiences needed for successful individuals who are transitioning into the presidency. It is not an easy task to become president, and it is not a simple role.

Some individuals who pursue the role of president describe it as a calling. Goldschmidt & Tunheim (2013) studied the idea of being called to the college presidency amongst female college presidents and found that many female presidents, along with male presidents, are drawn to the role or feel a pull towards the position. Along with sense of calling for the role, individuals must make time for ensuring they are able to handle the demands of the role. They must see both the “intrapersonal and interpersonal sides of leadership” and take time to reflect and be emotionally aware to prepare themselves for the demanding nature of the role (Floyd, Maslin-Ostrowski, and Hrabak, 2010, p. 67). Individuals may feel a calling to pursue the role, but they could face a number of challenges to overcome once in office.
Performance and Evaluation. According to Basinger (1999), presidential performance evaluation presents challenges for campus constituencies and presidents overall. Governing boards have begun to see the need to formally evaluate presidents (Basinger, 1999). While evaluations may have formal processes, unfortunately, the political climate of a campus can create tension. Basinger discussed the tension at the University of Kentucky when then Board of Trustees extended the contract of the president in a closed session, resulting in political tension on campus. The impressions individuals had of the president, as well as other influencing factors like campus politics, directly impacted the performance evaluation of the leader. Presidents are challenged to meet the needs of all parties, make difficult decisions, and justify their actions to the campus constituencies. The interesting part of the evaluation is that the process may not include direct feedback from communities like students and faculty. The process truly depends on the institutional culture, evaluation structure, and external influences.

Students may have different factors that they consider important when evaluating the president, much like the other campus communities.

Commitment to Students. Gee & Hart (2015) write about the need for presidents to connect with their students. Without this connection, presidents may not excel in their role. An interview with a current and President Emeritus of a regional Midwestern state institution identified the need for a student-centered approach as a president (Hencken, 2016 & Glassman 2016). The current institutional president highlighted that he serves a “myriad of constituents internal and external” yet is intentional in finding ways to “see the learning environment” through teaching so he is not out of touch (Glassman, 2016). As a former academic affairs professional, the president talked about the need to ensure
that there are resources for students to succeed academically (Glassman, 2016). The President Emeritus, who was previously a student affairs professional, also supported the need to remain in touch with students, and reported doing this through attending campus events, working towards organizational buy-in with new ideas, and putting students first (Hencken, 2016). He emphasized the need to “walk the talk” when working with students, as it demonstrates that the university and staff are committed to the same purpose (Hencken, 2016). However, this may often present challenges because of the other stakeholders, such as faculty, that the leader serves. The current president discussed the challenges of working with many groups, and stressed how standing meetings are important for communication and building relationships (Glassman, 2016).

The researcher also interviewed a Vice Chancellor of a regional Australian institution who talked about the importance of a student-centered approach. The Vice Chancellor, who served in a capacity that would be considered president at an American institution, focused on following the “spirit of the act” when serving students (Battersby, 2016). Additionally, the Vice Chancellor advocated for professionals to approach students as a key population and prioritize policies and practices that make things easier for students to be successful. While you must balance strategic and practical components of running a university, the “worst thing you can do is micromanage” (Battersby, 2016). He advocated for this approach as a way to adapt to changing demographics, student interests, and educational needs. Overall, this reinforces the idea that presidents must balance many different roles and responsibilities, but they must find ways to support and serve students in their work.
While presidents do serve an important role, and serve many individuals on campus, they also understand the importance of focusing on students. It may be an important part of the role of president, yet, as interviewees indicated; it is only one component of the role. The researcher spoke with these professionals to understand what they considered important with working with students, and also to better understand how presidents saw the presidency as someone who holds or has held the role. Understanding the perspective of presidents and their view on student impressions helps better see what presidents do to connect with students. The work presidents do influences students, and this gives insight into how presidents view that work. Additionally, it furthers the research by highlighting opportunities to investigate the dynamic between presidents and students further.

**Challenges of the Role.** Presidents have a complicated role that has benefits and challenges. Some of these challenges may be from the changing academic landscapes, diversity of student populations, technological advances, political unrest and change, along with fiscal concerns (Cook, 2012). Due to these challenges, the individuals who serve in the role must prove their ability to meet the expectations. Presidents may also experience fatigue and exhaustion due to the fast-paced nature of their job. Tekniepe (2013) studied the influences on presidential turnover among community college presidents and identified the following, “political conflict between the governing board and the college president, internal pressures from the professoriate and subunits within the organization, external pressures from community stakeholders, and fiscal stress” (Tekniepe, 2013, p. 145). While presidents balance the needs of stakeholders, they must also balance additional expectations while ensuring they are investing in the future of the
institution. Presidents may have to focus on areas such as meeting with governmental officials instead of spending time focusing on the academic mission of the institution (Bok, 2014). Presidents face many pressures and must answer to many individuals in regards to their actions. These pressures could influence presidential performance in the role, as well as qualities that are desired in institutional leaders.

**Campus Constituencies**

Presidents have many different constituencies to consider in every decision they make. There are many groups that a president must consider, and that list may be ever changing (Michael et al., 2001). However, presidents must consider the needs of many when making decisions, speaking on the institutions behalf, and sharing information. The challenge of considering the needs of only one group means that the president may be neglecting a key interest of another. Fleming’s (2010) study found “the divergent perceptions of other stakeholder groups are not taken into consideration” when presidents only focus on one (p. 265). They can be seen as both positive and negative, but it does reiterate the complicated nature of the role of a college president and the work one must do to meet stakeholder needs. Tekniepe (2014) found the key to a successful relationship with one group of constituents is trust. Without a strong foundation of trust, there may be challenges to making decisions, communicating, and other forms of working together on campus. As noted by Michael et al.’s (2001) study of the relationship between trustees and presidents “presidential effectiveness also depends on the quality of relationships the president has developed” (p. 335). Some of the relationships a president may form during his or her time at an institution are with various constituent groups such as trustees, administrators, government, faculty, and alumni.
Trustees. College trustees are individuals who act as an independent governing body for the institution (Michael et al., 2001). The type of institution may influence the number of trustees, expectations of trustees, and levels of involvement. One of the most important parts of the trustee role is hiring the president, evaluating the president, and understanding presidential performance (Michael et al., 2001). Michael et al.'s (2001) study found that trustees believe that presidents who are skilled at building and maintaining relationships are more effective. Specifically, the results indicated that presidents who build effective relationships with the board and its members are able to maintain board support (Michael et al. 2001). Additionally, another study encouraged trustees to consider presidential commitment to student success as part of the search process, and consider these experiences when selecting and evaluating presidents (Crisis and Opportunity, 2012). Smith & Miller (2014) studied community college presidents' perceptions of trustee involvement in decision-making and found a few discrepancies between what trustees do and what presidents feel that they should do. For example, presidents did not desire trustee involvement in fundraising while trustees were interested in this type of involvement (Smith & Miller, 2014). Both presidents and trustees see the role of the other differently, which influences the way the two groups interact.

Legon et al. (2013) argued that a great relationship between presidents and trustees begins with effective recruitment and training of individuals who understand higher education, have a variety of experiences, and are committed to the mission of the board. Another study by Vaughan & Weisman (1997) explored preferred characteristics of presidents and trustees at community colleges. They found that presidents and trustees often share similar characteristics in their age, gender, political affiliation, and
educational experience, yet there are differences between the two groups. The study argued “presidents and trustees should work as a team, sharing a common vision and goal” and identified ways they can best work together for overall institutional success (Vaughan & Weisman, 1997, p. 11). As noted by Michael et al. (2001), “hiring presidents and evaluating their performance is part of the most important role trustees perform for their institutions” (2001, p. 332). Assessment may include identifying areas of success, but also areas of improvement, “using assessment as a tool to provide feedback and foster good communication between the board of trustees and the president” (Michael et al., 2001, p. 332). Overall, one cannot undervalue the importance of the role of trustees and the relationship presidents have with the board and the individual members. While the president may be the leader of the institution, the board hired the president and does hold the ultimate authority.

**Administrators.** From a vice president to a director of a department, there is a wide range of administrators on a college campus. These administrators serve in key roles on campus that provide services, create an educational experience, and meet the institutional needs. Presidents, as the leader of the institution, must find a way to ensure that the work of other administrators is in line with the institutional mission (Legon et al., 2013). Presidents are challenged and encouraged to develop and maintain a strong team of leaders in administrative roles to carry out the work of the institution (Legon et al., 2013).

Palmer (2013) conducted a study of college administrators and then compared their roles to that of public servants. Palmer found that administrators identify with perspectives relating to both public service and campus administrators simultaneously.
Like presidents, administrators also are tasked with balancing a complicated role. Not only must they meet institutional needs and goals, they feel they must also contribute to the greater good and invest in the future of students as well as higher education. They interact with students on a daily basis, and often can shape student opinions of the campus and the other administrators. A mentor, such as an advisor, can greatly influence the student and how they see the campus (Campbell et al., 2012). Rogers (2013) conducted a study about the number of administrators on campus and found that current administrators feel like “administrator” is a bad word with a negative impression on campus. The surveyed administrators also believe that it is “difficult to come up with a universal answer to the question of what exactly an administrator is” (Rogers, 2013, http://chronicle.com/article/Counting-Up-the-Campus-Work/136477/). This presents a unique challenge when presidents work with populations on campus and work to meet the needs of many.

