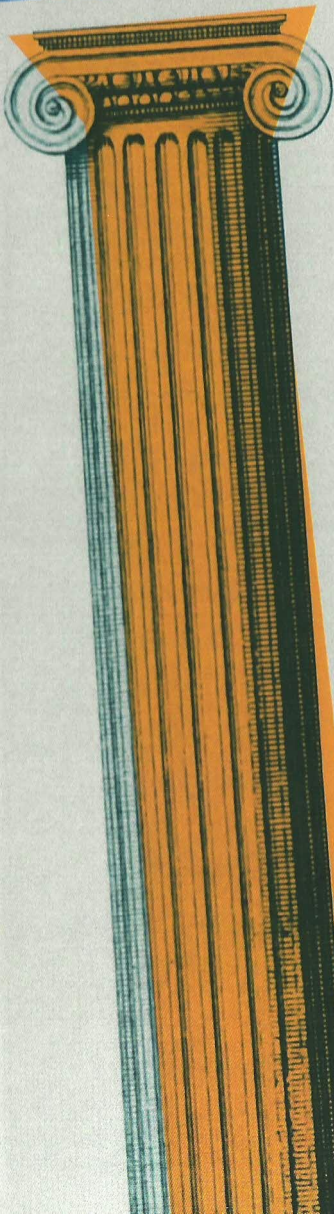
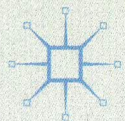


Critical
Approaches
to

**WOMEN and
GENDER**
*in
Higher Education*

Edited by
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Conditions Enabling Women's Leadership in Community Colleges

Amy Martin and KerryAnn O'Meara

As noted in the introduction to this book, despite increases in women's presence at higher education institutions in the aggregate, gendered notions of work and leadership continue to impact their representation in senior level positions at colleges and universities nationally. Both the 2007 and 2012 editions of the *American College President Study* highlight that women are beginning to be more equally represented in senior leadership positions (e.g., chief of staff, chief academic officer, dean, chief diversity officer, provost, senior administrative officer) but not in the college presidency.¹ Women's representation in senior leadership positions also varies based on academic discipline and institutional type, creating a gendered academic labor market.² This dearth of women in higher education presidencies (and variation across discipline and institutional type) is evidence that despite the strong presence of women leaders in higher education, gender discrimination still exists.³ In this chapter, we use a

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multiple frame analysis that includes feminist standpoint theory to examine the intersections of gender, leadership, institutional structures, hiring processes, human resource policies, individual agency and community agency in one state's system of community colleges. The purpose is to (1) present one example of a complex, nuanced framework for researching the gendered nature of organization structures that positions stakeholders at the center of conversation, (2) use the various approaches associated with this framework to examine the gendered nature of on-ramps and off-ramps for women pursuing community college leadership positions and (3) subsequently pose suggestions to higher education leaders, researchers and policy makers about how institutional culture can be challenged to advance inclusion on campus.

Since their inception, community colleges have been situated as institutions where faculty and staff could pursue notions of social equality and increased opportunity in direct response to the mission of more selective research institutions.⁴ Generally, community colleges are considered equitable worksites for women and many build their academic careers in these environments. However, women are still reluctant to consider, and face barriers to pursuing, the presidency in the community college environment. Thus, a lack of gender representation at the highest level of leadership in community colleges remains a nagging reminder that these institutions have yet to enact their pursuit of social equity. However, there is an opportunity to activate on-ramps to the community college presidency for minoritized academic leaders as presidential retirements continue to increase over the next decade. This chapter and study will be used as a platform to examine the relationship between gender and leadership with an eye toward taking advantage of these pending retirements in higher education.

Curious about gender and leadership in Maryland, we conducted a review of leadership positions at community colleges in 2012. Among a variety of interesting gender equity indicators (faculty salaries, tenure, and leadership), we discovered that 56 % of the Maryland community colleges' presidents were women.⁵ This representation in the presidential ranks is much higher than the 33 % of women in community college presidencies nationally.⁶ Additionally, as shown in Table 4.1, the percentage of women presidents in Maryland community colleges has been increasing since 1998 and has been higher than the percentage of women presidents at public associate's institutions nationally since 1998. Given the lack of representation of women in the community college presidency nationally,

Table 4.1 Women Presidents 1998–2012

	<i>Maryland community colleges^a</i>	<i>Public associate's institutions nationally^b</i>	<i>All institutional types nationally^b</i>
1998	22.2 %	22.1 %	19.3 %
2001	36.8 %	27.0 %	21.1 %
2006	41.2 %	29.1 %	23.0 %
2012	56.2 %	33.0 %	26.4 %

Sources: ^aMACC Directories, 2004–2012; Maryland Community College Websites, Directory of County Officials; Maryland Association of Counties

^bCook and Young 2012

we were curious about the potential set of factors that created on-ramps for women who considered and pursued a community college presidency in Maryland.

