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Two Profiles of Women Community College Presidents

Melinda Rhodes

Introduction

In 1991 a nationwide survey of college presidents conducted by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) indicated that 11% were women, and by 2001 women had captured 27.8%. This significant increase bodes well for women seeking community college presidencies. For any number of reasons—not excluding prestige and competitiveness associated with four-year college and university posts—women have made significant headway at two-year institutions.

According to Oregon State University Professor Rebecca Warner and State University of New York President Lois B. DeFleur (1993), “women presidents are much more likely to be found at two-year schools. While there has been an increase in women’s appointments as CEOs in the last five years, the increase is still most evident in community college settings as compared to large, comprehensive institutions” (p. 4).

In Kansas, women lead 4 of the 25 (16%) American Association of Community College members. In Missouri, the percentage of women holding top posts is 37%. In Nebraska there is one female president of the 9 community colleges presidents. The representation of women in top posts in these Midwest states varies dramatically.

Researchers, especially those interested in promoting the presence of women in administration, have sought to discover what factors or connections among factors might prevent women from attaining these top posts? And, they ask, how women who find themselves in these top posts cope with the continuing challenges of leadership?

Surveys and narratives from women leaders about their experiences makes clear that barriers to attainment of presidencies exist in terms of the market itself, the culture of higher education, the juggling of personal and professional lives, and the distinct methods of leadership that women may bring to administrative posts.

The marketplace for administrators in higher education, especially for presidents, is a mixture of “good news and bad news.” The labor market for administrators exhibits the following characteristics: institutionalized policies or rules that affect mobility, access to the right networks, mentoring and sponsorship and patterning of career ladders. Warner and DeFleur (1993) analyzed the job market for administrators from both a supply and a demand perspective to explain the absence of women in the marketplace. On the supply side, the authors argue,

sex segregation in higher education administration would focus on the usual set of human capital factors (amount of education, training, and years of experience), but would also include occupationally specific factors such as the educational area of one’s advanced degree and the existence of certain academic experiences such as holding a faculty position (p. 6).

Women lack degrees in prestigious subject areas or have less experience as faculty and faculty chairs.

In another study, Oglesby and Windham (1996) focused on gender-related, career-path characteristics of community college presidents and found that, following the 1960s and 1970s, “opportunities for faculty and administrative positions are fewer,” and that those positions were

accompanied by tighter budgets and calls for accountability (p. 316). The study analyzed the career-paths of both male and female presidents and suggested a difference in several key areas. The findings contradicted some of the research on women in four-year institutions. The most significant career-path predictors of gender among community college presidents were the following:

1. employment status of the spouse (more likely women presidents had working spouses);
2. elementary-school experience (more likely with women presidents);
3. number of community college positions held (more women held faculty posts first);
4. years of community college experience (men reported more years of experience);
5. absence from work of at least 1 week to care for children (seen in women's careers); and
6. community college presidents (men had more experience in this area). (p. 316)

Kubala (1999) relied on a survey of community college presidents from 1995 to 1997 to analyze career-ladder characteristics, job acceptance motivation and initial observations of presidents upon taking office. Seventy-two percent of the respondents emerged from an "academic pipeline." Other routes to the presidency included trusteeship, administrative or student services, institutional development and planning and marketing.

Weisman and Vaughan (2002) indicated improvement in the status of women seeking presidencies. They credited changes in governing boards' commitments to diversity and current presidents greater commitment to "mentoring the underdog and increases in graduate school enrollment as reasons for improvement. Nevertheless, women remained in an "underdog" position. The researchers found the tenure for male presidents to be 8.4 versus 4.7 years for female presidents.

LeBlanc (1993) outlined the barriers to women in higher education administration: self-esteem issues, the need for self-improvement for women administrators who desire promotions, lack of women's exposure to challenges and constituencies outside the academic arena, the challenge of balancing family and careers, the lack of mentors to assist in a rise to the top, lack of available networks of influence, and a remoteness from activities that develop a strong understanding of the mission or vision of the college as a whole (pp. 41-49).