**Government.** While students, faculty, staff, trustees, and the specific community have been previously discussed, there is also the need for presidents to consider government (Immerwahr et al., 2008). Institutions are facing increased government oversight in all areas of higher education (Immerwahr et al., 2008). College presidents and government, according to Immerwahr et al. (2008) are out of sync with each other’s needs. This creates a challenging relationship between presidents and government officials. Presidents are expected to manage relationships with government officials on numerous levels, all which have different interests and areas of concerns to focus on. Legon et al. (2013) shared that presidents must “produce good news from their universities to enhance the reputation of their governors and to meet the current regime’s
various ideological or policy objectives” (p. 28). Higher education institutions, specifically public ones, provide an opportunity to showcase these successes. While there may be benefits to the relationship between presidents and government, there are also many challenges. One of these challenges comes from government regulation and funding. For example, one college president argued, “we get mandated by the federal government and by the state government to provide more and more and more services, and then they turn around and ask us why the costs are going up” (Immerwahr et al., 2008, p. 14). There continues to be a struggle between presidents and government stakeholders when finding balance in their relationship to meet the needs of their communities.

Faculty. Faculty, in particular, is a group that has seen a significant amount of research regarding relations with the president. As noted by Birnbaum (1992), the relationship between these two groups may be described as contentious. Birnbaum conducted a study looking at levels of faculty support towards college presidents and found that because higher education often involves shared governance, faculty support of presidents can support presidential effectiveness. The data suggests that presidents can maintain faculty support throughout their time at the institution if they focus on the relationship, remain enthusiastic, foster strong relationships, and maintain a strong desire to learn (Birnbaum, 1992). A 2010 study explored the relationship between presidents and faculty looking at the ambiguity among groups on campus and found that “each group defines the institution according to their own perceptions, values, and issues of importance” (Fleming, 2010, p. 253). When exploring communication norms among presidents and faculty, participants wanted presidents to convey ideas consistent with the
mission and vision of the institution (Fleming, 2010). This challenges the president to understand the group expectations, experiences, and most importantly their perceptions of the leader. If they think the leader is considering and effectively communicating their beliefs, then they may change how they communicate about the leader. Additionally, if they think that the leader is not considering their beliefs, then that may change how they portray the leader to other populations. It is also important to consider the dynamic between faculty and students and how that may influence student perceptions of presidents.

As students are more likely to interact with faculty than the president, faculty may shape student impressions of the leaders. Umbach & Wawrzynski (2001) studied the relationship between faculty and students. The study found that faculty does have an influence on students in their engagement and learning development (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2001). As noted by Umbach & Wawrzynski, faculty interactions in and out of the classroom are the greatest influence on student learning (2001). This highlights an opportunity for presidents to influence student impressions of the leader through strong relationships and interactions with faculty.

**Alumni.** Stakeholder groups like alumni are large populations with many people that could consider themselves a part of the institutional group. The president must find a way to establish a good relationship with these individuals through activities like attending events, promoting their experience at the institution, and making a financial donation (McDearmon, 2012). McDearmon’s (2012) study explored key support behaviors of alumni and examined the relationships between alumni and the institution. According to the study, support behaviors were described as donations, event attendance,
committee participation, and other similar activities that go beyond graduating from an institution. Results indicated that alumni who completed a support behavior were more likely to have a stronger institutional identity (McDearmon, 2012). A stronger institutional identity could influence how they reference and advocate for the institution.

Another study of alumni support found that student experience, along with income, age, and likelihood to donate to other organizations influenced alumni giving to their alma matter (Skari, 2013). It is important to consider that the study found that student experience at the institution shaped support behaviors. If students are more engaged and connected to the institution, the research suggests it will shape future support and behaviors. The study, in particular, found that value of student involvement, the importance of relationships, and satisfaction with student experience (Skari, 2013, p. 35). Additionally, Gaier (2001) conducted a study and found that a student alumni association was another way to connect alumni with students; the organization provided a foundation to create more ways to build a network of support. It is important to consider this as it demonstrates that institutional identity as alumni can change after students leave campus. This provides an opportunity to see what creates institutional identity while individuals are current students on campus.

Students

Students are a key campus constituency to the president. Students are part of the work of a president. From creating policies to ensuring athletic traditions are continued to approving spending on a facility, presidents often make decisions that directly impact students (Schuemann, 2014). However, presidents and students may not interact daily or even understand each other on many levels (Schuemann, 2014). With more than 18
million college students in the United States, the voice of the student is becoming more prevalent (Statistic Brain, 2015). Scheumann (2014) identifies a gap in the research looking at the dynamic between students and presidents. While there is information for presidents and faculty, community, staff, government, and other constituencies, it leaves much to be desired between presidents and students. The challenge with the literature is that many topics of student conversation and discussion of student impressions may not be documented in an academic forum.

**Student Involvement and Engagement.** Without students, the campus would cease to function. As students, they use the services the institution provides, an education. Falvey (1952) conducted a study that evaluated student participation in college administration at a four-year liberal arts college. While this was an early study, it presented themes and findings that still hold true today. One key finding of the study was that relationships and human connections can be a challenge when engaging students, but “individuals regard other individuals” (Falvey, 1952, p. 172). This is important to note, as often students or presidents are seen as something other than individuals and associate them with the institution as a whole, neglecting their individuality. Falvey shared that those who work with students in governance must have a “faith in the democratic process and in the ability of human beings to approximate this process in their relationships with one another” (Falvey, 1952, p. 173). Student engagement with campus can be shaped by a trust in the system and the leaders. Michael et al. argued that students are less likely to speak up on subjects that matter to them if they feel like people will not care or listen (2001). Students are more engaged in administration when they feel their opinion
matters; and if students do not feel their opinion matters, that may change how they view a leader or administrator on campus.

Astin's (1999) involvement theory argues that involvement exists along a continuum and "different students manifest different degrees of involvement in a given object, and the same student manifests different degrees of involvement in different objects at different times" (p. 519). This demonstrates that students are all at different points in their own involvement and experience on a campus, so no two students may see a leader or administrator the same. Students may interact with a leader and have one impression of them, while other students may never have interacted with the leader yet have a completely different impression. Finn & Zimmer (2012) studied engagement and its relationship to student achievement. They found that students who have higher engagement perform better academically and socially, showing that their involvement and investment shapes their experience (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). It depends on the student and the nature of the involvement or experience a student may have had. Student involvement on campus may often connect students with campus administrators and staff members who interact with the president. Tausch & Beckner (2012) found that students were more likely to be engaged in campus advocacy movements if inspired by anger and frustration. If students were inspired by the campus climate and wanted change, they may feel compelled to act. These findings support the idea that students have the ability to inspire change on campus, and may work together to do so (Tausch & Beckner, 2012). While student groups can inspire change on campus, Putman (2011) cautions presidents to be aware of the work of student organizations as part of their role. With this awareness,
presidents may be better prepared to meet student needs, demands, and work with student populations as a whole.

**Student Success.** Immerwahr et al. (2008) study of presidents and their perspective cost, access, and quality of higher education found that presidents and students might not always see eye-to-eye on the types of services to provide on campus and the cost of those services.

Part of the increased cost is that students demand more, and are provided more, on college campuses today. There’s more advising. There are health centers. There are recreation facilities. The product that students are getting is tremendously more inclusive than it was when I went to college, for example. That’s driving the cost. (Immerwahr et al., 2008, p. 14).

A study about student success at community colleges identified the importance of presidents focusing on a balance between academic commitment and access to education, using resources widely and wisely, and creating lasting change on campus (Crisis and Opportunity, 2012). One president in the study stressed the importance of understanding and following students. He believed that “where they are coming from and where they are going will tell you where to develop partnerships and help students” (Crisis and Opportunity, 2012, p. 8). The study identified areas presidents’ value to ensure student success, yet did not interview any students in addition to administrator. The findings of the study, while valuable to the body of research, do not clearly evaluate the issue from both the student and presidential perspective.

**Student Media.** On any campus, student media is written and promoted directly to the students. The media can take the form of a radio station, student newspaper, social
media accounts, and many other mediums. One of the most prevalent mediums on a campus that is in the same geographic region as the host site for this study is available in print and web for students. The publication’s tagline features the words “tell the truth and don’t be afraid” and reinforces the mission of sharing the news to the university community. The paper covers campus events, updates, and happenings, which includes coverage regarding the institutional leader. A September article included coverage of the State of the University speech by the president and discussed the budget concerns on campus, as well as the goal to increase enrollment through increased marketing funding (Presidential address was straightforward, 2015). According to the paper, “broadening [the institution’s] reach through marketing will likely be a factor in the university actually achieving Glassman’s stated goal” and “although it is nice to have these goals and ideas out in the open, it is now up to the campus and community to hold [the president] to his promises looking into the future” (Presidential address was straightforward, 2015).

The coverage of this speech demonstrates the dynamic between student media promotion of an event that features the institutional leader. While the coverage of this may be one example, it highlights the information that students who did not attend the speech are reading. In addition to the article, the publication has a Twitter account that shared seven tweets regarding the speech and a YouTube video featuring the full speech (Daily Eastern News, 2015). This exhibits how students may be getting information and learning about the paper’s perspective and coverage if they have not attended the event. While this publication may not be the same one as the study host site, it provides a unique perspective to see how a story published on campus may be something students read and
formulate opinions from. These opinions may be of the campus overall, the leader, and the leader’s job performance.

**Students at Community Colleges.** In the United States, around half of undergraduate students attend community colleges (2016 Fact Sheet, 2016). These students may be traditional or non-traditional college age, they may work full or part time, they may also only be taking a few classes a week because of this, their needs and interests are different depending on the institution and student population (2016 Fact Sheet, 2016). This high population of students demonstrates the need to better understand the role of community college students and how they interact with their institutional presidents. The concept of a community college is uniquely American and their nontraditional approach to education helps them be successful for many students. According to Cohen & Brawer (1982), community college’s adaptability and flexibility has helped them achieve their educational mission within the community. Martin, Galentino, & Townsend (2014) studied themes of successful community college graduates. These graduates demonstrated clear goals, strong motivation, the ability to manage internal demands, and self-empowerment. However, students who attend community colleges often face challenges like access and funding.