Something about the environment in Maryland is uniquely positioning women to overcome gendered work norms and expectations of leaders. The percentage of women presidents in Maryland's two-year colleges has been increasing since 1989, and remained above the national average of women presidents in associate's institutions since 1998.⁷ Utilizing feminist standpoint theory⁸ and Bolman and Deal's four organizational frames,⁹ this chapter relies on data from a study that explores the factors that contributed to the comparatively high numbers of women presidents at Maryland community colleges to stimulate a nuanced conversation about gender and leadership in higher education.

Understanding the factors contributing to the higher percentage of women in Maryland community college presidencies using a feminist, multi-frame approach is important for three reasons. First, most studies of women and leadership consider the issue from single vantage points. Using a multi-framed social science approach takes into consideration the unique context of a state's history, geography, politics, economics, and organizational system, and the impact those factors have on community college leaders in that state. Second, most of the previous research about women academic leaders has examined individual women's paths to the presidency, or has been bounded by a single institution. In this study, the case was bounded within a state system (Maryland's 16 community colleges), which will promote discussion about aspects of regional and state governance that encouraged the hiring and promotion of women. Third, much of the previous research about the influence of gendered norms on

women leaders in higher education institutions has focused on the "barriers" women have to overcome to achieve positions such as the presidency. Focusing instead on the practices and conditions that supported women's pursuit of and persistence in top leadership roles in the community colleges in Maryland enables the identification of specific institutional and individual strategies that could be replicated in other states' community colleges. The next section provides an overview of the theoretical framework and specific theories that were employed to guide this case study. This theoretical approach could be replicated or enhanced as a technique that dissects the unique relationship between social constructions of gender, leadership, and the higher education environment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Structural, human resource, political, cultural, and feminist theories or frameworks can be helpful tools in understanding the intricate challenges associated with a lack of gender parity in higher education leadership. When used together, these frameworks highlight multiple possibilities and pathways for change. The following paragraphs outline the key aspects of each approach and how these frameworks were applied in a study of women in the Maryland community college presidency.

Structural Approaches Structural approaches are drawn from management science and sociology. This type of approach tends to emphasize goals, specialized roles, or formal relationships, and leads to the examination of organizational charts, rules, policies, procedures, and hierarchies.¹⁰ Applying this perspective to the issue of women presidencies in two-year institutions specifically, scholars have explored the demographic, pipeline, organizational, and policy-related explanations for this phenomenon.¹¹ For example, scholars have considered such policies as "stop the clock," tenure, family leave policies, affirmative action, sexual harassment, Title IX, and Title VII, and how each of these may have created structures that supported women on their pathways to the presidency.¹²

Human Resource Approaches Human resource approaches are drawn from psychological theories and emphasize the influence of mentoring, networking, and leadership development on the career paths of individuals within organizations.¹³ Applying the human resource perspective to the issue of women presidencies in two-year institutions, scholars have

explored human capital theory, the influence of leadership development programs, mentoring, personal choices, and professional growth.¹⁴ For example, in addition to studying gender and leadership generally, scholars have specifically considered women community college leaders' investment in a terminal degree, attendance of leadership programs, and access to a positive mentor in relationship to their willingness and ability to pursue a presidency.¹⁵

Political Approaches Political approaches are drawn from sociology and political science theory and emphasize the bargaining, negotiation, coercion, compromising, and coalition-building aspects of organizations.¹⁶ Applying this perspective to the issue of women presidencies in two-year institutions, scholars have explored the impact of coalitions, commissions, or unions on women's experiences.¹⁷ For example, scholars have examined the impact of unionization efforts for women full-time and part-time faculty and the role of women's commissions in creating equitable leadership opportunities for women in higher education institutions.¹⁸

Cultural Approaches Cultural approaches are drawn from sociology and anthropology and emphasize the role that values, beliefs, stories, myths, and assumptions play in an organization.¹⁹ Applying this perspective to the issue of women presidencies in two-year institutions, scholars have explored the impact of institutional and social norms on women's experiences in higher education.²⁰ For example, scholars have examined the culture and/or climate for women at community colleges to determine if two-year colleges are equitable worksites for women and places where they have the desire and support for assuming the presidency.²¹

