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# Presidential Derailments at Public, Master's Level Institutions: An Examination of the Precipitating Factors and Events

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Julie Diane Longmire entitled "Presidential Derailments at Public, Master's Level Institutions: An Examination of the Precipitating Factors and Events." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Higher Education Administration.

E. Grady Bogue, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Norma T. Mertz, Robert Rider, David Folz

Accepted for the Council:

Dixie L. Thompson

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges  
Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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**Presidential Derailments at Public, Master's Level Institutions: An Examination of the  
Precipitating Factors and Events**

A Dissertation presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy in Education  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Julie D. Longmire  
May 2010

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Patricia B. Longmire, for her love and support throughout my entire life, and my sister and brother, Allison Longmire and Tommy Longmire, for their support and for keeping me humble throughout this entire process.

## Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Grady Bogue, for guiding me through this process. His kind words of encouragement were always tempered with an expectation that I would finish promptly. For that, I am grateful.

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And finally, my heartfelt appreciation goes to the men and women who participated in my study. Without your opinions and assistance, this study would not have been possible. Thank you for your courage and wisdom.

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the factors and events associated with the derailment of presidents at public, Master's level institutions. The research study was guided by three questions:

- 1) What factors are perceived to be associated with the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents?
- 2) What events are perceived to be associated with the derailment of the president?
- 3) What relationship, if any, may be found between derailment factors emerging from previous Center for Creative Leadership research and factors emerging from this study?

Data were collected from 19 in-depth interviews of current presidents, board members, faculty members, and vice presidents who were familiar with the derailed president. Field notes, media accounts of the derailment, and board minutes also served as sources of data. Findings of this study supported three of the enduring themes of derailment stemming from the Center for Creative Leadership's research. Those include: failure to build and lead a team, problems with interpersonal relationships, and failure to understand and value the institutional culture (inability to change or adapt during a transition). Three unique factors emerged: failure to communicate effectively, the inability to work with key constituencies, and ethical failures. These findings suggest that college presidents must take time to understand and value the mission of the institution that they serve, as well as work hard to maintain effective communication with key

constituency groups so if problems arise he or she will have social capital to draw on and help them avoid derailment. Implications for practice and recommendations for future research are discussed.

## Contents

Chapter I.....	1
Introduction to the Study .....	1
Context of the Study .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study .....	5
Research Questions.....	5
Conceptual Framework.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	6
Limitations of the Study.....	8
Delimitations of the Study .....	8
Definitions.....	9
Organization of the Study .....	9
Chapter II .....	10
Review of the Literature .....	10
Introduction.....	10
Leadership Effectiveness .....	10
Ineffective Leadership .....	24
Executive Derailment in the For-Profit Business Sector .....	27
Executive Derailment in the Non-Profit Sector .....	37
Conceptual Framework.....	42
Summary.....	43
Chapter III.....	45
Research Design and Methodology .....	45
Introduction.....	45
Research Design.....	45
Research Sites and Population .....	47
Research Methods/ Sources of Data .....	50
Data Collection Procedures.....	52
Data Analysis .....	54
Trustworthiness of Data.....	56
Chapter IV.....	59
Presentation of the Findings.....	59
Results.....	60
Case Study 1 - University A .....	60
The university environment. ....	60
Derailment themes. ....	61
Derailment theme 1.....	61
Derailment theme 2.....	63
Derailment theme 3.....	67
Events leading to the presidential derailment. ....	70
Derailment event 1.....	70
Derailment event 2.....	71

Derailment event 3.....	73
Summary of derailment themes and events for University A.....	74
Case Study 2 - University B profile.....	74
The university environment.....	74
Derailment themes.....	75
Derailment theme 1.....	75
Derailment theme 2.....	78
Derailment theme 3.....	80
Derailment theme 4.....	83
Events leading to the derailment.....	87
Derailment event 1.....	87
Derailment event 2.....	87
Derailment event 3.....	88
Derailment event 4.....	89
Summary of derailment themes and events for University B.....	91
Case Study 3 – University C.....	91
The university environment.....	91
Derailment themes.....	92
Derailment theme 1.....	92
Derailment theme 2.....	97
Derailment theme 3.....	98
Derailment theme 4.....	101
Events leading to the derailment.....	103
Derailment event 1.....	103
Summary of derailment themes and events for University C.....	107
Case Study 4 – University D.....	107
University profile.....	107
Derailment themes.....	107
Derailment theme 1.....	108
Derailment theme 2.....	109
Derailment theme 3.....	114
Derailment theme 4.....	116
Derailment theme 5.....	119
Events leading to the derailment.....	121
Derailment event 1.....	121
Derailment event 2.....	122
Derailment event 3.....	123
Derailment event 4.....	124
Summary of derailment themes and events for University D.....	125
Cross Case Analysis.....	125
Derailment Themes across Cases.....	125
Failure to understand and value the institutional culture.....	126
Inability to work with key constituencies.....	126
Failure to build and lead a team.....	126

Lack of effective communication skills.....	126
Problems with interpersonal relationships.....	127
Ethical failures.....	127
Analysis of Events that Led to Presidential Derailments.....	127
Relationship between Corporate Derailment Themes and University Derailment Themes ...	130
Chapter V .....	133
Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations .....	133
Summary of the Findings.....	134
Derailment Themes of Public, Master’s Level Institutions .....	134
Failure to understand and value the institutional culture (Inability to change or adapt during a transition).....	134
Inability to work with key constituencies.....	135
Failure to build and lead a team.....	135
Lack of effective communication skills.....	135
Problems with interpersonal relationships.....	135
Ethical failures.....	135
Events Leading to the Derailment of Public, Master’s Level Presidents .....	136
The Relationship between the Factors of Derailment of Public, Master’s Level Presidents and the Four Enduring Themes of Leadership Derailment .....	137
Discussion .....	138
Presidential Derailment Themes and the Conceptual Framework.....	138
Methodological Considerations .....	142
Conclusions.....	144
Implications for Practice .....	145
Board of trustees/ State governing boards.....	145
Sitting college presidents and aspiring college presidents.....	145
Recommendations for Future Research .....	146
References.....	148
APPENDICES .....	157
APPENDIX A.....	158
APPENDIX B .....	160
APPENDIX C .....	161
APPENDIX D.....	162
THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE .....	162
Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects.....	162
APPENDIX E .....	168
VITA .....	171

## Chapter I

### Introduction to the Study

The crisis of leadership in our institutions and government is in many ways the most urgent and dangerous threat facing the world today because it is insufficiently recognized and little understood.