While community colleges across the country serve so many students, their graduation rates are not as high when compared to four-year institutions. Gurantz (2015) studied student behavior and how it relates to outcomes at community colleges. Gurantz found that student behaviors in completing tasks like registering may be influenced by the increased number of community college students, as well as challenges that come with providing students access to popular courses in areas like math and science.
Community colleges are a unique part of higher education and with this comes a unique set of challenges for students. Nearly one-third of college presidents in the United States are from community colleges (The American college president, 2012). Presidents at community colleges work with students who have different experiences, backgrounds, interests, work expectations, and needs. This influences the dynamic between students and the leader when meeting the needs of an ever-changing student body.

**Presidents and Students.** A phenomenological study and doctoral dissertation by Schuemann (2014) evaluated how students experience and understand the university presidency. The study found several key themes in exploring the student experience of the presidency. These themes demonstrated that students found value experiencing informal presidential encounters and were impacted by their interactions with the leader (Schuemann, 2014). Schuemann (2014) also found that “encouraging interactivity between students and presidents benefits students by further motivating their campus involvement, enhancing their connection to the university, and inspiring their student leadership aspirations” (p. 4). This relationship, as noted by Schuemann as existing between presidents and student leaders, identified ways that both parties were able to find meaning in their view of the other and saw the importance of the interactions.

**Theoretical/Conceptual Framework**

This study has two theoretical influences that guide the research. The first, Blake and Mouton’s (1964) Managerial Grid, is based on supervisory and leadership effectiveness in an. This helps understand the impact and style of the institutional leader. The second, Astin’s (1999) Student Involvement Theory, helps to understand what
shapes students interests and experiences on campus. Both of these theories give greater guidance and insight into the topic.

**Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid.** This corporate leadership theory is based on types of managers and leaders within an organization. The theory included a managerial grid and has two dimensions of managerial behavior. The first is concern for people and the second is concern for production (Blake & Mouton, 1964). From these two types, five leadership styles have been identified from where someone falls on the grid. These styles are impoverished management, task management, middle-of-the-road, country club, and team management (Blake & Mouton, 1964). These types help understand how leaders interact with those who work for them and what that might say about the impression they give to employees, peers, and others within the organization. Thrash (2012) studied the leadership of academic deans and compared it to the leadership styles in the grid over time in office. Thrash (2012) reported that the grid is heavily used in leadership and higher education, and that time did not influence the leadership styles used by the grid. This helps provide an example of individuals being compared to the styles on the grid and looking at if there is an influence by external factors. The grid helps better understand presidential effectiveness and potential characteristics presidents have as determined by theory. While students do not report to presidents, they may see parts of presidential leadership or hear about it from people that do interact and report to the president. One way to evaluate the style of leadership is to use student responses to understand where the president falls in the grid.

**Student Involvement Theory.** Astin's (1999) theory of student involvement provides a unique insight into how students may come to view the leader of an institution
and why that view is relevant to the study as a whole. The theory is centered on five basic postulates, which define student involvement at different stages. These postulates start with investment of energy into the educational process, the continuum of degrees of student involvement, the qualitative and quantitative features of involvement, quality and quantity of involvement in the program, and effectiveness of educational policy to encourage involvement (Astin, 1999). This theory is relevant to student impressions of presidents as it helps give insight into how students can become engaged and invested into the campus culture. This helps see how students show investment in organizations and the campus, and highlights how they grew in their awareness of the president and the campus. Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek (2006) argue that going to school and earning a degree is linked to benefits for the individual such as cognitive development and personal development. This experience as a student can shape the individual development and view the world, as previously presented. Overall, the purpose of this theory is to investigate why students become invested on a college campus. This investment is important to this study as it provides a connection to how students formulate their investment and involvement on campus, as well as how they may or may not find value in being involved in different ways.

Summary

The literature gives insight into the complicated and adaptive role of an institutional leader as well as the experiences of students on a campus. Presidents are challenged to maintain relationships with a variety of stakeholders; yet meet the needs of individuals. While there is significant information about the dynamic between presidents and trustees, presidents and government, and presidents and faculty, there is a gap in the
literature regarding the relationship between presidents and students. The trends that present themselves in the literature are the importance of the leader to make meaningful connections with constituents, as well as make tough decisions and take action on institutional initiatives. For students, often they are interested in feeling a sense of investment and awareness of what is happening around campus. This creates a unique dynamic between the president, the ultimate leader and spokesperson for the institution, and the student, the primary users of the services the institution provides. As Gee & Hart said, “consider yourself a student of your students. To do so, you must step outside the comfort zone of your past role and match the students’ pace. They not only keep you in business, but also keep you in touch with the present” (Gee & Hart, 2015, http://chronicle.com/article/Advice-From-2-Streetwise/229457/).
Chapter III

Methods

This chapter outlines the methodological framework that has structured this study. The purpose of this study was to explore student impressions of institutional leaders and student evaluation of leader performance at community colleges. This has been conducted with the use of a basic qualitative framework.

Design of Study

To better understand an individual student’s insight and perspective of the leader, the researcher identified that a qualitative study was best. Qualitative provides an opportunity to understand “the meaning people have constructed” and in this context, the understanding and view people have formulated of the college president (Merriam, 1998, pg. 6). By taking the time to deeply understand the student perspective of the leader, the researcher sought to understand and answer the research questions. Another reason for conducting a qualitative study is that the researcher wanted to identify patterns to create themes or categories that better explain and present the topic (Merriam, 1998). Through an analysis of themes and overarching concepts, the intent was to identify what influences student impressions and why students felt a specific way about the leader.

The qualitative study included six individual face-to-face interviews with identified participants. Participants are from one of two community colleges. This qualitative study explored how students view an institutional leader and what influences those views. Through comprehensive interviews, the interviewer worked to understand how students see the president, campus involvement, exposure to the president, their expectations of presidential performance, and their evaluation of the current leader’s
performance. Each participant was a student who attended a community college in an Associate’s Degree program and was able to speak to his or her impression/awareness of the institutional leader.

Participants

Participants in this study were undergraduate students attending one of two community colleges, and were ages 18-30. These students came from demographic backgrounds consistent with the population of the institution. A purposeful sample of six participants was identified of students who enrolled in the Associates Degree program at one of the two community colleges. Special attention was given to students who were very involved on campus and had a strong awareness of the leader as opposed to those who are not as involved on campus and may not have as strong of an awareness of the leader. By targeting a specific population of students, the researcher was able to speak with students who are involved on the campus in different ways. The researcher worked with professionals in the student affairs office at the community college when recruiting participants. The intention of having a range of students was to see if there are external influences and experiences that shape student awareness and impression of the leader. All participants selected agreed to participate in individual interviews and signed a consent form. The participants were informed that participation was voluntary and they could have withdrawn from the process at any time.

The researcher spoke with students in parallel roles at both institutions to ensure that the information would be more uniform. These students included two student trustees, two student government presidents, and two involved leaders on campus.
College A. This rural institution had three participants: Jane, Sue, and Bryan. Interviews at College A were conducted at the end of the spring semester.

Jane is a student trustee at the college and interacts with the president frequently. She is involved on campus as an admissions ambassador and is a first year student. Jane is from a small town and works part time at a local restaurant in town. She identifies as a white female and enjoys her classes where she gets to personally connect with faculty.

Sue is the student government president from a nearby town. She is a second year student about to transfer to a four-year institution to finish her degree. Sue identifies as a white female and is interested in communications. Sue is extremely involved on campus serving as an admissions ambassador, peer assistant, and has moderate interactions with the president.

Bryan is the vice president of student government, an admissions ambassador, and very involved in the business program. Bryan identifies as a white male and takes classes in leadership and business. Bryan is a second year student and is about to transfer to a large state school to finish his degree.

College B. The urban institution had three participants: Chelsea, Katie, and Zack. Interviews at College B were conducted at the beginning of the fall semester.

Chelsea is the student trustee and a nontraditional student. Chelsea is a single mother who is interested in social work. Chelsea has struggled with mental health challenges and has worked to support mental health initiatives on campus. Chelsea has interacted with the president frequently in her role and is in her second year at the college.
Katie is the president of student government, an active member of the Latino student organization, and has moderate interactions with the president in her role. She is a third year student who identifies as a Latino woman and hopes to be a social worker.

Zack is an involved leader on campus who got involved when looking for speaking opportunities. Zack identifies as a male of middle eastern decent and has previously struggled with health issues. He is running for student senator and is a second year student. Zack is interested in leadership but has not had much contact with the president.

Site

This study was conducted at two regional Midwestern community colleges. College A is located in a rural community and College B is located in a more urban community.

College A has approximately 16,600 students enrolled. Of the enrolled students, the average age is 29 years old and most students are White (85%), Black (10%), and Other (4%). The institution serves mostly regional students looking for four or two year programs and offers degrees in programs like the sciences, arts, engineering, and technical training. It also has an articulation agreement with the regional state school located ten miles away, as well as agreements with many other institutions.

The president of College A has a business and corporate background. He has been in his role since 2013 and previously has experience teaching at a community college. He previously was a vice president at a technical college before taking the presidency at College A.
College B has approximately 20,000 students enrolled. Of the enrolled students, the average age is 28 years old and most students are White (60%), Black (15%), and Latino (6%). The institution serves international students as well as regional students looking for programs related to the health professions, liberal arts and sciences, and humanities. The college is nearby a large state school and has many partnerships like a pathway program to the large state institution.

The president of College B has an education background and had previously worked at Parkland before becoming president. He has been president since 2008 and first assumed the role in an interim capacity.

Both presidents are white males and have their doctorates, but their background and pathway to the presidencies are different. This is their first time in a college presidency but both previously held administration roles in higher education. By having the study conducted at two sites, the researcher hopes to identify more overall trends and themes of student impressions of the president, instead of the themes and impressions from only one institution.