The Study

Perhaps most revealing in the area of women community college presidencies are the narratives of those who hold the leadership positions. As women's presence increases in this arena, the lessons of current leaders become a great asset in providing models for other women aspiring to these posts. They provide concrete examples, valuable advice, words of caution and processes by which leadership effectiveness might be enhanced.

This study focuses on the narratives of two women leaders, one of whom continues to work as a community college president and another who made the transition from a community college presidency to the directorship of a continuing education division of a large, state research university. The women were first interviewed in 2000 when they discussed their own career characteristics and views of women presidency leadership issues. At that time, one was considering accepting a post leading a northwest community college undergoing drastic changes in mission, goals and target student population. She served as that college's president in 2002.

The women agreed to be interviewed again in 2002, sharing information about the challenges and the details that have defined the evolution of their leadership styles during the past two years. The earlier interviews were conducted by telephone and email. In 2002, one was interviewed by telephone, and the other during a lengthy personal visit. Both women are identified by pseudonyms in this study. Their stories are unique and individual, as much as they are inspirational and educational.

The Academic Pipeline

Like many women in higher education administration, Elizabeth Jones, the president at a midwest community college, has an academic background that reflects diversity of experience and an emphasis in the area of humanities. Jones completed her liberal arts degree in English with a minor concentration in theater and the teaching block. ("The diploma says 'Humanities' and education in a nationally accredited teacher education program, 1965," she explained. "I was certified in secondary English, speech, and maybe some other things.")

Jones immediately went on to earn a master of arts in speech and drama, with an emphasis on direction and dramatic literature and criticism. The graduate degree led her to a community college where she taught and directed student productions for a year. She left to pursue an advanced degree.

"I decided to enter the Ph.D. program while I still had the time and energy," Jones said. She enrolled in a doctoral program in theater and completed all the course work and preliminary examinations and began her dissertation before she accepted a teaching post at a community college. What followed was a mixture of career, family life and continuing enrollment at the university to complete her dissertation. "A year [after taking the post at the community college], I got married and started a family. I remained enrolled until I finally decided to complete the dissertation about 1988, and two years later I had the degree."

Jones' background was in the academic pipeline. "Traditionally, most senior administrators have come from one of the liberal arts disciplines," Warner and DeFleur (1993) noted. "Fields such as English, chemistry and history are usually well represented, but this is not surprising since these are among the largest academic disciplines. Specialized degrees such as higher education administration or business administration, however, are sometimes disparaged as not providing a sufficiently academic background for administrative roles" (p. 5). Women are more likely to hold degrees in the liberal arts and sciences.

Jones said that a degree in administration would have been a more direct approach to the community college presidency. "If all I wanted was to be a community college president, I would have taken an immediate Ed.D. and taken the straightest line to an administrative post. But I never even wanted to be a community college president until some time after 1990. When I took the [state] job in 1970, my goal was to work there three years, finish the Ph.D., get a faculty position at [a research university], and then become the department head."

Jill Miller, president of a community college, also initially majored in the humanities and worked her way to her current position through an academic appointment. She received a bachelor's and master's degree in speech with an emphasis in public address and rhetoric. Her education specialist degree was in secondary education instruction with an emphasis in English, and her Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction.

"I had no administration classes at the graduate level and would have benefited from budget, legal and human resource management information," she explained, adding that the academic

field emphasis has its rewards. "I believe gaining the respect of faculty is very important, and knowing a great deal about learning and teaching has helped me. My advice to someone who may want to be an administrator is to get a degree in a subject area such as English, chemistry, etc. Faculty respect these degrees more than administration [or] curriculum, and, in the future, I believe faculty will be more involved in the selection decisions."