Warren Bennis 1996

### Context of the Study

Over the last decade, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and other major news sources have been filled with the headlines and stories of college presidents that have either non-voluntarily stepped down from their positions or been fired by the board of trustees from their respective institutions. In June of 2006, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* went to press with a story entitled “Crisis of Confidence: Three current and former presidents discuss the recent spate of failures at the top” (Fain, 2006). Not three months later, another article in the same publication was released with a headline that read “Spate of Failures at the Top Grows, With Three More Presidents Ousted” (Ashburn, Leubsdorf, & Strout, 2006).

One can hardly pick up a newspaper or watch a news show without hearing about a president of a university that has taken some action that will ultimately lead to his or her abrupt, and usually non-voluntary, departure from the university. These derailed presidents were all approved by the board of trustees at their respective institutions before accepting the presidential appointment. Given that governing boards saw initial promise in these presidents, what transpires between the time presidents take office and their non-voluntary departure? What factors contributed to this crisis of confidence and the derailment of these once promising presidents?

These often abrupt, non-voluntary turnovers are what the business literature defines as derailment. For the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) studies, a derailed executive or manager was defined as one that either “leaves the organization nonvoluntarily...or is plateaued as a result of a perceived lack of fit between personal characteristics and skills and the demands of the job” (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 1). Researchers at the Center for Creative Leadership have been studying executive derailment for the past three decades in an effort to understand the detrimental effects of derailment in the for-profit business sector (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). For the purpose of this study, derailment will specifically be defined as college or university presidents that leave involuntarily within five years of taking office.

Since leading scholars have concluded that leaders’ behaviors, skills, and characteristics do matter (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hambrick & Mason, 1984) and that short-term leadership can have damaging effects on an organization (Basinger, 2005), how can the people who select leaders of higher education institutions equip themselves with the knowledge that will assist them in selecting candidates that will provide the institution with long-term, effective leadership? One way that search committees and boards of trustees can equip themselves would be to understand the factors that have led to the derailment of other college and university presidents. It can be reasoned that derailment behaviors can be avoided if they can be identified (Lombardo & Eichinger, 1992). Thus research identifying factors associated with college and university presidential derailment could deter derailment and save the institution considerable time and resources.

In the last two decades, there have been a growing number of college and university presidents that have failed to act as effective leaders within their organization, and as a result

have derailed from their leadership posts. Bogue (1994) suggested that many university presidents have fallen victim to their unethical behavior and loss of moral ideals. However, little is known about the causal factors that have preceded the derailment of these presidents (Bogue, 1994). Furthermore, there appears to be little research that could serve as a reference or guide to incoming presidents, search committees, and boards of trustees that would assist them in identifying the factors that lead to the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents.

Derailment research has largely focused on the corporate sector. In fact, the research was originally initiated in an effort to save businesses time and money when training and promoting leaders (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). The “enduring derailment themes” are problems with interpersonal relationships, an inability to meet business objectives, a failure to build and lead a team, and an inability to change or adapt during a transition (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 16; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). Much of this research has focused on individual executives or managers who are progressing toward top leadership positions and derailed, as opposed to focusing on leaders that have reached the pinnacle of the organization and then derailed (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Lombardo, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1988). Since the majority of the corporate studies on derailment have focused on managers who are on their way to the top position in the organization, the question remains whether or not the same factors that are associated with the rising managers' derailment are associated with leaders who have derailed once they reached the apex of the organization.

Within the non-profit literature, there has been little research conducted related to derailment (Calabrese & Roberts, 2001). Some research has been conducted on the derailment

of CEOs of hospitals and it was found that the factor most likely to lead to derailment was the executive's inability to adapt to organizational changes (Morrison, White, & Velsor, 1987).

Specifically in the education arena, there has been one study conducted on the derailment of superintendents in K-12 education (Calabrese & Roberts, 2001). Calabrese and Roberts (2001) studied over 50 cases of schools leaders who derailed and found that one theme emerged. The prevalent theme that emerged was that the school leaders lacked character (Calabrese & Roberts, 2001). Lacking character in this study manifested itself by the leader's actions, "at some point in the derailed school leader's career, he/she made the decision to place self-interest above the interests of the group and in so doing violated the basic principle of mutuality" (Calabrese & Roberts, 2001, p. 274). While there has been no research conducted on derailment within higher education, this sentiment is also echoed by Bogue's (1994) anecdotal evidence when he states that "it is almost impossible to read a single week of the *Chronicle* without finding a record of college leaders betraying personal, professional, and public trust" (p. xii). However, there has been no research that supports this assertion and there have been no studies that have specifically looked at derailed presidents within the context of higher education (Bogue, 1994).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Bornstein (2003) challenged trustees and others who select institutional leaders to be cautious of failures, such as a president's abrupt departure, and advised "if trustees assessed ahead of time the psychic, planning, fund-raising, reputation, and financial costs of frequent searches and leadership changes, they might work harder to make their presidents successful" (p. 4). Indeed the costs of such leadership failures are high and the topic of leadership derailment

within higher education is worthy of study. Therefore, research in the higher education field might investigate the factors related to the derailment of college and university presidents to ascertain whether or not the factors associated with derailment of for-profit managers and executives apply in this setting.

The factors that have been found to be associated with derailment of managers on their way to the CEO position in the for-profit business sector include the inability to build a team, the inability to meet business objectives, problems with interpersonal relationships, and an inability to change or adapt during a transition (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). However, it is not known whether these same themes are applicable to derailed presidents in higher education settings (Bogue, 1994). It is important that we begin to understand the factors associated with the derailment of individuals at the top of the organization to see if the same themes apply or if new themes emerge that are specific to the presidential position and/ or the higher education setting.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors and events associated with the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by three research questions:

- 1) What factors are perceived to be associated with the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents?
- 2) What events are perceived to be associated with the derailment of the president?

- 3) What relationship, if any, may be found between derailment factors emerging from previous Center for Creative Leadership research and factors emerging from this study?

### **Conceptual Framework**

As formulated by researchers at the Center for Creative Leadership, the conceptual framework that was used to frame and guide the study is executive derailment. Throughout the last two decades and across cultures, researchers have found that four common themes occur in all of the derailment research. The “enduring derailment themes” are problems with interpersonal relationships, an inability to meet business objectives, a failure to build and lead a team, and an inability to change or adapt during a transition (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 16; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). These themes will be explored in detail in Chapter Two.

These derailment themes provide an overview of what is known in the for-profit study of derailment. Due to the scarcity of research related to derailment outside of the for-profit sector, an exploratory descriptive study of the phenomena is most appropriate. This study explored the factors and events associated with presidential derailments at public, Master’s level higher education institutions to see if the findings are applicable to the themes of derailment that have been previously identified by the Center for Creative Leadership.