**Instrumentation**

The researcher is the primary instrument in conducting this qualitative study. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with participants. The face-to-face interview was chosen because it helps the researcher observe, listen, establish a relationship, ask complicated questions, and gather opinions of participants (Structured Interviews, n.d.). Furthermore, the researcher used a structured set of questions (Appendix B) that started with broad overview of information and transitioned into more specific responses.
Through this process, the researcher was intentional in asking questions that address the broader topic but explore the individual’s perspective.

**Data Collection**

Data collection included strict researcher protocols. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with all participants, with the exception of one student who the researcher conducted a phone interview with, but the researcher used conversation tactics to establish a quality rapport between the interviewee and the researcher. These interviews were audio recorded and were conducted in Spring and Summer 2016. A neutral location was selected for the interviews. This neutral location provided a forum for the student to share information and insight. There was only one sit-down interview with each participant, unless a potential follow-up interview was needed. No follow up interviews were needed. The researcher contacted participants after identifying them as students who had an awareness of the president and were willing to share their opinion. All interviews have been transcribed and coded into subcategories to determine overarching themes of the responses.

**Data Analysis**

Upon completing the interviews, the researcher compiled and analyzed the qualitative data. Through this analysis, the researcher identified overarching themes and key elements to use in drawing conclusions about the study. To ensure complete effectiveness of the data analysis, triangulation was used to draw comparisons. Triangulation is a tool to enhance credibility and strengthen the research findings (Krefting, 1991). Credibility is important in ensuring the quality of qualitative data, so the researcher’s thesis advisor also reviewed and coded all transcripts for themes.
Furthermore, the use of triangulation of data allowed for drawing comparisons between research findings, student engagement, and management theory.

Based on the findings of the data, the researcher coded and analyzed all results. To ensure the research questions are answered, the researcher organized data by how it relates to each research question. The researcher used organizational categories to identify broader areas to investigate, such as student evaluation of presidential performance (Maxell, 2015). The researcher took notes during the interview and when transcribing the interviews to pre-code the data and identified participant quotes and themes that are meaningful to the research (Saldana, 2015). The researcher manually coded the data by using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Next, the researcher continued by taking raw data and identifying preliminary codes as data is being formulated (Saldana, 2015). Finally, the researcher took the preliminary code and used the themes to help determine the final code, which is an overarching topic that relates to the preliminary code (Saldana, 2015). With this process, the researcher found primary and secondary themes to support the research questions for this study. This allowed the researcher to dig deeper into the data, but made findings relevant to the key points of interviewees as to why they had the impressions they have of the president.

Coding included taking the information to break down into smaller categories, which applied to the experiences of participants. Using tools such as substantive and theoretical categories, the researcher worked to “identify the content of the person’s statement or action” to ensure a deeper understanding of the intention and purpose of the statement (Maxwell, 2015, p. 107). Through data analysis, the researcher identified overarching topics explored in the literature review, as well as explored topics discussed
by participants. Following this, the researcher used these categories to determine overarching trends in the student perspective.

**Treatment of the Data**

Data was collected from two primary sources. The first was transcribed interviews conducted by the researcher, and detailed notes taken by the researcher during those interviews. All participants were required to read and agree with an informed consent to begin the interview. All information has been kept and treated in the ways required by IRB policy. The information is securely stored and the only people who have seen the interview notes or transcription are the researcher and advisor. The documents are in Microsoft Word and are stored on a password-protected device.

During data collection, the researcher kept a field journal to take notes about the interviews and identify trends among the participants. This will be used as a tool to determine potential researcher biases, as well as potential threats to the validity of the study. As noted by Krefting, in qualitative research, researchers must do their best to represent the perspectives of participants (Krefting, 1991). That being said, it is important to record how the researcher’s views may have changed during the process, as that could indicate that there is a bias or a different perceived truth. However, this truth cannot be generalized to the entire population, but one can draw conclusions that may guide and assist with future research. Through a fair and consistent treatment of data, the researcher worked to objectively analyze and understand the data, while building a rapport and understanding the perspective of participants.
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Summary

The researcher used a qualitative approach to better understand the impressions community college students have of institutional presidents. A qualitative approach allows for a deeper understanding of when impressions were formed, what shaped student awareness of the leader, how students view the presidency, and how this topic relates to the student experience as a whole. By working with two community colleges, the researcher was able to speak with students from different experiences, backgrounds, and institutions. By focusing on students in parallel roles, the researcher was able to determine if student perspectives across campuses has overarching trends. This allows the study to provide more transferable findings that other researchers and individuals can use to understand how students view the college presidency.
Chapter IV

Analysis

This chapter captures the highlights of the participant interviews and the findings and trends from the data. Each participant offered a different and unique perspective about their impression of the president, but there are some overarching trends that connect all findings. This study utilized research questions to guide the interviews and analysis process. What was studied included:

1. How do students describe the role of the college president? What influences this perception?
2. How does the college president impact the individual student’s experience at the institution?
3. Based on the student’s perception of the college president, how would they rate the performance?
4. How has the student’s impression of the president changed over time and why?

Perspective of the College President

The study interviewed students at two different community colleges, and while there are overarching themes and trends from these interviews, some trends and information are specific to each institution. Community College A (CCA) is the rural community college. Community College B (CCB) is the urban community college. The location of the institution along with the students’ roles at the institution needs to be understood before analyzing the findings. The participants all had different perspectives of the president and knowledge of the role, which shaped their impressions.
Community College A Participant Perspectives. Jane, the student trustee, has a very positive, almost idyllic view of the president. She has had many personal interactions with him in a variety of formal and informal settings. She described him as catering his message to the group that he is speaking with, but also is intentional about meeting the needs of all with whom he interacts.

Sue, the student government president, talked about the complicated intricacies of the college president’s role, but has not interacted with him as frequently as others. While she does not interact with the president daily, she does interact with his vice presidents and staff members. She described his leadership style as being focused on students but is casual and relatable, but also that he is an administrator and answers to the board of trustees.

Bryan, an involved campus leader, credits the president with changing his view on the institution and inspiring him to attend. He does not have as many interactions with the president as the other participants from his institution, but was still able to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role and the different responsibilities that a president must complete to be successful.

Community College B Participant Perspectives. Chelsea, the student trustee, has frequently interacted with the president and knows him and his role well. She sees him in formal and informal settings, and he helped her transition into her leadership role on the board. She credits the president with inspiring her to continue being involved on the board as a full member after graduation.

Katie the student government president is still getting to know the president. She views him as a celebrity on campus, and has a positive perspective overall. While she
was able to describe her understanding of the role with some accuracy, she was not able to touch on too many specific examples regarding the role of the president. She described him as being student focused, which is something she believed to be important.

Zack, an involved leader on campus, has not interacted with the president often, but does understand the role and its responsibilities. Zack has learned a lot about the president through his mentor, and understands that the president is the face of the institution and leads the institution forward.

Each participant identified a different perspective that contributed to the data collected for the study. The key data points and findings are outlined below.

**The Role of the President**

Students talked about how they understood the role of the college president through their involvement on campus. The impressions students had formulated, interactions they had with the president, and observations they made all contributed to their own understanding and knowledge of the role. They described the importance of the president building relationships through being approachable, personable, caring, and relatable. All students saw the president as a multitasker and administrator who communicated with different groups on and off campus, as well as someone who is a role model. Students were asked questions about the role of the president and how their perception of the president and the role of the president changed after they began to get to know the president better.

All participants had different levels of understanding of the presidency and the elements of the role. The participants most commonly noted that initial impressions of the
president, interacting with the president, influence of peer impressions, and perceptions of the president all determined their understanding of the president’s role.

**Initial Impressions.** Most individuals entering post-secondary education have little knowledge of the role and responsibilities of a college president. The initial impression is defined as the first memory a student has of the president or the first interaction they recall having with the individual. Zack, from CCB, shared his first impressions of the college president as being more administratively focused.

I guess you would expect this guy that’s really, what’s the word, administrative? Just this really professional, polished guy. But when he came to the stage he was laughing and a really bright person. I expected someone who was a very stoic person, you know what I mean? He was quite the contrast.

Chelsea, also from CCB, talked about preparing to meet with the college president for the first time and finding him to be more personable than she anticipated.

Well the initial impression I had of him was like “oh my gosh this is a really important guy and he’s going to be super proper and I’m going to look like some poor uneducated jack wagon sitting in his office.” And of course I had made myself scared for no reason because when I met him he was nothing like that.

**Presidential Interactions.** Each of the students interviewed was selected because they serve in a major student leadership role at their institution, thus they have a higher potential for interacting directly with the college president. Participants were asked about their interactions to gain insight into their understanding of what the president does and each spoke about him from different perspectives. Chelsea said that after she got to know the president, her impression of him changed and he no longer felt like an administrator.
"To me, that, it was almost like the suit fell off and the street clothes came on and he was an everyday guy that you would see shopping at the local Wal-mart."

Participants shared that seeing the president on campus and hearing about the president positively impacted their impression and helped them see the president outside of being an administrator. They talked about him developing relationships with various constituents on campus. Jane cited specific examples of the president participating in events and activities on campus.

He makes his presence very known on campus as well. When we have an event he always speaks, just recently he wrote a letter to the editor in [CCA Newspaper]. I don’t think anybody wouldn’t recognize him if they saw him on campus either.

Bryan, from CCA, talked about how the approachability of the president is known on campus and students can always schedule an appointment.

He’s a great role model because he’s not only seen as a professional but he’s not a ghost on campus that any student can’t get a hold of. Whether it’s me setting up a meeting with him or it’s a part time student that is here once a week and wants to talk to him about an important issue. He’s going to be more than happy to…seriously just walk right through his door. He’s the kind of president that needs to be on I think every kind of community college.