Family and Career

The influence of a spouse's job or career is more greatly felt by women administrators than by their male counterparts. The results of Vaughan's (1986) survey of male and female spouses of community college presidents indicated that male spouses have more formal education than female spouses do, that 89% of the male spouses surveyed were employed, and that 67% of the female spouses were employed outside the home. "Even though 67% were employed, 36% listed their primary occupation as homemaker" (cited in Smith & Helms, 1994, p. 13). Vaughan's (1986) evidence indicated very little career conflict between male presidents and female spouses. "There was no overt evidence of career conflict between female presidents and their male spouses . . . but adjustments were required when the wife became a president and the male spouse was also pursuing a professional career" (p. 13). These adjustments often created stress as a result of maintaining commuter marriages or divorce. Although 3% of male community college presidents were single or divorced in 1986, 17% of the women presidents were single and nearly 31% were divorced and had not remarried.

Jones noted that while the community college world had won her over, another factor influencing her decision not to pursue the possibility of a faculty and department head position at a university centered on her husband's career. "My husband's job, which I respected, pretty much meant we had to live in the small town." Jones' subsequent decision to accept the continuing education position in 2001 was linked to her husband's career flexibility and the couple's desire to relocate to the town in which they both attended college.

Miller's husband had exhibited flexibility and support that allowed her to work long hours and take on the challenge. Still, the road has not been a smooth one. The couple carried the burden of separation due to career differences. "Being a community college president requires 60-plus hours [weekly], so there has to be great support," she commented. Between 2000 and 2002, the couple divorced. Miller pointed out the difference she saw between the role of the spouse of a male president and the role of the spouse of a female president. Even the requirement for entertaining in the home was a critical factor in her decision to accept her current post. If that were a requirement for her presidency, she said, she would not have accepted the job. "He was never an asset to my career," Miller said of her former spouse. "He was never a hindrance, but he was never an asset."

Both women also commented on the need to juggle family and career. Miller remembered a woman administrator with whom she worked who would literally fall asleep during meetings because she was so exhausted. "Women can just get so tired," she said.

During her first year at a new presidency, Miller cared for her mother whose health concerns increased significantly. Her husband was unable and unwilling to care for her mother so she juggled the new post and the caretaker position. During the third year of her presidency, Miller lost a foster son to a work-related accident. The visibility of a woman president, she noted, restricts one's ability to grieve and, more recently and post-divorce, to engage in a social life.

Previous Occupational Experience

Past positions held in and outside of academia also contribute to a woman's opportunities to secure a presidency and success during a presidency. "Some research suggests that women are more likely to enter into administrative career paths that are clustered in the nonacademic areas of student affairs or other university services. . . . These career paths are more likely to be dead-end or to be on ladders which have low ceilings. It is the area of academic affairs that appears to have the most streamlined path to the top of the administrative hierarchy and in which women are less frequently found" (Warner & DeFleur, 1993, p. 8). LeBlanc (1993) noted that in order to advance into leadership posts in academia, women must plan "multi-dimensional career paths."

Jones took a rather philosophical approach to an analysis of her prior positions: "Every job I ever had contributes to my performance." According to Jones, the community college she led in 2000 offered her many opportunities for taking on projects, tasks, responsibilities and leadership. Perhaps the diversity of her positions and responsibilities created this perspective.

"The one event that probably helped me have the confidence to proceed was a temporary interval in the presidency position at [another community college], when there was much turmoil," she explained. "For a brief period, I was the ONLY dean-level administrator there and was acting president for a month or so. I recognized then that the job was within my capacity."

Miller said experience as a high school English teacher and debate coach gave her credibility as a teacher/administrator. She also has experience as a community college adjunct instructor and an adjunct instructor on the university level, teaching speech on the undergraduate level and English and education courses on the graduate level. "These teaching experiences were and are very helpful for I have experience to know how difficult it is to be an excellent teacher," she noted.

She also valued past experience as vice president for instruction at a community college and a post as senior academic officer of a larger college. "I followed a male who had been there over 20 years," she explained. "I was the only female on the top management team; I was the only one who nurtured others. It was a difficult role, but I admired the president who is still there. The faculty and staff union environment was adversarial, and I earned stripes of being 'an administrator.'"