### **Significance of the Study**

Derailment has yet to be researched in higher education settings, and as such this research serves as an initial look at the factors which are associated with the derailment of public, comprehensive college and university presidents. By exploring the factors associated with

presidential derailment at public, Master's level colleges and universities, this study begins to build a literature on presidential derailment in public, Master's level colleges that currently is not present. Since little is known about what causes the derailment of college and university presidents, this study adds to the knowledge base as well as serve as a reference for both current presidents and those who aspire to be presidents, as well as boards of trustees as they hire presidents.

Boards of trustees will benefit from this study because it will give them a set of factors that have been identified to be associated with presidential derailment which they can be mindful of when interviewing a presidential candidate, as well as guide them in monitoring a new president's behaviors and actions to safeguard against derailment. By using the findings of this study as a cautionary tale, boards of trustees could make better choices regarding who is given the presidency and ultimately save the state and taxpayers valuable dollars by only engaging in presidential searches which will produce viable, long-term presidents. Given that this research will look at publicly funded Master's level colleges, the taxpayers and legislators will also indirectly benefit from this study.

Another key group that could benefit from this study would be presidents of public, Master's level colleges or those people who aspire to be presidents. The findings could provide an insightful look at the actions and behaviors of presidents, who despite their early success and seemingly bright future, derailed. Understanding and acknowledging the behaviors and events that led to the derailment of these individuals could provide a good lesson on things to avoid.

In addition to aiding boards of trustees, current and aspiring presidents, this study will extend the existing research on derailment. While the majority of existing research in the

derailment field has focused on executives and managers working toward CEO positions (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995), this study will extend the existing research by focusing on leaders that have derailed when they are at the pinnacle of the organization. This study not only sought to determine the applicability of the derailment framework as established by the Center for Creative Leadership to the field of higher education, but also to the derailment of leaders at the top of the organization.

### **Limitations of the Study**

As with all research, the present study had limitations. One limitation of this study was that research was conducted on events that occurred in the past. Thus participants' memories and interpretations of the president's actions and behaviors could have been clouded by the amount of time that had passed since the derailment.

Another limitation of this study was the use of a qualitative approach to the study. In using a qualitative approach to the study of presidential derailment at public, Master's level institutions, the breadth of the study has been limited in favor of depth of understanding. Thus, the findings of the study may be limited in their applicability.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

A delimitation of the study was the sample of four derailed presidents of public, Master's level colleges. Thus, the findings relate to the derailment of these presidents and may not be applicable to derailments at all public, Master's level colleges or other types of universities and colleges.

### **Definitions**

Master's level colleges – For the purposes of this study, Master's level colleges will be limited to public colleges or universities that meet the Carnegie Classification of Master's level (Comprehensive) Colleges and Universities I and II. “The institutions typically offer a wide range of baccalaureate programs, and they are committed to graduate education through the master's degree” (Carnegie Foundation, 2007).

Derailment – For the purposes of this study, derailment will specifically be defined as college or university presidents who leave involuntarily within five years of taking office.

### **Organization of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one establishes the importance of effective leadership, the theoretical framework of derailment, the role that leadership effectiveness plays in presidents within the field of higher education, the purpose of the study, the research questions guiding the study, and the significance of the study. Chapter two provides a critical review of the research and literature on effective leadership, the nature of the presidency in American higher education, and derailment within the business sector as well as the non-profit sector. Chapter three describes the methods and procedures used in the conduct of the study, including the design, population, and methods and procedures used to collect and analyze the data. Chapter four presents the findings of the study. Chapter five offers readers a review of the study, a summary and discussion of the findings of the study in relation to the literature review in Chapter two, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of the present study was to explore the factors and events associated with the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents. This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature and is divided into five main sections. First, a brief review of the concept of leadership effectiveness in the for-profit sector and the non-profit sector is explored. Second is a brief discussion of ineffective leadership. Next, the literature related to the theory of executive derailment in the business sector is examined. In the fourth section, the literature on derailment within the non-profit sector is explored. The conceptual framework that will be utilized in this study is explored in the fifth section. And finally, a summary of the chapter is presented that will highlight the relevant literature and address the gaps in the knowledge related to presidential derailment in higher education.

#### **Leadership Effectiveness**

What makes a leader effective and/or the behaviors and concepts that define effective leadership are some of the most widely debated and researched topics in the business and leadership literature (Bass, 2008; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). In fact, the 2008 edition of *The Bass Handbook of Leadership* offered a thorough review on the concept of leadership and featured over 9,400 books, articles and presentations on the topic (Bass, 2008). Executive leaders do make a difference in the organization (Bass, 2008; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990, 1996;

Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Judge, 1999; Zaccaro, 1996). Specifically, this literature review focused on studies which examined executive leadership effectiveness. Studies that examined the leadership effectiveness of senior executives were important to evaluate because of the focus of this study on leadership at the top of the university, the president. Senior executives must develop a broad skill set in order to be effective (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990, 1996; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994; Judge, 1999; Zaccaro, 1996).

Leading scholars have provided useful theories about the characteristics of effective leaders. Gardner and Schermerhorn (1992) stated that leaders must possess cognitive complexity, self-efficacy, and a strong power motive. Effective leaders must also possess the capacity to learn, the capacity to change, and managerial wisdom (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). Leadership is an evolving process that requires the leader to be open, reflective and trustworthy (Aviolo, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Aviolo, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, and May (2004) proposed that authentic leadership, that is, leaders “who have achieved high levels of authenticity in that they know who they are, what they believe and value, and they act upon those values and belief while transparently interacting with others” is one way to achieve effectiveness (p.802). Leaders who can inspire others and exhibit ethical standards are also deemed to be effective leaders (Barnard, 1938; Boatright, 1988; Morgan, 1993; Mortensen, Smith, & Cavanagh, 1989; Hitt, 1990). A combination of factors is essential to effective leadership. Hitt (1990) said “...integrity is necessary but not sufficient. It must be combined with competence, vision, and enthusiasm to ‘lead to’ effective leadership” (p. 212). Effective leaders are ones who set the course of action for the organization, shape the culture and value

system of an organization, achieve the goals, objectives, and purpose of the organization, and are responsible for rewarding employees for meeting those objectives (Barach & Eckhardt, 1996).