Feminist/Gendered Approaches Feminist approaches tend to uncover the hidden and often inequitable aspects of society and institutions, especially by gender, race, social class and sexuality. Standpoint theorists, such as those from feminist and African American studies, employ the distinctive view of women and women of color within an organization (or culture) to identify barriers and suggest possible interventions that might positively change their environment.²² Applying this perspective to the issue of women presidencies in two-year institutions, scholars have considered the unique circumstances that keep the majority of women and racially minoritized women from pursuing or acquiring leadership positions.²³ For example, scholars have examined the organizational experiences of

women in community colleges by studying the impact of "ideal worker" discourses, gendered leadership norms and the responsibilities of managing family obligations on women's consideration of the presidency.²⁴

In summary, the conceptual framework used for this study included Bolman and Deal's²⁵ four organizational frames, which focus on the structural, political, human resource, and cultural aspects of organizations, as well as feminist standpoint theory.²⁶ The research questions were: (1) what were the factors that contributed to the comparatively high percentage of women community college presidents in Maryland? and (2) how did these factors interact to contribute to the increasing presence of women community college presidents in Maryland? Overall, this multi-pronged framework offers a more holistic approach than had been used before to examine the issue of gender and leadership, specifically that of women in the community college presidency.

RESEARCH METHOD

This multidimensional framework, utilized with a qualitative approach to research, can provide a strong methodological approach that allows us to represent the voices and experiences of the women living gender and leadership in their current roles. To structure this study specifically, a case study was conducted using multiple frames and methodological tools. The case study design provides thick descriptions of a phenomenon, and expands or generalizes theories.²⁷ This approach helps to reveal, in detail, specific factors that influenced Maryland's community college system in this case, and has the potential to uncover influences on gender equity in higher education systems more broadly.

Detailed descriptions of the case and process of inquiry highlight the challenges and considerations that influenced this examination of gender and leadership in Maryland community colleges. First, the collective set of community colleges in Maryland was defined as the 16 community colleges listed on the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MDACC) website.²⁸ However, the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) was officially formed in 1992, and the current set of community colleges, their establishment as the 16 community colleges of Maryland, and subsequent naming was not complete until 2006. Thus, this study takes into account the varying numbers and name changes of colleges between 1989 and 2006 in tallying trends over time. This attention

to overall tallies was important given that tokenism and "tipping point" theorists²⁹ contend that when women make up 35–45 % of a group, their presence in that environment becomes normative. Therefore, data collection focused on the time period directly prior to 2006, when approximately 41 % of Maryland community college presidents were women.

Mertens³⁰ identified several approaches to increasing the credibility of qualitative studies: prolonged and persistent engagement, peer debriefing, member checks, progressive subjectivity, negative case analysis, and triangulation of data. Multiple methods of data collection helped ensure the trustworthiness of this study. Specifically, data collection included 19 semi-structured interviews for approximately one hour in person or by telephone (see Table 4.2). These interviews were also compared with participant curriculum vitae, county- and city-based news articles, and web information to examine the career paths of women community college presidents in Maryland between 1989 and 2012.

Participants included five key informants: current and previous University System of Maryland leaders, a longstanding faculty member at the University of Maryland, and the director of a regional higher education organization. These five participants provided a macro view of Maryland and the higher education system in the state. In addition, they were able to identify the larger societal, human resource, and cultural factors that were influencing the rise in numbers of women community college presidents in the period leading up to 2006.

The next set of interviews was conducted with two previous community college presidents (one from Maryland) and one current Maryland community college president. These individuals had developed and coordinated community college doctoral programs or "grow your own" leadership development programs at several of the community colleges in

Table 4.2 Participants

5	8	2	2	2	19
Maryland Higher Ed System & Maryland Higher Ed Organizational Leaders	Current and Previous Maryland Community College Presidents	Maryland Community College Chief Academic Officers	Maryland Community College Trustees	Community College Search Firm Representatives	Interviews

Source: Martin 2014

Maryland. One of these individuals also served as a community college trustee.

Another set of interviews was conducted with three retired community college presidents who served in Maryland between 1989 and 2006, one longstanding community college president, another current community college president who had been in a chief student services position between 1989 and 2006, and two longstanding community college chief academic officers. This set of interviews provided a micro-level view of leadership in the state. These seven individuals identified the particular policies, practices, and programs that may have influenced the hiring of women community college presidents. They also explained how state, system, and institutional practices contributed to the culture and environment around gender in Maryland community colleges.