Mentorship

Jones credited a mentoring situation she encountered in college with her success in this job market. A mentor in a humanities field sparked her interest in the discipline and managed to make it personally meaningful to her. "He also showed me how one can maintain normal mental health and still be a consummate artist," she said. "He showed me how to be excellent while keeping both feet and my head (ego) firmly under control. But he did that all by example only. I'm still trying to learn what he taught me."

In addition to this discipline-specific mentor, Jones said she encountered another male mentor who assisted her in learning "the mechanics of administration." Ironically, this mentor at times taught her through negative example, and Jones found herself learning what not to do in certain circumstances. "He encouraged me and supported me as I learned," she explained. "Support is important, but so is teaching."

This same mentor would be mentioned by Jones two years later. As her leadership experience increased, she found that she was called upon to mentor rather than to be mentored.

Still, she found it valuable to “pick and choose pieces and parts of what I see as being very effective leadership.” She indicated that her own supervisor demonstrates vision and is effective at “making people think they have a lot of influence with him.”

Miller experienced a mentor who taught by negative example at times. During her time as senior academic officer, her superior, the president, suggested playing her “cards close to the chest” and refraining from being so “open.” “He also told me that the most important thing for a president to remember is to develop a good working relationship with the board. . . . No matter what faculty and/or staff think of the president, it is the board that hires and fires him or her.”

Many studies and commentaries on women in higher education administration and mentorship have been published. Hackney and Bock (2000) argued that experiences, such as those described by Jones, mimic an old model of mentorship that often excluded women. In other words, Jones, although finding some support resulting from personal relationships in addition to professional collegueship, did not encounter a “culture of mentoring.”

We . . . advocate for an academic organization that is characterized by a more inclusive and egalitarian academic culture—a culture where there is room for multiple voices and ways of knowing; where all members are recognized, validated, and appreciated; and where each individual is enriched and energized as a result. (p. 2)

There is a practical explanation for the difficulty women in this field face in finding mentors. “One of the greatest difficulties is the all too human tendency of members of such networks to choose persons most like themselves as protégés and to overlook or actively exclude newcomers who are different,” explained authors Moore and Amey (1988, p. 45). Bower (1993) echoed this observation and added several factors from contemporary research that lead to a general lack of mentorship of women in administrative positions.

1. Mentor relationships in part arise from social learning that is typically male.
2. The “queen bee” phenomena suggests there is often only room for one outstanding woman in an organization and that each other woman must fight her way to the top in much the same way.
3. Potential sexual aspects of a relationship prevent men from mentoring aspiring women. Potential male mentors may fear being misunderstood by peers.
4. The pattern of revocability which indicates that successful men often do not consider women to be serious about careers. (p. 93)

Regardless of the difficulty of finding a mentor, the benefits of a mentor relationship are undeniable. The protégé acquires an ability to see the bigger picture of a college or university, gains access to special or privileged information, learns basics like how to dress and travel and, most important, acquires critical information on how politics are played out on a campus or issues affecting administration on all levels of governance (pp. 96-97). “Probably the most important benefit of the mentor-protégé relationship is its power for career advancement of the protégé. Some mentors are specific and open about their intentions. . . . Other mentors leave the option open” (p. 97).

Miller, at 22 and a recent baccalaureate, was mentored by a woman who was and still is respected in the field of rhetoric and public address. “She taught me how to evaluate the work of others and how to anticipate the actions of others,” Miller said. “[She] trusted me, confided in me

and helped me become a stronger woman.” The two women developed a relationship that allowed them to become like family. In addition to support for Miller’s initial efforts at publication, her mentor provided opportunities for Miller to win significant and prestigious awards. The personal benefit from the continuing relationship is “unconditional support.” “I learned from her how to mentor others,” Miller concluded.

Miller’s current mentors can be found in the college’s Board of Trustees that she alternately mentors, because she said, the atmosphere is mutually supportive. She finds women models there who exemplify an ability to “press on” and hold an understanding of key issues.