Zaccaro (1996) conducted a full scale investigation into the for-profit literature on executive effectiveness in order to develop materials for executive development and training within the U.S. Army. He summarized the for-profit literature on effective leadership that compared the abilities of executives with those of lower level managers and supervisors and found that executives exceeded those in lower levels in the following areas: intelligence, creative potential, creative thinking, intuition, intuitive thinking, problem management skills, toleration of ambiguity, and in dealing with anxiety. Three traits were found to assist executives: their career experience, relevant education, and their functional background (Zaccaro, 1996). Effective executives were found to be able to deal with cognitive complexity, were risk takers, were self-efficacious, and had a desire to achieve. From this synthesis of research, Zaccaro asserted that effective executives needed to develop the following: conceptual capacity, so that they could deal with issues of cognitive complexity, i.e. ill defined and novel problems; behavioral complexity, as manifested through the ability to enact different and sometimes opposing roles; and social complexity, the ability to relate to and interact with subordinates and constituents from different cooperating and competing groups.

Javidan (1992) surveyed the immediate subordinates of more than 500 middle, upper middle and senior executives to determine what factors made the senior executives effective. The effective senior executives were viewed as dedicated and resolute visionaries who could motivate their subordinates, concerned coaches who maintained contact with their employees,

recognized the accomplishments of people within the organization, and were viewed as good representatives outside of the organization.

Tait (1996) conducted 18 in-depth interviews with experienced business leaders. Two groups of business leaders were interviewed: those who had more than 10 years of executive management experience and those who had 5 years or less of experience. The leaders were asked to reflect on their experiences and discuss the qualities and skills they felt were necessary to being effective leaders. The qualities found to be most critical for effective leadership included vision, people skills, character and drive. Specifically, the interviewees thought that the ability to make sense of complicated patterns of events, the ability to extract clear goals for the organization, and the ability to take independent and unpopular action were essential to effective leadership.

Studying leadership effectiveness has been one the main objectives of the Center for Creative Leadership. Out of this research, there have been studies of both effective leaders as well as leaders who have derailed. McCall and Lombardo (1983) investigated effective leadership by studying the careers of 40 Fortune 500 company executives. Interviews were conducted with senior executives and senior human resources professionals in three U.S. industrial organizations. Participants were asked to describe the career paths of someone who had successfully made it to the organization and another person who showed early promise, but later derailed from a top management position. The interviews produced 40 case studies, 20 focused on success and 20 on derailment. Successful, effective leaders had more diverse work experiences, and demonstrated the ability to handle mistakes effectively, the ability to work with all types of people, and the capacity for problem-solving (McCall & Lombardo, 1983).

Lombardo and Eichinger (1992) identified 16 leadership effectiveness factors: the ability to put people at ease, a capacity toward self-awareness, the capability to act with flexibility, the ability to be resourceful, the attitude of doing whatever it takes, the capacity of being a quick study, the ability to act with decisiveness, the competence to lead subordinates, the ability to create a developmental climate, the propensity toward confronting problem subordinates, an inclination toward the team orientation, the desire to hire a talented staff, the ability to build and mend relationships, the capacity toward being compassionate and sensitive, the inclination toward being steadfast and composed, and the achievement of a balance between personal life and work. In an effort to promote leadership training and to produce training programs on effective leadership, research from the Center for Creative Leadership has also focused on ineffective leaders, or leadership derailment, and those studies will be examined in a later section.

All of the previous studies focused on the for-profit business sector; however, it is also important to examine what is known about leadership effectiveness in the non-profit sector. Hall (1994) conducted an extensive literature review on studies that focus on leadership effectiveness in non-profit organizations. She found over 70 themes that were critical to effective non-profit leadership. Several of the themes were identical to those that are found in the for-profit literature; nonetheless, twelve unique requirements for effective non-profit leadership emerged. Those unique requirements include: 1) a deep commitment to the organization and a passion for achieving its goals; 2) an understanding and commitment to the unique traditions and role of the non-profit sector; 3) a commitment to the common good and practicing what is preached; 4) knowing what and how to make quantitative and qualitative evaluations of the organization's performance; 5) building an organization that cares about people and the clients it serves; 6)

understanding the clients' needs and serving as an advocate for them; 7) developing the knowledge, commitment, and skills of the board; 8) recruiting, managing, and developing dedicated volunteers; 9) understanding the public policy making processes; 10) building community relations to facilitate cooperation with other public and private organizations; 11) understanding how to use the media and maintaining good public relations; and 12) understanding the fundraising process and working effectively with funding sources (Hall, 1994).

Leadership effectiveness is central to the topic of this study. One cannot begin to explore the causal factors related to leadership derailment without first exploring the notion of what it means to be an effective leader. To delve further into the concept of leadership effectiveness as it relates to the present study, it is also necessary to explore leadership effectiveness in the higher education field.

Effective leadership in higher education is important to sustaining viable, healthy institutions. In *The Effective College President*, Fisher, Tack, and Wheeler (1988) asserted that there was a problem in higher education with ineffective presidential leadership and that effective presidents were critical to ensuring that higher education was to have a thriving future in the educational landscape. Fisher, et al. asked 485 people considered to be experts on higher education to submit the names of five people whom they considered to be the most effective college presidents. The 485 experts in higher education were current presidents, leaders of funding organizations, heads of national higher education professional associations, and scholars of the presidency. Two hundred and twenty-two experts responded and identified 412 effective presidents out of a possible 3,300 presidents.

Then, the researchers asked the 412 effective presidents along with a random sample of 412 representative presidents to complete a 15-minute questionnaire called The Fisher/ Tack Effective Leadership Inventory. Participants did not know whether they had been nominated as effective or whether they were in the representative sample. The survey was created by the researchers to aid in identifying the distinguishing characteristics of effective college presidents. It began with 109 statements that inquired about a range of topics including the use of power to social relationships. The survey was distributed to a stratified random sample of 400 college presidents. The initial round of survey participants elicited 256 responses. From those responses, researchers sought to reduce the total number of statements to 40, by eliminating statements based on responses from participants who said questions were confusing or ambiguous, and then factor analysis was used to reduce it to 40 statements about five factors: management style index (18 statements), human relations index (8 statements), social reference index (7 statements), image index (4 statements), and the confidence index (3 items). Demographic data included information about degrees earned, previous experience, scholarly activity, age, sex, race, marital status, political affiliation, and mother's and father's education. In the effective category, 312 presidents, or 76%, responded, and in the representative category, 303 presidents, or 74% responded.

After the initial survey was distributed, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 18 of the people who were identified to be effective presidents in an effort to produce a comprehensive view of effective leadership in higher education. The 18 interviewees were chosen because they were among those who were most frequently nominated in the four sectors of higher education (2 year, 4 year, public, and private institutions). Fisher, et al. (1988) found

the presidents who were identified as effective were different from those presidents in the representative sample.