The final interviews included two community college trustees and two individuals who work with presidential search firms that hire community college presidents (one was a previous Maryland community college president). These individuals provided perspectives on hiring trends related to women in the presidency nationally and within the state of Maryland.

All participants shared perspectives based on the identities they disclosed in their interviews. These perspectives speak to the importance of using feminist standpoint theory as a framework because they clarified how gender, race, and family status significantly impacted participants' perspectives on the path to the community college presidency and reinforced theoretical hypotheses about the gendered nature of leadership.

The research for this study also included analysis of previously collected Maryland higher education and community college survey data along with trends regarding gender and higher education institutions in Maryland and nationally. Archived news articles (e.g., *Baltimore Sun*, *Washington Post*) were analyzed to discern community college presidential search processes, educational attainment and careers in the Maryland/DC area, community college presidents' personal dual career family stories, the work of the Maryland Commission for Women, and women in the legislature. In addition, community college search firm websites and the AACC website were examined for community college president hiring practices, general search information, and preparatory tools. Next, data was gathered from the Maryland State Archives and online tools to understand the appointments of women community college trustees between 1986 and 2013. Then, Maryland community college websites were reviewed for policies and practices related to gender equity and work-life balance. These data

were triangulated with the Maryland Directory of Community Colleges, Maryland State Employee Data System information provided by MACC, a chart of community college trustees, and a chart of women community college presidents hired in Maryland 1989–2013.³¹

Data analysis also included comparing the size and location of community colleges with: trends in the hiring of women community college presidents, the number of women faculty at each community college over time, the development of family-friendly policies at individual community colleges over time, where and when childcare facilities or programs had been developed, which community colleges had diversity offices and programs, and which community colleges offered gender/women's studies programs. In combination, these types of data assisted the analysis of important trends that might have influenced the increasing number of women community college presidents in Maryland.

The data was analyzed by drawing on Bolman and Deal's³² four organizational frames (structural, human resources, political, cultural) and feminist standpoint theory.³³ Creswell's recommended data analysis process for case studies also guided this research. The process included creating and organizing files, making notes and forming codes, describing context, establishing themes and patterns, interpreting conversations and policies, developing naturalistic generalizations, and then presenting an in-depth picture of the case using narratives, tables, and figures.³⁴ The analysis was conducted using the conceptual frameworks identified for this study but allowed additional concepts to emerge from the data. Essentially, the data analysis was both data- and concept-driven.³⁵

During discussion of the findings and their relevance to a broader conversation about gender and leadership in higher education, there were two limitations of the research design for this study to consider. First, these findings cannot be generalized to other states' community colleges, or community colleges nationally. The study was purposefully designed not to compare Maryland community colleges with other states' community colleges in order to focus data collection on the collective set of women community college presidents in Maryland. However, state-by-state comparisons would help higher education practitioners to better understand the impact of state contexts (state political culture, labor market, educational attainment, state funding formulas, state higher education organization, state level activism and alliances, and geography) on the recruitment and appointment of women into top academic leadership roles and the community college presidency specifically.

In addition, this study did not gather in-depth data on affinity group training and development activities, the agendas set by the affinity groups, and the alliances formed among representatives from the 16 colleges. Focus groups with the members of the various affinity groups would add to understanding the details of MACC as a gendered organization through the collective perspectives of affinity group stakeholders. Adding focus groups as a methodological approach to similar studies could create space to further tease apart perspectives about the constructions of gender within higher education organizations, such as the leadership affinity groups in Maryland.

FINDINGS

The multiple frameworks utilized in this study revealed the gendered and interactive nature of on-ramps for women pursuing community college leadership positions. The high number and increasing presence of women community college presidents in Maryland from 1989 to 2012 was influenced by complex interactions between: (1) Maryland's abundant labor market; (2) leadership development and mentoring opportunities for women community college leaders in Maryland; (3) women's networks and alliances; (4) alternative paths to the community college presidency; (5) Maryland community college trustee membership and training; (6) Maryland women academic leaders' individual agency; and (7) Maryland women leaders' collective agency in changing MACC's culture. These interrelated factors between 1989 and 2006 converged to make Maryland an incubator for identifying and promoting excellent community college women leaders. Each of these factors is considered in the context of this book's challenge to critically examine notions of gender and leadership in higher education.