Participants, like Katie from CCB, identified personality traits like friendliness, as important to being president. "I think him being the president, that also is what does it. I think it’s his personality. He really just has that personality. He’s genuinely friendly to people."
Jane shared her view of CCA president's communication style and how it helped him seem more approachable. "He's very relaxed. He's very easy to talk to. Very easy to communicate with, whether it's something that is in more detail or very specific or more serious."

Despite the size of the CCA campus, Bryan shared how the president was still able to make connections with students.

It's such a great campus because we have on average about 4,000 students that are here physically one of the busiest days of the week. So you're going to see faces that are familiar every day and he's one of them. His door is always open. You can go in there and talk to him about him going to Wisconsin or something professional. He definitely has a history, has things to talk about, and is willing to talk to you.

Sue, from CCA, talked about how the president's role includes facilitating and supporting other staff members and administrators.

Well I would say his job is overseeing the vice presidents of the college you know. He's their boss of course. I know he deals with hiring, but I don't think probably he deals with hiring instructors. You know I would say that's more up to the division chairs, for hiring instructors. So I would say mainly his job is overseeing and really just making sure that everything runs smoothly, you know. I would say he has a lot of, I would say he has a lot of power. But, I would say his duties are mainly like making sure other people do their duties, you know?

Jane, from CCA, identified how the president is an advocate for the college.
I think he [is] a liaison between other colleges and community colleges and our community college. He works in the community as well. He doesn’t just work with [CCA]. We work with correctional facilities and their education as well, so he went to their graduation last week. He’s very engaged in the community and he wants only to make [CCA] better and more stable and he wants to branch that out to the community as well.

Katie discussed President B practicing what he preaches when interacting with the campus community.

You have to get yourself out there, let students know who you are. It’s kind of hard to have an open door policy as the president of the college versus a teacher or something because obviously the roles are different. But just giving students that trust and the like ‘you know who I am if you see me you can come talk to me if I can.’ Just building that relationship with them.

Jane identified that President A catered his messaging for the groups that he interacted with on campus. She thinks this helps him communicate and connect with others on campus and make sure they understand the message he is sharing.

I feel like he portrays the same [persona] in front of everyone. Obviously there is certain parts of a conversation where he’d be more professional, like in a board meeting, but after the board meeting he always shakes your hand and asks how you’re doing, how’s your day, asks about your family, stuff like that. I don’t think that anybody things any different of him.

**Peer Impressions.** In addition to their own impressions, participants talked about how the impressions of others shaped their understanding of the community college
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presidency. Katie, for example, had a friend that also had positive interactions with the president.

My friend she used to work here with us, same experiences with him, very positive experience as well. We talked a little about President B. It was never anything bad it was always good things said. I just think he’s a great person. The experiences I’ve had with him I’ve never felt bad about it. They’ve always been pretty good.

According to Chelsea, students often associate the president with getting in trouble which may contribute to the perception of being an unapproachable administrator. “I [don’t] think a lot of students walk around asking about the president because usually if someone is talking about going and seeing the president it’s usually not for anything good.”

Bryan felt that the more students talked about their impression of President A the better it was for the college.

Being around students who have been around him like that, having knowledge of the president and our purpose here on campus is going to strengthen our skills and relationships towards the actual president and is going to strength our skills and relationships as well because we have a common understanding of what’s going on.

The level of student interactions and presidential presence on campus differed between the two colleges. All three participants at CCA described the president intentionally interacting with students frequently; while two participants at CCB reported
interacting with the president and the other student identified that overall few on campus knew that there was a president.

For example, at CCB Zack shared that “level of awareness that we even have a president is not very high.” While Katie thought that he president was very active and involved on campus.

I guess anytime I see him it’s not just me. It’s with other students. He’s asking “hey how’s it going? Good, good to know.” I think that’s really important being a president of a college. Not only to take care of the college but also interact with the students. I think he does a really good job of that.

Chelsea had a similar impression as Katie that President B was often on campus and visible to students.

A lot of times you’ll catch him down in the student union in the mornings and he’ll just be greeting students and asking how classes are going. He’ll be giving directions if they’re lost and need help finding a class. He’s actually escorted students to classes. I mean, there is nothing that [President B] won’t do. He wears many, many, many hats. He wears them all elegantly.

At CCA two students referenced a specific example of the president riding a hover board during a student group meeting. This is something that both Sue and Jane shared as it positively shaped their experience with the president. Jane fondly described the meeting

He didn’t stay on it very long and he said that we were going to have to teach him to ride it and he, he’s great. I enjoy how engaged he is with the students, at that level too.
While Sue described the meeting as something that she did not expect. "The president of the college is trying to hover board for student [groups]. And that was like one of the big impressions I got, I was like wow what a super cool guy."

All students reported having a professional staff member on campus as a mentor that they interacted with extensively, and how this shaped their experience on campus. Zack, in particular, when asked about what shaped his perception of the president, he talked about his mentor. Zack's mentor was identified as the director of student life on campus.

I imagine that if I was working here, this is an office setting, it's not, you know, working at a retreat, and so I think if [my mentor] wasn't there without that very strong leadership I would probably have that angst that I used to feel about college and the modern world in general. So, being able to be there and see that leadership helped me have very good impressions of both the college and from that the president too.

Presidential Impression. Participants identified that the role of president and the view students have of that role is important when building the reputation of the campus and experience of the students. Each student identified what they considered to be important in the role of the college president and why.

Zack, a student leader on CCB's campus, spoke about the president's role as one that served as the primary advocate for the college.

My impression of it could be completely wrong, but he would be the person who represents [CCB] at bigger events. So let's say something happened to [CCB] at the state capitol, I would say he'd be the person to go over there and take care of
It. He’d be the face of [CCB]. That’s my impression of what he does. Speaks for the school and about the school, I don’t know if that’s right. He really holds up a lot of the weight of the school I would imagine.

Jane talked about how staff perceptions and understanding of the president is different than student perceptions.

I think that his impression is a big deal to students and the staff. Obviously the staff knows him in a different area than the students know him but um, because he is so willing to converse about anything. The students understand that if he talks about something in a serious manner that he is serious and he wants their opinion.

Sue, who serves as the CCA student government president, sees the president as setting the tone for the college when interacting with current and incoming students.

If he went up there and he seemed standoffish and just didn’t seem like a nice guy and they would come back and say their president you know, he was really mean or something. Even though you don’t deal with him every day I would say that because he’s the face of [CCA] it’s pretty important.

Zack spoke about how students should know about the president because it enhances their college experience.

I think that it’s very important that students know about the president and have that good impression and I think it can shape their experience at the college. We as people I think tend to want leadership either within ourselves or outside ourselves. And for a lot of people that come into college, they’re still trying to find where they want to go and all that. And to have a strong leadership position,
especially when it’s held and attached to the title of president, creates a very
strong impression.

Bryan acknowledged that being involved on campus gives him more opportunities
to get to know the president and understand his role.

I think classmates know what he does on campus and that he is the actual
president. Um, whether or not they see him on a basis like I do or whether or not
they keep up with the current events on campus will kind of differ between
students; but um, most of them are here to go to class and get out of here. But the
students that are really interested have a great perception of our president. They
see him, like I said, on Wednesdays he’ll pop into our meetings. He’ll come by
the carnival. So they know who he is. They don’t have the perception of him that I
do but they definitely know he’s here for positive things. They know who he is,
but I think, they’ve probably met him, I’d say everyone’s probably met him.

Whether or not they’ve taken the time to appreciate him for what he’s done for
our campus and who he actually is. I couldn’t tell you there.

Chelsea advocated for students to get to know the president and what he does like
she has because it would change how they saw the staff and faculty at the college. “If our
students knew how hard our president and our vice presidents work for us, I believe that
they would appreciate them a lot more and would seek them out a lot more.”

**Presidential Impact on College Experience**

Participants had varying levels of interaction and experiences with the president,
and because of this their impressions of the president varied. Questions were asked about
specific student interactions with the president and how that impacted the student
experience at the college. The participants noted that promoting of the college and supporting students were important in shaping the individual student experience.

**Promoting the College.** A president often is sharing the mission and vision of campus, along with promoting the experience that the college provides to students. Participants may not know all the meetings and events the president attends on the behalf of the college, but were able to share experiences where seeing the president at events and activities promoting the college changed their impression. Bryan, a student leader at CCA, talks about how seeing the president promote the college and work to have a personal connection with him.

If you go to [a large flagship state institution], I’ll be at [a large flagship state institution] next year where there’s 40,000 students. There’s the chancellor there, but I’ll probably never see him. So, I had that same impression when I came to [CCA]. It’s still college. It’s a two-year community college. So he’s going to be a president I’m never going to see. Behind doors in a different wing that would never be open to students. So, like I told you, you can walk into his office, walk into their office anytime during the day. So I definitely saw him as the icon, or kind of a symbol of our campus and now I get to see him on a personal basis where we get to talk. So it’s changed from the end of two spectrums I guess.

Zack, a second year student from CCB, was surprised by the president when he saw him at an event on campus promoting the college.

The only time that I’ve seen him was very recently, just like a week ago. I was at the Events and Activities Fair and he kind of gave a little speech. He’s really a
great guy in what he does. He had a lot of energy, more than what I expected actually.

Jane alluded to the president of CCA and his focus on being a very invested president.

I think that he is very willing to jump in and help whenever he can. And get people involved as well and help them understand what’s going on and bringing awareness to things helps people join together.

**Supporting Students.** Participants were asked to share how they view the role of a president on campus and what examples led them to hold this belief. The participants were asked to speak to their experiences interacting or seeing the president and how that influenced their experience at the college. Each identified that supporting students and student success was a major role for the president. Chelsea, from CCB, spoke about how the president helped shaped her experience as the student trustee.

They are very centered in ensuring that I’m getting the most out of my college experience. He’s very compassionate, he’s very understanding, very listening, he understands that especially me, I’m a nontraditional student, single mother. He understands that life happens. And we can’t control that. We do to the best of our ability but there are things that are out of our control and he doesn’t fault us for that.