Fisher, et al. (1988) found several characteristics which the effective presidents had in common. Effective presidents were found to be less collegial and more distant, less spontaneous with their speech and actions, more confident, more inclined to take calculated risks, and more committed to an ideal or a vision rather than to an institution, more inclined to rely on gaining respect than on being liked among others (Fisher, et al., 1988). Fisher, et al. also concluded that the traditional prototype of the college president was not found to be apparent in those people who were identified to be most effective. Effective presidents were found to be “strong, action-oriented visionaries who acted out of a kind of educated intuition” (Fisher, et al., 1988, p. ix). Fisher, et al. likened these effective presidents to be more like executives within the business sector.

Building on the literature related to effective leadership, Fisher et al. (1988) developed a list of characteristics that constituted an effective president. Effective collegiate leadership requires a leader who:

- possesses a vision, leaders must have some creative ideas about where their organization should be going and be able to communicate that vision to people;
- enjoys a high level of energy, presidents must be willing to endure and enjoy the long hours that come with being a college president; visibility, presidents need to be seen around the university, the community and the state for which they work;
- relates well to others, effective leaders must be able to work well with a diverse constituency;

- promotes respect and admiration, they understand the importance of respecting themselves, the position and other people;
- possesses the willingness to be bold decision makers, these presidents possess courage and conviction and will not shy away from making bold decisions if needed;
- utilizes power well, effective leaders must be comfortable with exercising power; possess a positive self-image, leaders must believe in themselves and their ability to perform well;
- displays a trusting attitude and develops trustworthiness, leaders must exhibit integrity and be able to trust their constituents;
- enjoys a sense of humor, leaders must be able to portray a sense of optimism;
- considers shared governance to be crucial, however, they also understand the importance of being the leader, they have to understand the politics involved in leadership and possess the ability to negotiate;
- believes in the underlying goals of the organization, must understand the importance of the institution and its mission as well as the process of the academy; the organization is the leader, the leader is the critical determinant of success or failure within the organization (Fisher, et al., 1988).

Bogue (1994), in *Leadership by Design*, reflected on his ten years of service as a university president and offered ten measures of collegiate leadership effectiveness:

- the longevity of service, leaders must be willing to build long-term relationships and goals to achieve desired outcomes;

- the fulfillment of the goals and mission of the university;
- the creation of an organizational environment that promotes integrity;
- the improvement of campus diversity;
- the satisfaction of the various constituents;
- the commitment to providing opportunities for the growth and development of one's colleagues and staff;
- the operation of the presidency and university in the context of cultural, political, and economic climate of the environment;
- the obligation to continuous personal growth, learning from one's own leadership mistakes;
- the personal reflection of the leader which requires that leader to examine his or her own conscience; and
- the commitment to ethical behavior and preservation of personal integrity.

One measure of the effectiveness of college presidents is constituent satisfaction (Bogue, 1994; Bornstein, 2003). Constituent satisfaction can be measured by surveys or ratings, by the accolades that a leader receives, or by a lack of negative outcry from the constituents themselves. College presidents must learn to effectively manage the relationships with their various stakeholders to carry out their vision for the campus they lead (Bogue, 1994; Bornstein, 2003). Collegiate presidents have the challenge of meeting the needs and desires of several different constituencies. In fact, Bogue (1994) called this responsibility to multiple stakeholders one of the unique factors of higher education leadership. Each constituency will judge the effectiveness of the president (Bogue, 1994; Benismon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989). Bornstein (2003)

illuminated the idea that the constituents can have different perspectives on the effectiveness of a president and that often times faculty were the most difficult group within which to establish legitimacy.

Six main constituencies of a president emerge: the students, the staff, the faculty, the governing board, political officials, and the public. Birnbaum (1989) surveyed full-time faculty at 93 colleges and universities in 1968-1970 and surveyed a similar sample in 1980-1981 to inquire about the effectiveness of the president at their institution. The Institutional Functioning Inventory contained 11 different scales on faculty perceptions of organizational culture. Faculty believed that effective college presidents must have a high level of technical competence, an understanding of the nature of higher education and the culture of their particular institution, and the necessary skills to interact with various constituencies (Birnbaum, 1989). Again, each of these stakeholders will at some point gauge the effectiveness of the president and the president must be cognizant of each party when making decisions. University presidents seemingly need to be all things to all people. In sum, Fisher (1984) defined an effective president as someone who possesses “a strong drive for responsibility, vigor, persistence, a willingness to take chances, originality, ability to delegate, humor, initiative in social situations, fairness, self-confidence, decisiveness, sense of identity, personal style, capacity to organize, a willingness to act or boldness...” (p. 36).

One constituency that is important to all presidents is the governing board or trustees of the institution. Michael, Schwartz, and Balraj (2001) surveyed trustees and presidents of accredited institutions in one Midwestern state to identify factors that trustees perceive to be indicative of presidential effectiveness. From the data, the researchers developed a list of four

indicators of successful university presidents: knowledge of the higher education culture and context, an influence that helps to attract resources, a healthy relationship with the board chairperson and faculty, and effective management skills, such as level of academic leadership, vision of a long-term plan, knowledge of budget, and the overall management of the institution (Michael, Schwartz, and Balraj, 2001).

Bornstein (2003) opined that university leaders must be not only be effective leaders, but they must also develop legitimacy within their presidency. According to Bornstein, in the “process of gaining legitimacy, presidents develop relationships of trust and influence that build the social capital essential to strengthening and transforming institutions” (p. xi). Bornstein conducted in-depth interviews with thirteen sitting and retired presidents to study how presidents establish legitimacy. Surveys were also sent out to 377 randomly selected presidents in an effort to develop a broader insight. Based on her research, Bornstein established an analytical construct of the factors in establishing legitimacy as a president:

- Individual – incumbent’s personal background (career paths and identity characteristics);
- Institutional – the internal structural and cultural context (presidential selection and transition processes, governance, tradition, and norms);
- Environmental – external context (economy, tax laws, funding, enrollment patterns, community issues);
- Technical – perceived effectiveness (vision, strategic planning, management, budgeting, fund-raising, lobbying, academic and civic leadership);

- Moral – ethical decision making, selfless devotion, and service to the mission and values of the institution (p. 25).

Bornstein found that legitimacy must be established with a variety of stakeholders; presidents were perceived to be effective if they had achieved constituent satisfaction with two out of three major constituents. According to Bornstein's findings, legitimacy was threatened by six factors: lack of cultural fit, management incompetence, misconduct, loss of social capital, inattentiveness, and grandiose behaviors. Bornstein said that "without legitimacy, a presidency is doomed" (p. xi). As such it is important for administrators to understand how these factors will be used to determine their effectiveness and in turn, their legitimacy.