Maryland's Labor Market Maryland's abundant labor market, educational attainment trends among women, pipeline of women in Maryland community colleges (students, faculty, chief academic officers, trustees), and geography (proximity between community colleges and four-year institutions) proved to be strong structural factors that contributed to the high number and increasing appointments of women community college presidents in Maryland. The fact that 65 % of Maryland women worked outside the home in 1992³⁶ and 23 % had advanced degrees in 1990³⁷ increased the likelihood of Maryland women applicants for community college pres-

idencies in the 1990s. More women in the pipeline with significant work experience meant more women ready for leadership opportunities. This finding enjoins college and university leaders to continue advocating for women's access to education, provide support for their participation in the workforce and encourage women to pursue their doctorates, particularly in those disciplines that lack gender diversity.

Leadership Development and Mentoring In addition to the large numbers of women in Maryland's workforce, national and regional leadership development opportunities (e.g., ACE-NIP, HERS, Lakin Institute,³⁸ MACC affinity groups) along with intentional and pervasive mentoring of women community college leaders at Maryland community colleges were strong human resource factors that directly contributed to the high number of women community college presidents in Maryland, particularly between 1989 and 2006. This finding is important because leaders at the American Association of Community Colleges have found a lack of preparation and overall desire to consider a community college presidency influences the gap between the number of women in the pipeline to the presidency and the percentage of women in the community college presidency.³⁹

Part of the reason why women community college presidents in Maryland were prepared for their positions was due to their participation in leadership development opportunities at the national and state level. Participants hired between 1989 and 2006 noted that those opportunities (e.g., Harvard, HERS, Lakin Institute) had been critical to increasing their confidence and developing the skills necessary to assume a presidency. Several of the participants identified participating in the American Council on Education-National Identification Program (ACE-NIP) as critical to their success. The goal of ACE-NIP (founded in 1977, and now the ACE Women's Network) was to prepare women for academic leadership positions and provide them with support at the state level.⁴⁰ Some of the early women community college presidents in this study noted that the ACE-NIP group in Maryland was active and they were heavily involved with the group. Supporting women's attendance at these types of institutes, including those structured for specific social identity groups (e.g., women, all genders, sexual identity groups, racial and ethnic groups), remains a critical on-ramp to future higher education leadership positions.

At the same time the Maryland ACE-NIP group was active (1990s), the MACC was getting organized and inadvertently created opportunities

at which community college leaders (e.g., affinity groups of presidents, trustees, chief officers) could gather. The geographic proximity between Maryland community colleges facilitated regular meetings among affinity groups. Several Maryland community college presidents and academic leaders in this study identified MACC affinity group meetings as places where they learned how to manage important issues on their campuses and gained other important leadership skills. This type of structure could be replicated through state systems of higher education or organized based on geographic proximity of institutions to provide leaders of all genders with this type of support and learning.

Considerable educational opportunities continued at the individual Maryland community college campuses where men and women presidents intentionally mentored senior officers (CAOs, CSSOs). Mentoring included support for completing a terminal degree, intentional discussions about topics like budget management, job shadowing, representing a president at an MACC affinity group meeting, and small forms of encouragement. Essentially, these findings demonstrate how national, regional and individual human resource approaches can be combined to establish a rich set of development opportunities for emerging higher education leaders broadly and create on-ramps to the presidency for women specifically. Human resource factors in the Maryland study were also enhanced and supported by political factors set in motion during the 1990s.

Women's Networks and Alliances Strong alliances among women legislators, political activists, and higher education leaders between 1989 and 2005 proved to be significant political factors that contributed to the high number and success of women community college leaders in Maryland. Between 1987 and 1992, Maryland women were being elected to congress (Barbara Mikulski, Connie Morella), the first woman community college president in Maryland was hired (1989), and a woman was hired as the first executive director of MACC (1992).⁴¹ Women worked with the Maryland Commission for Women,⁴² MHEC,⁴³ and MACC to create task forces that represented women leaders across the state. These political alignments increased the power and influence of Maryland women. As these alliances formed, and Maryland women organized themselves, they also targeted their advocacy efforts (e.g., family-friendly policies, moving women into higher education leadership positions, advocating for women to be elected to state office, curriculum alignment groups across institutional type).

The women academic leaders and early community college presidents in this study identified these networks and working groups as critical to their support and success in leading Maryland community colleges. Collectively, the Maryland Commission for Women, the Women's Legislative Caucus, MHEC, and MACC created an influential coalition of women who advocated for women's representation in the highest-level positions in Maryland higher education institutions. These findings serve as reminder that broad political activism for people who identify on the gender spectrum remains an important piece of breaking down gendered barriers to leadership in high education.