Jane, from CCA, talked about feeling like she mattered as a student to the president before she even enrolled in classes.

I was at [CCA] Visit Day. He spoke to us and our group was kind of small that day, I think there was like 26 students or something high school students. He spoke to us and after he was in the hallway where I was and I had just broken my
foot that previous night so I had a boot on and everything. He stopped me and said “what are you doing here?” And I said “I’m here to tour campus” and he said “in that boot?” And I said yeah and he said, “well you must really like [CCA].” And I said, “I’m planning on it!” And that conversation was something that stuck with me, he was very cheerful about it, very lighthearted.

Participants also spoke about how President B was personable and supportive toward them. Chelsea told a story of when she came to her first meeting as a student trustee and was nervous, but the president took time to calm her and help her feel confident in the role.

I felt like I walked into a world where I didn’t belong but within two minutes of being there it felt like home. I’m sure he could tell I was nervous and whatnot, but he made sure to encourage me in a positive way to say, hey you got elected into this position, you did this. You’re the winner, no need to be nervous now. If you were going to be nervous you should have been nervous when you were running.

Katie, from CCB, talked about how she was initially shy when speaking with the president, but after interacting with him has felt more comfortable.

I have only interacted with [President B], our college president, well now twice. Maybe three or four times. Very respectful person. Very down to earth. He’s pretty good. Sometimes I feel like nervous. I feel like people get nervous or intimidated by those higher up professionals. He definitely did not give me that vibe. Like, I’m a shy person at first but after I’m in the environment a little bit I’m more outgoing and probably will never stop talking. But he definitely did not give me that vibe. He’s very easy to talk to.
Not only did students personally identify as mattering to the president, but they also saw him caring about student concerns as a whole. Sue, from CCA, shared an example of how the president was receptive to a concern student government had about a potential policy change on campus.

We went straight to the president’s office. I got out of the meeting and I said all right [President A] needs to hear about this. I go straight to his office he was in there and we talked. We talked for about 15 minutes. You know, we actually talked for 15 minutes because he had a meeting. So he talked all the way up to when he could. So that was pretty cool. I definitely view him, I mean, a lot higher just as a person. That’s great to be the president of the college and just let a student walk in and talk to you about their student government concerns. That speaks very highly of him.

Chelsea shared that she had been profoundly impacted by having a personal relationship with President B and getting to know him as a leader. Because of this connection, she wants to stay involved with [CCB] as an alumna. “He’s been so impactful on my personal journey that there are board seats coming open after I graduate and I am interested in a full board seat at [CCB].”

Overall, students placed different levels of importance on the interactions they had with the president and how that shaped their journey. Each student had different opportunities to connect with the president which impacted their impression and connection to this individual.
Evaluation of Presidential Performance

Students demonstrated varying levels of understanding regarding their knowledge of the role of president. Overall, their understanding was based on their perception of the role and seeing the president as the voice of campus. Participants all vocalized the importance of a president being an advocate for the institution. They also talked about how their experiences shaped their understanding of the role of a president.

Chelsea, the student trustee at CCB, identified that the president showed care for the needs of the institution by focusing on specific institutional initiatives.

He is focused on, well recently it’s been brought up that mental health is becoming a larger issue and he is taking steps to ensure that our college is prepared for those needs to be filled. And that not only to me shows compassion for people that have illnesses, but it also shows civility because he deeply cares. He wants to ensure that they get anything and everything that they need to be successful. There [are] not a lot of presidents out there that are like that. To him it’s not just about the school image, to him it’s about each and every student succeeding. Each and every student getting that associates degree or certificate when they leave [CCB].

Participants saw the president as a leader who should be a good role model and promoter for the institution, thus their evaluation of his position was focused on his ability to do so. Bryan, a student leader from CCA, talked about how he thought it was important for the president to be seen attending events and talking to students.

So you always see, he’s always doing something you like. He’s giving speeches at the right kind of places and he knows where to be at the right time. Um, and also
he just treats everyone the same way whether you’re a student on campus or whether you’re a student that’s not involved he’s going to treat you with a smile and respect. I really don’t have anything bad to say about him.

The participants all shared different insights based on how they felt like their president had set the expectation for how students and staff perceived the institution. Participants were asked questions based on their own understanding of the tone their president set on campus.

Katie, from CCB, talked about how the president shaped the way others viewed the campus and institution as a whole.

Because it’s important, I guess, to know what kind of college you’re coming into. Are you coming into a college who is looking out for the best interest for you? That’s important. I think for me I could answer that with a confident yes. I think our president here does look for the best interest of students and that’s important.

Bryan, reflected on his own experiences as a prospective student and how President A’s speech at an event helped him decide to attend the college.

So he spoke when I was there and I sucked in every single kind of information he said. Whether it’s our national ranking in our type of campus or what they have to offer me. It’s very important. Like I said, I wasn’t even considering [CCA] before I came here. So, things he said, things the admission representative said were things that brought me to this campus.

Chelsea, the student trustee at CCB, sees the president’s reputation and goals are reinforced by his staff.
He enforces those values through the professors that he has attained and kept over the years that he's been there – the few short years that he's been there. Because that’s really important to him that his professors carry the same codes and values and morals that he does. That the student comes first, that we’re here to support them, that, you know, as long as they’re trying and making an effort that we will do whatever we can to help them out no matter their struggle whether it be financially or personally, you know. I think that our administrators follow his lead. And that’s what makes [CCB] so wonderful and so great. Not only do the administrators follow that lead but the professors follow that same level of professionalism also. So it’s just a trickle-down effect. He carries himself with such high standards, you know, and with such dignity that everyone else seems to follow suit.

Zack, from CCB, shared that he knows the president meets with many different people because he represents the institution; people associate their impression of the institution with their impression of him,

Especially as the president of a college and interacting with so many students, his style, he’s viewed by a lot of people, so it will very strongly affect how the outside world and the inside world of students view him.

Bryan described how student awareness of the president is important to the student experience and investment on campus.

I think people need to understand why the presidents are here. Like any community colleges, I’m sure like at [another institution] you could email his secretary and say I want to meet with [another president]. I think he’d be willing
to meet with any student on campus. I think people need to understand why the president is there. What their background is, things like that. And then they’re going to understand their school better. Whether you’re taking econ and you want to know your professor well, it’s kind of the same thing. You want to know why your president is there. His purpose. His skills. His stance on certain issues and things like that. So you can have an understanding of why he’s on campus.

**Evaluation Rooted in Perception.** Student understanding of the role of president shaped their evaluation of how they felt the president at their institution was doing.

Students were asked what they thought the role of a president was and how they would evaluate the performance of the president from their institution. This helped identify both their understanding of the role and how they felt their president was doing.

Jane described President A’s approach of connecting with students and how she thought it was effective.

Obviously there’s stuff behind the scenes that I don’t know about but how he brings awareness to the students helps us not only understand what’s going on but him and his image and his job role more effective. I think that as the president you need to be able to reach out to your students and them listen to you and respect you. I think that because he is so personal about that, students understand how serious he is, but also how he is talking to them about it to bring awareness to them for a reason.

Zack rated President B rather high, but he wished more students knew about him. I would give him a solid 7 out of 10. Say I’m rating on a 1 to 10 scale. I would give him a 7. The rest of the three points are because I don’t know him and I think
that is an important thing that more people should know him. If I had any humble critique it would be that he should make himself more known with the students.

That would be my critique. The benefit is, well, we are still here. [CCB] seems to be doing pretty well for the most part, it’s still running. But without me knowing what he’s doing, I think that’s the flaw in itself.

Chelsea had the opportunity to be on an evaluation committee for President B through her leadership role and talked about her experience.

It was really awesome to be involved in that process because it’s very intricate and very interesting. I gave him rave reviews. He’s wonderful. Absolutely wonderful. I’m not sure how [CCB] secured [the president], but I know, and I quote, it would behoove you to do everything in your powers to ensure that [the president] stays right where he is.

Katie thought that overall, President B had good intentions and that is what made him successful. “I think he wants the best for the college and for the students. I think he does everything possible to achieve that.”

Development of Impressions

Student impressions of the president, according to participants, shifted during their time at the institution. Students were asked questions about their first impression of the leader and their current impression, along with how the impression had changed over time. Jane, CCA student trustee, talked about how she first felt overwhelmed by working with the president, but after getting to know him on a personal level she felt more confident in her role.
And at first I was like I don’t know what I’m doing here, but, um, he made me think that he gave me that first impression that he’s not too high to talk to someone who is not even going there yet. Which is pretty cool. That’s the first conversation I had with him and after that I was interviewed as an ambassador and I really got to know him in that role. We each got a personal meeting with him and he told us how important our jobs were. And then that’s where I really understood how passionate he was about it. He told us that if we had any questions on anything or whatever that we could stop and talk to him which, that’s always nice to know.

As students enter in to leadership positions they will have to have interactions with the college president. These interactions will evolve like most relationships between people and the participants in this study spoke of this evolution. Sue described how her interactions with the president changed as she got to know him better through her experiences as CCA student government president.

My initial view of him was probably…I wouldn’t say I was scared of him but he was the president. It’s like you view him really high on the totem pole. Obviously he’s a really respectable guy but I viewed him as more of the type of person you would see and would say: Hi [President A] or something like that. Now that I’ve dealt with him on multiple occasions I feel like I could call him [by his first name].

Chelsea expressed an example where the view she had of President B at first was later disproved once she began working with him.
So I would say my preconceived notation of him was actually incorrect. When I first met him to now he has stayed solid. How he was when I first met him and when he introduced himself to me is exactly how he is now. He hasn’t changed a bit.

Different leadership opportunities expose students to time spent with the president that normal students do not get, the president of CCA student government, shared.