One of the five factors in developing legitimacy as a president was acting with moral intentions (Bornstein, 2003). Included in the moral factor were ethical decision making, selfless devotion, and service to the mission and values of the institution (Bornstein, 2003). One major threat to legitimacy that Bornstein noted was misconduct. She perceived college and university presidents as having "a greater moral responsibility because they serve as role models for students and citizens" (Bornstein, 2003, p. 49). This sense of responsibility for acting in an ethical manner is critical to achieving and maintaining legitimacy as a collegiate leader (Bogue, 1994; Bornstein, 2003).

In both the for-profit literature and the literature related specifically to higher education, the link between ethics and leadership effectiveness has emerged (Barnard, 1938; Boatright, 1988; Bogue, 1994; Bornstein, 2003; Morgan, 1993; Mortensen, et al., 1989). Leaders are expected to set the ethical tone of an organization as well as exhibit strong moral character (Barnard, 1938; Hitt, 1990). Echoing this demand for high ethical standards, Hitt (1990) argued

“ethics and leadership go hand-in-hand. An ethical environment is conducive to effective leadership, and effective leadership is conducive to ethics” (p. 1).

Ciulla (2004) asserted that the relationship between ethics and effectiveness is not morally neutral and sometimes a little indistinct. She said “sometimes being ethical *is* being effective and sometimes being effective *is* being ethical. ...ethics *is* effectiveness in certain instances” (Ciulla, 2004, p. 310). Context is also an important part in determining effectiveness and ethical behavior (Ciulla, 2004). There are four dimensions on which one can measure the ethics of leadership:

1. The ethics of a leader as a person, which includes things like self-knowledge, discipline, and intentions, and so forth;
2. The ethics of the leader/follower relationship (i.e., how they treat each other);
3. The ethics of the process of leadership (i.e., command and control, participatory);
4. The ethics of what the leader does or does not do (Ciulla, 2004, p. 326).

Ethics is an important aspect of an executive’s position. In a study conducted by Mortensen, Smith, and Cavanagh (1989), managers “rated ethical matters as a ‘moderate’ to ‘somewhat major’ part of the job” (p. 256). Barach and Eckhardt (1996) asserted that “personal integrity is a vital character trait of any effective leader” (p.84). Ethical behavior has been found to elevate a leader’s position in the eyes of a subordinate and helps to establish credibility (Morgan, 1993). Moral leaders are also instrumental in inspiring people (Costa, 1998; Hitt, 1990; Barach & Eckhardt, 1996). Campbell (1991), Harris and Hogan (1992), and Lombardo, Ruderman, and McCauley (1988) found a leader’s credibility or trustworthiness to be the single most important factor in subordinates’ judgments of his or her effectiveness.

The adherence to ethical values is an important aspect of leadership effectiveness. Costa (1998) said that in order for a leader to be effective, the leader “needs that inner discipline and vision to balance the self-interest and competitive instincts demanded by the market with the legal and moral responsibilities expected by the community” (p. 211). Andrew (1989) prescribed a set of requirements of an ethical leader. The requirements include:

- a willingness to make decisions without having every fact available and when they are no pat answers,
- competence to recognize ethical issues and consider the consequences of possible solutions, and
- self-confidence to seek out different points of view and then decide which is the right solution (Andrew, 1989, p.101).

This section examined the scholarship concerning leadership effectiveness in the corporate sector as well as the higher education arena. Having the knowledge of what is considered effective leadership within the higher education community helped to provide a contrast to the actions of the derailed presidents that were studied. Possessing an understanding of the notion of effective leadership in higher education was critical to this study. Derailment is viewed as a result of ineffective leadership. The Center for Creative Leadership has studied the failures of business leaders since the 1980s. In the next section, the existing literature on ineffective leadership within the for-profit business sector will be explored.

### **Ineffective Leadership**

Ineffective leadership is a major problem for organizations (Bass, 2008; Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). Hogan, Raskin, and Fazzini (1990) attempted to further the research on

incompetent leadership and proposed that the percentage of incompetent managers in America was between 60 to 70 percent. DeVries (1992) reviewed the executive selection process in North America from 1960 to present and found the failure rate of executives has been around 50%. Not only do ineffective leaders cause organizational objectives to go unmet, they can also cause psychological harm to employees and other constituencies (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Hogan and Kaiser (2005) declared that “bad leadership degrades the quality of life for everyone associated with it” (p.169). Reviewing literature on ineffective leadership is important to see if correlations exist in the behaviors of the derailed presidents featured in this study.

Executives are judged as ineffective as a result of their actions. Judge (1999) conducted a mixed methods study on executives to explore the character of those that lead for-profit organizations. A survey was administered to Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in major companies within the southeastern United States. Eighty-two surveys were completed and included in the sample. In-depth interviews were also conducted with seven of the CEOs. In addition to exploring the character of the executives, Judge also evaluated failed leadership and offered four reasons why executives fail: the leader did not articulate a vision of a strategic plan for the organization; the leader did not understand the different interests of their main constituencies; the leader did not prioritize goals; and the leader failed to demonstrate ethical behavior for the organization. Bass (2008) argued that “executives fail when they become too involved in personal interests, and not enough in their constituent’s and organization’s interests” (p. 690). Levinson (1988) reasoned that executives failed because they concentrated on short-term results and were unconcerned with the emotional well-being of their employees and

customers. Ineffective leaders also led inflexible organizations that were unable to adapt when faced with situations that called for change (Levinson, 1988).

Executives are also ineffective because of personal and psychological issues. Kets de Vries (1989) examined executive ineffectiveness by studying media accounts of failed leadership. He asserted that some executives become ineffective due to psychological forces. He found that ineffective executives were more likely to isolate themselves from reality and keep themselves at a distance from their subordinates. Ineffective leadership is manifested in some executives as a fear of success which causes them to become anxious, deprecate their previous accomplishments, and engage in self-destructive behavior (Kets de Vries, 1989).

Hogan and Hogan (2001) examined the literature on executive derailments and produced a taxonomy of derailment factors. The researchers also developed an inventory, the Hogan Development Survey (HDS), to assess the potential for derailments in executives. The DSM-IV from the American Psychiatric Association was used to correlate 11 typical derailment behaviors as evidenced in the literature review to personality disorders. Personality disorders are “dysfunctional dispositions that may or may not be associated with anxiety and depression...but which are associated with poor social and occupational performance” (p. 41). Hogan and Hogan asserted that leaders have both a “bright side” and a “dark side” to their personalities. The “dark side” tendencies are often hard to detect in the initial interview stage of executives because they “coexist with well-developed social skills that mask or compensate for them in the short run” (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). The “dark side” tendencies manifest themselves only after a leader has been in the position long enough to let their guard down and are often noticed by subordinates first because ineffective managers typically let their guard down around staff (Hogan & Hogan,

2001). The dark side tendencies included: *excitable*, tendency toward moodiness, hard to please; *skeptical*, shown through cynicism, distrustfulness, and doubting others' true intentions; *cautious*, reluctant to take risks for fear of negative criticism; *reserved*, aloof, detached, and uncommunicative behavior; *leisurely*, independent and ignoring people's requests; *bold*, unusually self confident, feelings of grandeur; *mischievous*, manipulative, cunning and deceitful behavior; *colorful*, needing to be the center of attention; *imaginative*, acting and thinking in sometimes odd ways; *diligent*, perfectionist tendencies, critical of others, and inflexible about rules; and *dutiful*, eager to please and reluctant to go against popular opinion.