Transitions

Transitioning from a community college to a four-year institution presented Jones with significant challenges. Her post focuses on delivery of instruction through distance education using a combination of technologies—online course management and presentation, videotapes, CD-ROMs, interactive television and instructor rotation from one site to another. The Division of Continuing Education caters to on and off-campus students, but the challenge has been in promoting lifelong learning in the college and increasing student services to the roughly 5,000 students a year, half of whom take courses solely by distance. The division also supports colleges using technology, partners with community colleges in the state, provides training to the military, seeks international partnerships in terms of academic programming and offers its own course management system. She believes in the quality of distance education, notes the absence of strong assessment for traditional classroom learning, and speculates that, should a true “apple to apple” research project be undertaken, distance education would be found more effective.

The transitional challenges for Jones have been cultural. “This sounds like an administrator talking, but one of the things that I’ve dealt with all my life—and it’s even harder here, harder because it’s just a bigger and less mobile institution—is to tell the story of the success of and the need for continuing education more dramatically. The university hasn’t learned the importance of this.” Although the resources at a research university might be greater, she noted, student services are not necessarily geared to the non-traditional student, and she has less contact with the everyday running of the university.

For Miller, the move from one community college to another brought with it increased budget (about 30%) and the culture of a newly emerging community college. The transition also brought with it potential for growth. During the first year of her presidency, she remembers scheduling an appointment in a neighboring community. “I got in my car and gave myself 45 minutes. I was there in seven minutes.” The service area, she noted, was vast. “So the first thing I learned is there are a lot of people here, we should have a lot of students.” The recognition of this has led to an increasing enrollment for the last three years. This is the first fall semester that this community college has experienced a decrease in enrollment, and Miller viewed this as an opportunity to expand student services.

Leadership and Gender

As much as mentorship, leadership styles of male and female higher education leaders has been the subject of research and theories abound on the relationship between types of leaders and gender. Chliwniak (1997) summarized the literature on women’s leadership by saying, “while men are more concerned with systems and rules, women are more concerned with relations and

atmosphere” (p. 2). In a survey of literature conducted from 1984 to 1998, Loughheed (2000) found that “even though women and men believe women can be successful leaders, there remains discrimination against women leaders and questions remain whether or not a woman should be selected as a leader” (p. 6).

Jones described her leadership style succinctly: “My natural and preferred style is developmental and inspirational. When necessary, however, and for short periods of time, I can be directive and authoritarian. However, I do not believe that is effective in the long run, and the confrontations that develop make me very uncomfortable.” Still, the weaknesses that she identified are sometimes reflective of gender-based leadership differences as opposed to actual weaknesses. “I take responsibility for everything that happens,” Jones said, “because I think I should have prevented bad things from happening, even when that is unrealistic.”

Jones had a tendency to take on technical aspects of administration and teaching that should be delegated. She continued to recognize that quality in 2002, although she also said her leadership has evolved in many ways.

I’ve learned to be more comfortable depending on other people to finish projects, and maybe learned how to have input into that process without actually doing it. And that’s hard to learn. I’ve thought many times, I didn’t used to trust people to do a good job, and maybe it was because they didn’t do a good job. Maybe I was getting pretty bad results. And I don’t know who’s changed.

She also admitted to not listening to bosses or subordinates. “I have plenty of vision,” she noted, “and maybe not enough patience. I love my work because I am mission-driven, but I am easily disappointed and sometimes angered when other people display severe character flaws through unethical and unprofessional behavior.”

Jones noted that expectations of men and women in leadership positions are responsible for the resulting characteristics attributed to either sex. “Because people expect certain differences, we’re forced into those roles if we want to be effective leaders,” she said.

In 2000, Miller described her leadership style as “inspirational, democratic and participatory,” all terms attributed to women’s style of leadership. “My basic nature is of kindness, and I try to make others happy. I work very well with talented people who believe community colleges make a difference in the lives of students wanting each to succeed.”

Her assessment in 2002 focused on her personal “openness,” which she viewed as both an asset and a flaw. “When I was at [state] Community College, I gave the board too much information. I told them about my worries. That was stupid.” Still, she said, this characteristic is unchangeable. “What I bring to the table is a great deal of relationship skills, vision and mission.”