A lot of others, like your everyday student, like they don’t interact with him. They aren’t going to get the opportunities that we have. I wouldn’t say anybody views him as someone who is like scary or something like that. They just don’t have like daily interactions with him.

Katie, the student government president at CCB, talked about how her college involvement gave her a chance to learn more about the president.

I came to [CCB] not knowing about the president. I went through my first semester, maybe even my second semester not knowing about the college president. It wasn’t until like I got into my student government role that I even got to relate with [CCB President].

Sue described how impressions of the president and his leadership style shape student experiences at the institution.

I definitely think that his first impression makes a big deal on the students. Not that they wouldn’t base their decision on the college off of that but they’d definitely base their decision on the rest of the faculty off of that because if you have a president that is a jerk, what is his administration like?
Summary

Each student had a unique impression of the college leader. That is shaped through their involvements, experiences, and understanding of the role. The understanding and experiences was different for each individual, but some common themes and trends remained. These themes included the importance of president interactions, the influence of peers and the campus community, the understanding of the role, and the presence the leader has on campus. The more involved a student was and the more opportunities they had to interact with the president, the more well formulated and detailed impression they had. Student impressions of the community college president are influenced by a variety of factors, but overall the individual student experience, knowledge, understanding, and evaluation of the role shapes their experience and beliefs as a whole.
Chapter V
Discussion

This study used qualitative methods to better understand student impressions of community college presidents and the factors that influence impressions. Of the two institutions studied, students demonstrated a different experience and impression of the president, but overall there are some parallels that are consistent. When comparing the student responses to the trends in the research, there are some themes that are present, as well as areas that may require additional research in the future.

Discussion

During participant interviews, several overarching themes were identified and these themes helped to explore what shapes student impressions of community college presidents. The understanding students have of the position of president, the connection students believe they have to the president, and the positional expectations students have for the president all shape impressions and contribute to the understanding students have of the presidency.

**Development of Impressions.** The participants’ impressions of the president shifted during their time at the institution. At first, students thought the president was a very administrative figure and thought the president was not approachable before any engagement with the president. As students became more involved on campus and had leadership positions that provided them opportunities to engage, interact, and establish a connection with the president, their impressions changed. Participants said that getting to know the president changed their impressions to one of a friendly and approachable leader. Schuemann’s (2014) study presented the idea that students found value in
informal encounters and interactions with the president. Students in this and Schuemann’s study found that the interactions led the participants to feel more connected to the institution and inspired them to become even more involved. For example, Katie spoke about her initial impression of the president as being positive, which led her to feel she mattered and this made her want to get more involved on campus. Her involvement in the student government led to an even greater connection to the president which provided her with several examples of the positive influence she saw him having on campus.

Michael et al. (2001) discussed the importance of students perceiving that they had a direct line of communication to the president. This line of communication may take place in coming to the office when addressing a concern, such as Jane cited doing for student trustee matters; or responding to a student organization crisis, such as Sue highlighted. While the president may not be able to respond to all student concerns or address them immediately, participants in this study had the impression that they had access to the president if needed. Student impressions, as noted in the research, are influenced by a number of factors, but the concept of being able to approach a president and have concerns addressed, as well as the chance to have more face time with the president through increased involvement, helped formulate student impressions in this study.

The Role of President. The role of a president is a complicated one, where one must balance the needs of many communities, serve as an advocate for the institution, manage a team of administrators, and focus on financial sustainability. (Michael et al., 2001). Some of the participants in this study had formal leadership roles where they interacted with the president while others held positions that required less direct contact
with the president. All of the participants had an understanding of the presidency that was based on their own experiences, knowledge of the role, and perceived connection to the president.

Participants understood the president served them, students, as a campus constituency; however, few spoke about the other constituencies on campus. The participants also recognized that the president uses different messaging and communication to talk with different groups on campus. Gee & Hart (2015) highlighted the need for presidents to find balance when managing all the components of the role. One of these areas of balance is making sure to interact with the students and the campus community. All of the participants talked about how often they heard the president speak at events, attend campus functions, walk through campus, and stay involved in campus matters. One president in particular was known for taking daily walks around campus and participants spoke about how the president made an effort to greet and interact with students on these walks. As one of the constituents on the campus, the students in this study certainly felt that the president made choices in their best interest and would listen to them and their classmates about issues and campus concerns.

The campus reputation of a president was identified by students in this study as an important component of the role. Participants discussed the president’s personality and presence on campus as elements that formulated their impressions. Katie specifically talked about how the president of Community College B had a personality that was very friendly and approachable. Participants talked about how friendliness when coupled with presidential accessibility made them think positively about the president and helped develop their connection with the president. Students who cited specific examples of
seeing or interacting with the president and talked about ways they felt the president was making a difference on campus reported a favorable impression. Those who did not have specific interactions with the president spoke of the president’s role conceptually, but had a more difficult time talking about how they saw the president making a difference on campus. The participants could not speak specifically to all aspects of the president’s job, which is understood by the scope of their perspective and what is most important to them. The more visible the president is to the students and the more engaged he is on campus the more favorable impression students will have of this individual.

Participants saw the president as an advocate, representative, champion, and voice of the college. Some students talked about specific examples where they had seen the president on campus at events, the most significant being prospective student days or orientation. Zack talked about how the role of a president is to represent the institution, and saw him do this at a campus organization event day. Zack also talked about how he thought the president was responsible for carrying the college’s mission and attending events was part of doing this. Others, like Katie, talked about the president supporting the college at off campus functions like press conferences. Sue identified that if a president is seen as combative or unapproachable to prospective students, then they may view the institution differently because the president is the public face of the institution.

Immerwahr, Johnson, & Gasbarra (2008) presented the idea of a president acting as a mix between a mayor of a town and a CEO. This cross between the two roles reiterates the importance of a president to serve as the voice for the campus and to speak on behalf of the institution. Participants highlighted that they understood that the president represented the institution and often did so at events, functions, and meetings across campus.
Participants of the study highlighted an awareness of the president serving as a spokesperson or voice for campus, as well as being involved and engaged in the campus and local community, but did not address other areas of the role such as fundraising, supervision, fiscal management, and so on. This may be because participant impressions were shaped from their own experiences and interactions with the president, which limits the scope and understanding they have of the position. Participants acknowledged that they saw the president attending meetings and understood that he managed a team, but were unable to speak to the specific responsibilities of the role. The president's role includes building a strong leadership team, as presented by Legon, et al. (2013), and this team is responsible for supporting the student experience, as identified by Astin (1999). A president must manage a team that both completes campus operations and builds relationships with students. Participants were all asked if there was a staff member or mentor that was important to their understanding of college and their experience, and all participants highlighted that interacting with professionals helped them learn more about the college and become more engaged on campus. As a result of this increased engagement and understanding of the campus, students were more likely to have a greater awareness of the president and the campus as a whole. Participants saw the president as role model who leads the campus. Bryan and Chelsea both talked about the prestige of the presidency and how getting to know the president gave them someone to respect and admire. Participants may have been intimidated by the leader at first, because of the powerful job and title a president holds, but participants also saw the president as someone to look up to.
Student understanding of the role of a president was rooted in the connection students had or perceived they had with the president. Interactions like hearing the president speak during an admissions event as prospective students or seeing the president serve as an institutional representative at an event influenced the student perception of the role. The participants that were more involved on campus had a greater likelihood of having a better formulated impression of the president. Often, mentors or leadership roles changed the student impression of the leader or strengthened their understanding of what the presidency entailed.

**Evaluation of the Role.** All participants evaluated the president by different standards, and their evaluations were rooted in their understanding of the presidency and the connection they felt to the president. Their experiences and perspective is based on their involvement and time on campus. The students were able to evaluate the president and speak to how they felt the president was doing without having a more substantial connection. Chelsea, in particular, had the opportunity to formally evaluate the president with her role on the board of trustees. In this role she gave him a very positive review, but not all students had the chance to formally evaluate the president. Traditionally, the board of trustees conducts an evaluation of the president which may be done differently across campuses (Bassinger 1999). The majority of participants rated the president favorably and this appeared to be directly related to specific interactions or examples of times they had talked with the president. Zack, who had rated the president as 7 out of 10, said it was because he did not know the president as much as he wished he did.

The more often students in this study interacted with the president the more likely they were to favorably evaluate the president. Presidential effectiveness is rooted in the
quality of relationships a president develops (Michael et al. 2001). Students had different relationships with the president based on their leadership experience and involvement on campus, and they all agreed that it was important for students to have a relationship with the president. Participants said they felt the president cared about them as students and would make time to meet with them if they asked. Presidential accessibility and approachability was not only something participants felt, they said their peers would agree with as well. This idea of presidential accessibility was important to participants and helped create a more favorable impression as well as strengthened their perceived connection with the president.

While participants were not able to speak to the intricacies of the role of a president, they still felt it was important for students to have a knowledge and understanding of the role. One participant, Bryan, talked about how students who understand the president and the role of a president are going to have a better understanding of their college. This idea of understanding their school better is in tandem with the concept of being more involved and engaged on campus, leading to a well-established impression of the president and the college. Students all understood the presidency differently, with varying levels of understanding and knowledge of what the role includes. The role of president holds a connotation of power and prestige, even on different community college campuses. In essence, the president’s responsibility is to see to the success of the campus and its students, but as noted in both the interviews and the literature review, expectations of what that looks like varies from person to person. The challenge for a president is determining what to focus on.
Limitations

This study explored student impressions of community college presidents, but is not a complete and full analysis of the dynamic. This study included a limited number of involved students from two different community colleges. These students were chosen because of their increased likelihood of interacting with the president; in the future it would be advantageous to study the impressions of students who are not involved on campus. Another limitation is that students were interviewed at two different times of the year, which may have an effect on what they discussed and what areas they focused on and the amount of experience they had in their role. Due to different research approval processes at the institutions, interviews happened at different times of the year at each institution. An additional limitation for this study is that the presidents were both male and Caucasian. While white male presidents are more common in higher education, it is important to note that there is a large population of female presidents and a study regarding their interactions with students may yield different results.