Ineffective leadership can be caused by an executive's actions or his or her psychological factors or a combination of both. The results of ineffective leadership are varied depending on the magnitude of the ineffectiveness, but range from the maintenance of status quo to the derailment, or firing, of the executive. The literature on executive derailment will now be examined.

### **Executive Derailment in the For-Profit Business Sector**

Central to the idea of effective leadership is the concept of leadership derailment, i.e. the result of a leader who is ineffective. A number of studies have focused on derailment in the for-profit sector, with a specific focus on the actions and characteristics of the failed leaders (Bentz, 1985; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Lombardo, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1988; Morrison, White & Van Velsor, 1987; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). Beginning in the early 1980s, the Center for Creative Leadership started researching derailment in businesses and has continued to expand upon that body of literature. The Center for Creative Leadership conducted initial research on leadership derailment in an effort to provide executives with

information on why some managers are effective and others ineffective, often leading to derailment (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). Leadership derailment is defined as a leader that either “leaves the organization nonvoluntarily...or is plateaued as a result of a perceived lack of fit between personal characteristics and skills and the demands of the job” (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 1). A derailed executive has been a person who was very successful in the beginning of his or her career and when they moved into more responsible positions were unable to succeed because any early strength became a weakness or some early weaknesses began to matter (McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996).

Three initial studies were conducted that specifically looked at executive derailment (Bentz, 1985; McCall and Lombardo, 1983; Lombardo, et al, 1988). Bentz (1985) conducted a qualitative study that used in-depth interviews to gather data about executives at Sears that were considered to be failures; however, it is important to note that despite being deemed as failures these executives had not been fired from their respective positions. The Guilford-Martin Personality Inventory was used to gather data about executives. Bentz then used information about the executive, such as subordinate ratings, levels of promotion, and the personality data to ascertain differences in the executives who had secured top executive positions and those executives who had failed to be promoted to higher levels within the organization. The study found that the executives who derailed were deficient in one or more of the managerial skills needed at the executive level (e.g., administrative skills, disciplined judgment, ability to lead within a large scale organization) (Bentz, 1985). Personality flaws, such as being overly emotional, insensitive and overly ambitious, were also found to be factors in the derailment of some highly skilled executives (Bentz, 1985).

McCall and Lombardo (1983) also conducted a qualitative inquiry into the derailment of executives within the business sector and compared derailed executives with a group of executives who had remained successful. Interviews were conducted with senior executives and senior human resources professionals in three U.S. industrial organizations. Participants were asked to describe the career paths of someone who had successfully made it to the organization and another person who showed early promise, but later derailed from a top management position. The interviews produced 40 case studies, 20 focused on success and 20 on derailment.

Data from the interviews indicated that specific performance problems, insensitivity to others, failure to build a team or delegate, and over reliance on a single mentor were found to be major factors in the derailment of the executives (McCall & Lombardo, 1983). The results of this study furthered the idea that weaknesses could supersede apparent strengths and introduced three more causal factors of derailment: an early strength becomes a weakness; a deficiency begins to matter, and bad luck (McCall & Lombardo, 1983).

In an effort to give quantitative support to the earlier qualitative studies, Lombardo, Ruderman, and McCauley (1988) studied 169 mid to upper level managers in a multi-national company. The managers were rated by former bosses or colleagues to ascertain information about the behavior of derailed managers in contrast to the successful managers. For a manager to be included in the sample, at least one currently employed supervisor or peer who had worked with the manager for at least one year had to be willing to serve as a rater. The entire sample was male and represented 15 countries. Almost half of the managers ( $n = 83$ ) classified as derailed; the derailed managers were defined as managers that were involuntarily terminated

between 1983 and 1985. The remaining managers were still employed by the company in progressively responsible positions.

Raters were asked to complete The Executive Inventory based on their observations of the managers. The Executive Inventory, derived from the results of previous research on executive derailment (Bentz, 1985; McCall & Lombardo, 1983), was used to rate the managers on their strengths and weaknesses (Lombardo et al., 1988). Raters were asked to evaluate the managers on the following eight scales: handling business complexity; directing, motivating, and developing subordinates; honor; drive for excellence; organizational savvy; composure; sensitivity; and staffing. From ratings based on these eight factors, the mean scores of the derailed and the successful executives were analyzed (Lombardo et al., 1988). Lombardo et al. (1988) found that across all eight dimensions the bosses' ratings were statistically higher for the successful executives than for the derailed executives.

As the researchers compared the successful executives to those that derailed, they found that derailed executives were markedly different from their successful peers (Lombardo et al., 1988). Lombardo et al. (1988) compared and contrasted characteristics of successful leaders and leaders who had derailed (see Table 1). Three major differences between the derailed executives and the successful executives emerged; these different characteristics can be seen in Table 1. First, derailed individuals were viewed as "lacking the cognitive capabilities or skills to handle complex business ventures, think strategically, make high-quality decisions in ambiguous circumstances, and demonstrate needed political skills than were the successful" (Lombardo et al., 1988, p. 212). Second, derailed individuals were seen to have negative personality features,

Table 1

*Characteristics of Successful Leaders vs. Derailed Leaders*

Leadership dimensions	Characteristics of Successful Leaders	Characteristics of Derailed Leaders
Managerial skills	Intelligent Astute in business matters Versatile Able to handle a complexity of job assignments Able to adapt to changing environments	Lacking cognitive skills to handle complex situations Unable to think strategically Poor decision-maker in ambiguous situations Lower political skills
Personality factors	Loyal Possess integrity Ability to admit personal mistakes and limitations Able to take responsibility for mistakes	Unstable Lack drive Abrasive Untrustworthy
Leadership of Others	Able to hire and retain quality personnel Sensitive to employees Develops personnel	Failure to direct Failure to motivate Failure to teach and develop personnel Unable to select quality personnel

Source: Lombardo, et al (1988)

such as instability, abrasiveness, unmotivated, and untrustworthy (Lombardo et al., 1988).

Third, a failure to lead and develop a team was seen in derailed executives (Lombardo et al., 1988).