Alternative Paths and Search Processes Gendered on-ramps to leadership were also bolstered by advocacy for women in all types of educational leadership positions in Maryland. This finding challenges notions of what positions best prepare chief officers (CAOs, CSSOs, CBOs) in community colleges for the presidency. Of the 16 women community college presidents hired at MACC's community colleges, seven had paths to the presidency through the Chief Student Services Officer position or a combination of experiences as community college leaders in academic affairs, student services, or business services.⁴⁴ Maryland community college trustees' willingness to hire community college leaders from non-traditional paths to the presidency, particularly student services, influenced the high number of women presidents by expanding the pool of women in search processes. Specifically, one participant (a current Maryland community college leader) commented that hiring presidents from the pool of chief student services officers increased the likelihood that a woman would be hired because of the larger percentage of women in those positions. Notably, the same participant also contrasted this possibility in community colleges with four-year universities where chief student service officers are rarely considered for the presidency. This approach creates an arguably unnecessary barrier for talented individuals of all genders who have already acquired the skills and abilities necessary to assume a college or university presidency.

Maryland community college trustees took what might be considered another bold step to break down gendered barriers between 1989 and 2007. They hired three women presidents from within their institutions without conducting an external search; two of these women were formerly CSSOs.⁴⁵ According to Weisman, Vaughan, and the ACCC,⁴⁶ about

one-third of community college presidents were hired from within their institutions. Several participants commented that Maryland's community college trustees' approach of conducting internal searches or simply appointing some of the early women community college presidents was a bold move for the time period (two in 1998, one in 2007 after two years of succession planning). Regardless of this approach being categorized as typical or bold, early internal searches certainly helped create a normative environment for hiring women presidents among Maryland community colleges.

In contrast to the national norms in which one in three presidents is hired internally, since 2007, all new presidential hires in Maryland's community colleges were external hires. This finding suggests that both internal and external search approaches may support efforts to move women into the community college presidency. However, in states and higher education institutions lacking a history of women and other minoritized genders in top leadership positions, internal succession planning and hiring may prove critical to obtaining more presidents who identify along the gender spectrum.

Trustee Membership and Training Between 1996 and 2006, another key intersection of gendered on-ramps to community college leadership in Maryland involved the increase of women who were appointed by the governor to community college trusteeships (except at Baltimore City Community College, where trustees are elected). More women trustees arrived at the same time that half of the institutions needed to hire presidents.⁴⁷ During this timeframe, Maryland's community college boards of trustees relied on search firms (sensitive to hiring for diversity) to fill the presidencies. The percentage of women community trustees in Maryland grew from 26% of trustees in 1992 to 29% by 2001, and then jumped to 35% by 2005. During this same period, numbers varied with respect to the representation of women on these boards. For example, a board may have had anywhere from one woman among a group of seven trustees to three women in a group of seven trustees.⁴⁸ Thus, even though the percentage of women representing the hiring officials for community college presidents was growing, men still played a critical role in the hiring of women community college president in Maryland.

Perhaps the level and amount of training the boards went through to increase their competency and credibility as members influenced trustees

of all genders. For example, one participant, who is a current trustee member, explained:

Well, the biggest criticism that I know about boards is that boards are lay-people so they really don't know very much about higher education...[so] we trained. We really did train, because we know and we knew then that the criticism would be that we were a lay board that didn't know much about governance.

This participant felt that progressive boards countered gendered and stereotypical beliefs about the characteristics of effective presidents because they had been exposed to different examples of competent presidents and boards at conferences and MACC affinity meetings. Since many of the women community college presidents who participated in this study did not use traditional male approaches to leadership, training about equitable approaches to search processes likely helped boards of trustees be more open to considering women for the community college presidencies that were open at their institutions.

Additionally, the average term of service for Maryland community college trustees is five to six years, which is longer than the four-year national average.⁴⁹ This longevity meant that community college board members who were involved in hiring women presidents or saw women presidents succeed on other campuses likely stayed in the trusteeship long enough to note those successes and consider them when hiring a new president.

Overall, there were significant numbers of women trustees, well-trained trustees, and stability among the board of trustee members in Maryland between 1996 and 2005. Together, these findings lead to a call for serious examination of higher education governance structures and trustee board training, given their importance in advancing minoritized individuals to leadership positions in higher education. On-going training that breaks down stereotypical notions of leadership could remove critical barriers for leaders of all genders who already have individual agency in regards to pursuing a college or university presidency.