Implications

This study presents several implications for professionals, students, and college presidents across campuses. These implications help identify ways to understand the dynamic between presidents and students at community colleges as well as opportunities to use this research to create more connections between presidents and students.

Community College Presidents. Almost one third of college presidents in the United States are leaders of community colleges (The American college president, 2012). Community colleges serve nontraditional and traditional students and are known for adjusting quickly to the needs of the community. Students identified a connection with a
president as a key influence on their experience at the college and that they had a more favorable impression of the campus when they had a connection with the leader. A president at community college has a unique challenge when connecting with the wide range of students that set foot on campus each day but, as this study highlights, students find value in any interaction or opportunity to get to know the president. It is critical for presidents to seek out as many opportunities as possible to engage and interact with students. As noted in this study, seeing the president talking to students on campus and speaking at events were profound moments that inspired students to attend the institution, get more involved, and embrace their leadership opportunities.

**Student Affairs Professionals.** Student affairs professionals often serve in a mentorship capacity for students at the institution. Mentorship, as outlined earlier, is an integral component to shaping student impressions of the president and inspiring more student involvement on campus (Schwartz, 2001). They interact with students daily and may contribute to shaping student awareness and experience on campus. Professionals should have an understanding of the presidency and a knowledge of what shapes students' impressions. Student affairs professionals need to help develop links between the president and the student body on campus. They need to seek out opportunities for the president to engage with students in positive ways and develop a culture where students feel comfortable speaking with administrators. Additionally, presidents and administrators want to hear about student successes and challenges. This helps presidents understand the needs of the institution and serve students, an important campus constituency.
Marketing and Communications Professionals. Communication across campus and with the local community is often dependent on the needs of the institution. The importance of a perceived connection to the president influenced student impressions of the presidency as well as understanding of the campus. Professionals working in the area of marketing and communications for the campus need to identify ways to promote the college, the student experience, the quality of the college leadership to the greater community, and current and prospective students. Learning what shapes the student experience and what may inspire students to have a more favorable impression of the college helps college presidents do their job.

Alumni Affairs Professionals. Presidents are the face of an institution and the reputation and brand an institution establishes in a community is key to its continued success. Alumni staff looking for ways to market the institution and engage alumni must consider the key people on campus as well as the ways in which the alumni can remain involved on the college campus. Alumni support behaviors may be different across various campuses, but most commonly alumni may promote the institution, donate, volunteer, or get involved in other ways (McDearmon, 2012). The relationships students have with the campus and the president may impact their involvement as alumni. For example, Chelsea talked about running for a full board position after graduating because her relationship with the president inspired her to do so. If professionals in alumni affairs can identify ways to engage students while at the institution they will become invested in the college as alumni. Alumni affairs offices also need to find ways to engage alumni and the president on a continuous basis as this is part of the college.
Students. The more opportunities students had to be involved and engaged on campus, the more likely they were to have a perceived connection with the president. Astin (1999) presents the idea that involvement exists along a continuum, with the students’ institutional satisfaction improving as their involvement increases. Students who are more invested in campus and have a connection with the president may develop a positive impression of the institution. Participants in this study became involved and engaged on campus which helped them have opportunities to further their careers, develop meaningful relationships, and have a more well-rounded experience at the college. Students need to find ways to connect with the campus and become involved in ways that are meaningful to them.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many opportunities for future research that this study inspires and the recommendations are outlined below. As previously noted, there was little research regarding the dynamic between students and community college presidents, so this research begins to set the foundation to explore and understand the relationship.

- Conducting this study at other institutions like regional universities or private schools offers a new venue for future research and can help us begin to understand if the type of institution creates a different impression of the student expectation of presidential performance. The size of the institution may also impact the quality of experience students have and the connection they have with the president.
- This study focused on involved students, but students who are not involved may have different impressions of the college president or may
have no impression at all. Seeking out these students intentionally would provide a different lens to view the president.

- There may be a difference in impressions of a college led by a female president versus a male president. The differences between leadership styles of men and women may change the connection between presidents and students. This study only included male presidents, yet many universities and colleges have female leaders. Studying female leaders or a mix of male and female presidents may provide different results and insight into impressions of the presidency.

- The likelihood for alumni involvement upon having a positive or negative impression of the president may be another research topic. As this study has identified that a connection between students and the president can inspire the student to become more engaged and involved on campus, another study could explore the impact of that connection on alumni satisfaction.

- This study focused on student impressions, but another study could be conducted to see what the understanding of the role of a president is across different constituency groups like faculty, local community, or trustees. This provides an opportunity to identify what one group considers important and what all groups may consider important.

All of these recommendations for future research provide opportunities to continue to expand and develop the knowledge of this topic. It helps create a better understanding of what presidents are doing well, what is expected of them, how people view them, and
how we can create more intentional and well-connected campuses and relationships in the future.

Summary

This qualitative study sought to understand what shapes student impressions of community college presidents. Through face to face interviews at two different community colleges, the answer to the questions the study posed has become clear. Six total participants were interviewed who served in a range of leadership roles across campus. This range of leadership experience provided a window into different student experiences from both traditional and nontraditional students. Overall, participants who had a perceived connection with the president had favorable impressions of the president. Students who had specific examples or experiences of interactions they had with the president had well developed impressions and experiences. These impressions were shaped by their interactions with the president, understanding of the role of president, influence of mentors, and evaluation of the role.

The role of a college president is one that holds a connotation of power and prestige. The president is the face of the institution and the voice of campus. This study highlighted the ways that students see the presidency and the ways presidents interact with students. Often our notion of what it means to be a president, or presidential, may be preconceived. This study identified ways that the participants began to see and understand the presidency on their own campus through their interactions with that individual. Students have the chance to hear about the president, interact with the president and continue to grow in their understanding of a president. The connection students believe they have with the president is an important influence of their knowledge
of the role and presidential impression. One participant, summed up the idea that our knowledge of the presidency and its role may be rooted in our own understanding and experiences as Americans.

I believe that the position of president gives me something to look up to. And I think that title for a lot of us, especially as Americans really holds that prestige in it. If you think 'oh you have the president of the college.' You have this leader here who is speaking for us. I think it's very, very important, very powerful.

Each president conveyed a unique impression and expectation of leadership that developed the student impressions. These impressions shaped how the student saw the president, connected with the president, understood the president, and the experience the student had on campus.
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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Introductory Questions

1. Interviewer: Do I have your permission to take audio/video recording of this interview?

Share purpose of study

2. Interviewer: The purpose of the study is to learn more about how students view community college presidents. While this is a formal study and I have prepared questions, I’d like to use this as a time to have a conversation together.
   a. Do you have any questions about the purpose of this study?

Collect demographic information

3. Interviewer: The following questions are to collect demographic information about study participants. This will not be used to identify you. To begin, tell me about yourself- what would you like me to know about you?
   a. How long have you been at this institution?
   b. How did you go about selecting this institution? What did you know about the institution prior to coming here- where did you gain that information?
   c. What do you tell others about this institution?

Student Involvement/Experience Questions

1. Tell me about how you’re involved on campus.
   a. How many organizations are you involved in?
   b. What are some of these organizations? What do they do?
   c. Do you hold leadership positions in any of these groups –if so, explain to me what that looks like.

2. Tell me about some professionals on campus you know or have worked with through your leadership positions.
   a. What kind of staff and professionals on campus do you interact with as part of these organizations?
   b. What roles do they fill on campus?

3. Are there any professionals on campus that you speak to on a regular basis and if so, what do you typically speak with them about?

4. Name someone who you think is the “voice” or “spokesperson” of the campus.
   a. Tell me why you selected them.
   b. What are some personal qualities they have that you like?
   c. What are some personal qualities they have that you don’t like?

Student Impression/Awareness of President Questions

5. Do you know who the college president is?
   a. Who are they?
6. Do you remember the first time you heard about the president?
   a. What was the circumstance?
7. In a given week, how often do you hear others talk about the president?
   a. Who do you hear talking about the president?
   b. What inspires those discussions?
   c. What are the discussions about?
   d. Where do the discussions take place?
   e. Does the place they happen change what is said?
8. What do you think the college president does?
   a. Give me some examples of what the president is responsible for.
   b. Tell me more how you learned what the president does?
9. What do you think about the university president?
   a. What are some positive characteristics of the president?
   b. What are some negative?
10. What else do you know about the college president?
11. What kind of leader do you think the president is?
   a. If you had to describe the president’s leadership style, what would you say?
   b. How do you think the president’s leadership style shapes impressions of the leader?

Student Impression of Leader and Campus Overall
12. From your perspective in what ways has the college president been effective?
   a. What ways has the president not been effective?
13. If you were a college president for a day, what would you do?
   a. What do you think your job would entail?
14. What new initiatives have been implemented at the college during your enrollment?
   a. What role do you think the president played?
   b. What do you think other students thought of the initiative and the president’s involvement?

President Interaction Questions/Wrap-up
15. Tell me about any interactions you have had with this college president? Formal and informal.
   a. What context?
   b. What was your opinion of the leader?
   c. What sort of communication does the president have with students at this institution? Formal or informal?
16. What was your initial impression of the president?
   a. What are your expectations of the president now?
   b. What ways is the president meeting or not meeting your expectations?
   c. If you had to evaluate the president’s job performance, what would you say?
   d. What would you say is the general awareness of the college president by your classmates? Please explain.
e. What would you say is the general level of satisfaction your classmates have of the president? Please explain.
   i. What should be the students’ awareness of the college president?

f. How important do you think student impressions of the president are to the college president? Please explain.

g. In what ways does the president shape your experience?

h. How has your impression of the college president changed during your time here?

17. Is there anything else you’d like to share?