She said that as time has passed, she certainly has learned more in terms of content, but her core remains the same. “If I have to change my style because of my job, then I don’t want the job. People, especially faculty and staff, want an authentic person.”

The Politics of Leadership—Faculty, Staff and Trustees

Harrow (1993) noted that “power and the political process are inextricably linked throughout the literature on leadership” (p. 143). Communication skills, the management of power, and the

relationship a community college president has with her board of trustees determines effectiveness of leadership.

Communication as a barrier often arises from perceptions of a male style of communication—authoritarian, assertive—as being more appropriate when it comes to discussion with subordinates. Women are often considered better listeners, better “decoders” of nonverbal expressions and better nonverbal communicators in general. “Women need to be aware of, and even able to, employ either style when the situation demands” (Johnson, 1993, p. 138).

Although Jones did not endorse the concept of inherent barriers to women in higher education, she did “believe that women must be better at everything in order to achieve equal levels of responsibility than men,” adding that “maybe it’s only office politics that we’re not better at, because we are less likely to accept that as a good value to hold.” Another area of higher education politics that Jones found challenging was tenure in the university setting. “I have never in my life understood the culture of tenure,” Jones said. “As a graduate student, nobody ever explained that to me. . . . It’s like being a new immigrant in a new world.”

Miller reported that a change is occurring regarding the politics of community college administration. “I used to believe there were no barriers to women in higher education,” she commented. “Then I began to believe that colleges want strong leaders, and some believe women are too soft. Now I am beginning to believe that colleges are looking for facilitators, not strong authoritative figures. So I am back where I started from several years ago. I believe being a courageous, talented female leader is the best.” During the course of her career, Miller has emphasized the value of unity, “as we all need to speak with one voice and not be seen to be fighting with each other.” Miller said a strong accomplishment in multiple positions “was to show that women are O.K., too, as presidents and as chief academic officers.”

Involvement of faculty in governance is part of communication and politics. Jones noted that

I would like to have a faculty and staff that can and will participate fully and professionally in the internal governance of the college. . . . I would like to be able to demonstrate that our programs and our student learning are superior. If I could do all these things by myself, I would deserve a Nobel peace prize! If I can accomplish them through other people, I will have done my job and earned my pay.

Miller worked to build trust between administration and faculty. “My biggest challenge at work is to help the VPs and deans lead by being open and caring even though in the past an adversarial relationship existed. Our college is small, and we cannot get enrollment growth and become more student centered until we enjoy a nurturing climate.” According to researchers Weisman and Vaughan (1997), the most positive relationships between presidents and boards develops as a result of both parties clearly articulating job duties and expectations of constituencies (Iwanaga, 1998, p. 1). Flexibility in the relationship must exist.

Jones took a realistic approach with her board of trustees. She described it as “pretty good,” yet acknowledged the trauma of working with an elected board.

They still resist adopting a ‘policy governance’ model and, therefore, are occasionally tempted to micro-manage or to react to small amounts of misinformation. But I have kept a lid on most controversies, and they appreciate not being in the negative spotlight. I have also braggled on them and let them share the limelight for the new community services movement.

Jones exhibited the flexibility necessary to work with an elected board, especially a rural board. She concluded working with an appointed board would be better. She has not encountered any great dissension or major conflicts among board members or board members and herself. "But that could change instantly any time," she acknowledged, "and I really fear that. I'm not a very good fighter (I don't enjoy fighting) so I don't know what would happen." Jones inherited the board of her community college following a tempest, so she understood the ramifications of discord.

Community college presidents credit longevity in a position to appointed boards. A former president for 30 years, said [state's] system of appointed local boards that act only as advisory bodies to a state board that is also appointed has been beneficial to his career (Stephens, 1997). Problems with elected boards are not restricted to one gender.

Miller has had the experience of working with both elected and appointed boards of trustees. In 2002 her board was appointed. Miller recounted that she did not see much difference between the two types. "What matters to me is that the members share my belief in the value of community colleges and that they make good decisions."