Individual Agency O'Meara, Campbell, and Terosky observe that agency in career advancement takes two forms: perspectives and behaviors.⁵⁰ Maryland women community college presidents and academic leaders in this study exercised agency to overcome gendered challenges. They described specific strategies that they used to balance the needs of their

family with their career aspirations. For example, one of the community college presidents in this study described how she managed the demands of a high-level leadership position and family obligations:

And I said, so even in work, there are peak times and there are times when things are kind of moving slow and good and you don't have to necessarily give, you know, 100 percent. And when I say 100 percent, not that you're not committed to work, but you're not there until all hours of the day and night. You're not there on the weekends. And that's okay. And you can do it and raise a family and raise a family with a good quality of life.

With the support of critical mentors, some of these women pursued their doctoral degrees while raising children and working. Several women in this study also moved their families to Maryland so they could pursue community college leadership positions there. At the same time, these women took on additional assignments or attended events on behalf of their supervisors (community college presidents) so that they could gain the skills necessary to pursue a presidency. In combination, the critical choices the women participants in this study made to pursue their terminal degree and career aspirations, support their families, and stay authentic to who they were as leaders influenced their own acquisition of the community college presidency and provided visible role models for other women community college leaders.

Agency and Culture Change These individual behaviors by women community college academic leaders in Maryland increased their chances of becoming presidents. However, as discussed by Eddy and Ward in Chapter 2, women in this study merged their individual agency to collectively challenge masculine norms and practices present in the leadership culture of Maryland community colleges. These early women presidents collaborated with each other and shared successful leadership and management strategies. Together, they achieved both individual accomplishments in their community college presidencies, and helped support the success of other leaders (men and women).

For example, the collaborative approaches to leadership used by these women presidents created a culture that was attractive to community college leaders across the 16 colleges. Maryland women community college presidents were known for embracing change, practicing inclusion, and

collaborating. One participant described the comprehensive nature of this change:

I think the group of presidents that we have now, thankfully, is so different from 20 years ago. They are passionate. They want to see advancement of everybody. They want to collaborate with others as long as it benefits their students. The change has been just monumental, really, from—not only in Maryland but I know in Maryland—from isolated community colleges, which people who didn't really have training in education in how to be an educational leader, to now it's just extremely strong. We've had an extremely strong group of presidents, I think, for ten years [since 2003].

Participants in this study indicated that there was something culturally unique and progressive about MACC's organizational structure and the interactions within it. The early activism of Maryland women legislators and the unique, collaborative structure of MACC were critical feminist/gendered factors that supported Maryland women community college leaders.⁵¹ These findings suggest that higher education leaders who represent minoritized genders and their advocates should find ways to utilize their collective agency within state systems of higher education (or among a specific group of institutions) to help shape an inclusive environment that embraces change and values multiple perspectives.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The continued struggle for gender equity in higher education presents different challenges across institutional type.⁵² There is evidence that the higher percentage of women presidents at community colleges relative to other institutional types may be an example of a gendered labor market in which women and people of color tend to lead the lower status two-year colleges rather than the more elite four-year research institutions.⁵³ The multi-pronged approach for analyzing the research highlighted in this chapter provided evidence of activities (e.g., leadership development programs, networking opportunities), policies (e.g., search guidelines, affirmative action), and aspects of women's individual and collective agency that contributed to the hiring and promotion of women in the two-year college setting in Maryland specifically. These findings can also contribute to deconstructing broad concepts of gender and leadership to shine a light on specific policies, practices, and actions that support leadership

on-ramps for people of all genders. For each set of findings, we will discuss their relationship to women in the community college sector specifically and then examine those findings as they relate to gender, higher education and leadership more broadly.

First, structural findings from this study imply that states interested in advancing women into community college presidency should focus attention on getting women on community college boards of trustees, providing and promoting dual career hiring opportunities along with family-friendly policies, and providing opportunities for pursuing a doctorate. Although geography and a highly educated women's labor market provided critical structural supports in Maryland, states without these benefits might focus on the visibility and presence of dual career hiring and family-friendly policies, seek opportunities for collaboration with local higher education institutions across institutional type, utilize technology to conduct meetings, and provide leadership development opportunities at individual institutions.

Specifically, participants in this study noted several structured opportunities that brought them together. First, the state legislature mandated that community colleges and universities work together to create seamless transition for two-year colleges' students to transfer to four-year institutions. Women faculty and academic leaders came together in curriculum alignment groups across institution type and this raised the prominence of women working in community colleges. Second, Maryland's women higher education leaders (including community college leaders) also worked on task forces with women legislators from the state such as one on family-friendly policies. Third, women community college leaders (chief officers, presidents, trustees) came together to tackle common challenges in the community college system. In combination, participants noted that these opportunities helped them acquire critical leadership/management skills and boosted their self-confidence. These findings suggest that women in other states may want to consider creating opportunities for state-level networking across institutional type and in partnership with the state legislature. This form of connection may be particularly important for larger higher education institutions with more pervasive tenure systems and formal hiring practices, where fewer people of minoritized genders are in the pipeline to the presidency.⁵⁴ Women's advocacy and political alliances (promoted through the women's state legislators group) can be critical in changing the state environment and promoting

gender equity at higher education institutions in Maryland and in states across the country.