She acknowledged that a president's relationship with her board is the most important of all relationships. . . . However, I do not follow good advice regarding this relationship; rather, I work harder in my relationship with the faculty, staff, students and community. . . . Handling dissension is not difficult if you know what the problem is and if you have strong board members who will honestly communicate with the president and other board members. . . . Disagreement is good. I like debate and reason [because] decisions are made on behalf of the institution.

In 2002, Miller had to lead union negotiations with a team of administrators with an institutional history of adversarial relationships. Her leadership, she said, was questioned and she was criticized for being "too nice." She entered into negotiations with focused on three issues: the need of the institution to grow, a student-centered environment and mutual harmony. "The only way you could bring harmony to this institution was to forget the past," she noted. The result was a satisfactory three-year contract and a "healing" of the institution. "That was my proudest accomplishment so far," she concluded.

The presidency also calls for faith:

My biggest challenge is to keep my faith in people who work at community colleges. I truly believe our work is a calling and that we must go to great lengths to help encourage, teach and to create more dignity for many of our students. The mission of a community college calls for people who know how important it is for our students to have successful experiences with us, to want to continue learning.

Additional Roles: Institutional Development

Demands of a community college presidency were not restricted to the issues discussed. Whisnaut (1990) noted "as chief executive officer, everything the president is and does directly reflects upon the institution" (p. 10). Budgetary concerns and increasing regulation presented additional challenges. Glass and Jackson (1998) observed that the directors of community

college education dual roles of private fund raiser and development team leader are included in the job descriptions of community college presidents. In fact they concluded “transformational educational leaders are change-oriented, articulate a vision, and gain a sense of direction as they look to the future to determine the needs of their constituencies” (p. 10).

Jones referred to the conflict between the fundraising role and available resources. “We are not able to pay sufficiently to attract top notch, self-directed, experienced staff,” she noted. “An elected board from a relatively poor farming area is not likely to provide additional money. As a developer, I probably cannot be satisfied to lead an institution that will remain static or even decline.” The funding dilemma—accompanied by the lack of potential sources for funding—represented the only point that Jones expressed pessimism.

The pitfalls in private or public funding mechanisms were balanced by a number of successes experienced during Jones’s tenure. The college exhibited enrollment growth and budget relaxation when other colleges nationwide were experiencing equal or declining enrollment. Capital projects, using cash for funding, were completed. Cash funding at the college level comprised more than 15% of the annual expenditure under her leadership. She committed herself to leadership and involvement in the community, building the support base “through aggressive partnerships and community service activities that had never been done before.” She promoted the college as a comprehensive community college.

Miller concentrated on constituency recruitment as a method of developing the institution she headed in 2002. She viewed hiring strong faculty and administrators both as a personal accomplishment and as a contribution. She was especially proud of hiring exceptional teachers and top quality minority administrators. Writing letters of recommendation for students, encouraging faculty to obtain terminal degrees, providing better pay, and grants for better equipment or program improvements were strategies that Miller used to develop resources. Her 2002 election to the board of directors of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) enhanced her presidential image and furthered her institution’s visibility at the national level.

Miller advocated for the Noel/Levitz survey techniques that allowed students to grade their institutions. Miller encouraged colleges to use the results to improve admissions and financial aid. “To me, since affordability and financial aid are valued highly by students, those services should be shining stars for community colleges.” In 2002, Miller turned her attention to developmental programming and assistance to students facing academic probation. She established an endowment fund.

Towards the Future: Looking Back

Vaughan and Weisman (1998) found that community college presidents have held their posts for an average of 7.5 years. Jones does not see herself in the role of a community college president forever. “Actually, in 10 years, I hope I have retired from this profession and entered another, at which I will be amazingly successful, at least in my own mind, because then that’s all that matters.” The measures of success for this woman community college president will not necessarily be related to the college’s progress. “The highest compliment I could pay to a teacher, who was a friend of mine, was that our lives are better because he taught us. I want to be remembered as a good mother. And someone who made a difference for the better.”

Miller said "I hope people remember me for trying very hard to improve their lives at the community college. I want to be remembered as someone who was absolutely passionate about the role of community colleges."

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