Maryland's community colleges had a strong pool of women in chief officer positions (CAO, CSSO, CFO) between 1989 and 2006, and currently have a strong pool of women chief student services officers.⁵⁵ States lacking such a robust pipeline to the community college presidency could consider expanding search pools to include minoritized leaders from other states. From a feminist standpoint, future research about Maryland community colleges could try to understand MACC's ability to influence the number of people of color and LGBTQ people who successfully pursue and attain community college leadership positions in the state. Other studies could compare the presence of women in leadership positions in other states that are progressive, metropolitan, and labor rich. They could also compare states with similar numbers of community colleges and higher education organization.

Overall, future research about gender and leadership in the community college sector could explore: (1) the role of hiring, training, and appointments of community college trustees in increasing the diversity of community college presidents, (2) differences in the pathway to the presidency and opportunities across institutional type within state systems of higher education, (3) trends in the recruitment and appointment of minoritized individuals to community college leadership positions, (4) the experiences of women community college presidents of color broadly and in Maryland specifically, and (5) the effectiveness and success of community college presidents who assume the presidency through non-traditional pathways.

Grounded in the findings from this research, we recommend that states interested in advancing women into the community college presidency focus attention on (1) expanding search pools to include leaders from student services and business affairs, (2) encouraging community college leaders from minoritized groups to attend local and national leadership institutes, and (3) creating a culture of mentoring within and among community college leaders in the state. Recent attention to evaluating the community college presidency based on student success offers some specific approaches to preparing leaders for the presidency, including: understanding legislative and financial structures, building relationships with industry, building relationships with a diverse set of constituents, and developing and implementing entrepreneurial approaches to raising revenue.⁵⁶

Based on the organizational leadership perspectives gathered in the course of this research, higher education search committees should carefully consider candidates who have not been in a previous presidency to ensure the door to the presidency continues to be open to younger leaders from minoritized groups. Findings from this study also suggest that studying the individual and collective agency among higher education presidents of minoritized groups (along with the structural, human resource, political, and cultural factors that support their agency) could help us understand how to support college leaders who identify along the continuum of gender identity, particularly academic leaders with families.

CONCLUSION

Our hope is that this chapter has contributed to one of the goals of this book, namely to stimulate conversations, research and practice that address the lack of gender diversity in top leadership positions at colleges and universities across institutional type. A multi-framed approach to this research that included feminist standpoint theory facilitated a complex and intricate examination of gender and leadership in a higher education setting. This approach brought forward the critical perspectives of various stakeholders in the study, demonstrating that people of all genders played a part in advancing women leaders to community college presidencies in Maryland. Using a multiple framed approach to continue studying the issue of gender and leadership in higher education could lead to additional understanding of the various intersections between policies, practices, leadership programs, alliances, mentor programs and individual/collective agency as it relates to advancing people from minoritized genders into higher education leadership positions.

This study and other contributions to this book confirm that issues related to gender, race and advancement to the top leadership positions in higher education still fester in our institutions. An anti-deficit approach to studying these challenges enables the identification of on-ramps for women pursuing community college leadership positions and points to potential strategies for other minoritized leaders seeking a college presidency. Most significantly, the higher education leaders of all genders in this study provide a positive example of how institutional culture can be challenged and changed to advance gender inclusion at these institutions.

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Higher Education Policy: Disrupting the Structures that Bind Us

Susan V. Iverson and Elizabeth J. Allan

Policy initiatives, curricular reform, research, and grassroots organizing have all contributed to advancing equity and shaping women's status in US higher education. Significant gains have been made in women's access to and representation in higher education as evidenced by enrollment figures and graduation rates. Women today are more likely than men to complete college and attend graduate school, and they comprise half the American workforce.¹ Yet, these measures are only part of the full gender equity picture. For instance, when taken in aggregate, enrollment data does not portray the persistent lack of gender parity among students studying engineering, computer science, and other science and technology fields; neither does it reflect the persistent wage gap, nor does it depict the quality of classroom and campus experiences.²

The numbers alone (whether aggregated or disaggregated) do not convey how women continue to report working and studying in climates that privilege masculine perspectives, and approaches to organizing and

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