Morrison, White, and Van Velsor (1987) replicated the CCL research, but focused on women in management positions. During the study, Morrison et al. interviewed 22 executives from ten Fortune 100 companies, 16 men and six women, to determine what made women in mid-level management positions successful or unsuccessful. The executives that were interviewed were considered to be “savvy insiders” who had responsibility for identifying and

selecting top executives for their positions (Morrison, White, and Van Velsor, 1987, p. 183).

The executives were asked to consider two women whose careers they knew well, one who was successful in a top management position and the other who was seen as having potential but was unsuccessful in either securing a top position or who failed in a top management position, and then answer questions focused on their perceptions of the women's careers. The executives were asked eleven questions about the women who were successful including such questions as, briefly describe the person's career path, what types of behaviors did the woman exhibit that made her stand out, whether or not the person made a big mistake and how did they recover from it, and changes over time in her work style.

Participants were asked five questions about the derailed women. Those questions are as follows:

1. Briefly tell us what you know about this woman's career.
2. Obviously this person achieved a great deal in the company, even if she never attained what was hoped by management. What were the key events that contributed to that success – what led to this person being seen as high-potential and attaining the level she did?
3. What was the sequence of events that led to the derailing from the track to the top jobs?
4. What happened to this woman afterwards?
5. How representative is this person of women who get derailed?
6. How does she differ from the men who derail? (Morrison, White, and Van Velsor, 1987, p. 185).

The successful women were viewed as having more help from upper management than the derailed women and a higher drive to succeed. The successful women were also seen as being tougher, more decisive, and more demanding, than their derailed counterparts. The ability to work through others was also an ability that was noted as a major difference between the successful women and the derailed women (Morrison, White, and Van Velsor, 1987).

The derailed women were seen as bright and exceptionally talented in the early years of their careers (Morrison, White, and Van Velsor, 1987). The reasons for derailment were consistent with what earlier studies had shown of men who had derailed. The reasons included an inability to adapt to a new boss or culture, performance problems, exhibiting behavior that was seen as overly ambitious, and being viewed as unable to lead a team or plan strategically (Morrison, White and Van Velsor, 1987). Performance problems most often cited included: not being able to understand the complexity of situations; maintaining the status quo or not doing an extraordinary job; achieving less than expected financial results; and not being consistently outstanding (Morrison, White, and Van Velsor, 1987).

Another study that focused on derailed mid-level managers was conducted by Lombardo and McCauley (1988) and expanded on original CCL research by conducting a factor analysis on a questionnaire derived from previous research and used a database of 355 bosses' ratings of managers. Empirical relationships among the themes were used to combine the original categories and ratings into 16 skills and perspectives that research has shown managers can and must learn to be successful and six factors that can lead to derailment. The six factors found to lead to derailment included problems with interpersonal relationships, difficulty in developing a staff, difficulty in making strategic decisions, a lack of follow-through, an over reliance on

management, and strategic differences with upper level management (Lombardo and McCauley, 1988).

In the mid-1990s, Van Velsor and Leslie (1995) conducted a study in an attempt to see if the derailment themes from previous CCL research had withstood the test of time and also if they were continuous across cultures. Twenty senior executives were interviewed from 15 U.S. based Fortune 500 companies as well as 42 English speaking executives from 24 companies in six European countries (Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995). The study used the same qualitative research methods as the studies conducted in the 1980s which included in-depth interviews where the executives were asked to explain the careers of two managers with whom they were familiar, one who had successfully navigated their way to the top management position and the other who had been seen in their early career to show senior management promise, but who had been unsuccessful in securing a senior level position (Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995).

The interview protocol consisted of two different, but complementary, sets of questions about the successful and derailed manager. The researchers asked the executives to recollect and describe a person with whom they had worked closely that had derailed. The executives were asked to describe the person's career. Then, participants were asked to identify early strengths that led to this person's early successes. Next, participants were asked to describe the sequence of events that led to this person's derailment. Participants were also asked what happened to the person who had derailed and if the person was indicative of other others that had derailed. Lastly, the executives were asked to give examples of "fatal flaws" that had caused the person to derail (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1996).

Van Velsor and Leslie (1995, 1996) found that four enduring themes emerged from the data and were consistent across time and location. Those derailment themes included problems with interpersonal relationships, failure to meet business objectives, failure to build and lead a team, and an inability to change or adapt during a transition (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996).

Problems with interpersonal relationships were identified in two-thirds of the European cases and one-third of the U.S. cases. In all of these cases, the derailed managers were seen as successful in their early careers because they were very good at task management and later failed when they were promoted to positions that required a more nuanced leadership role (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). Problems with interpersonal relationships was also expressed through the derailed managers' tendency toward being overly critical and using other employees to further their own career (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). A failure to communicate effectively was also classified as having problems with interpersonal relationships (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). Failure to communicate was manifested through the executives' unwillingness to communicate with his team, co-workers, or peers; unwillingness to share pertinent information with the necessary parties; and an unwillingness to work within a team setting.

Failure to meet business objectives was expressed as a factor of derailment. In the study, early success with technical skills was seen as a positive trait that propelled the managers into more prominent positions; however, those who had an outstanding track record in one area often were the same managers who later derailed when they were promoted to positions that were more unstable and required new skills and new levels of leadership (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995;

Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). European executives often cited that derailed managers were self-promoting and could not deliver when needed (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996).

The inability to build and lead a team, showed up in twenty-five percent of the European cases and twenty percent of the American cases (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). This factor was often explained as a manager having a trait that was seen as a positive in the beginning, but later caused them to have problems and ultimately derail, such as assertiveness and initiative. Van Velsor and Leslie (1995) found that this factor was more important in this study than in past studies because a more team-oriented management style was emerging in business during this time period.

The last factor that emerged from the study was an inability to change or adapt during a transition. This theme evolved over time (Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995). The different concepts that fall under this factor include the failure to adapt to a new boss with a different managerial style, failure to develop new skills or overdependence on one skill, and the inability to adapt to a new position or a new culture (Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995). This factor became more apparent as a derailment factor in this study and was cited as a major factor in the derailment cases of two-thirds of both European and American managers (Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995). The executives stated that in several instances they gave the derailed managers feedback, but the derailed managers were unable to learn from the feedback (Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995). The unstable, complex nature of business made the ability to adapt in a transition an essential skill (Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995; Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996). Van Velsor and Leslie (1995) concluded that values or lack thereof did not derail managers; “rather, derailment had to do with the fact that an

individual was unable to ‘fit’ with the evolving demands of the job over time and at successively higher organizational levels. Derailment is a development issue, not a values issue” (p. 69).

Throughout the studies on executive derailment conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership four dominant derailment factors emerged: 1) problems with interpersonal relationships; 2) failure to meet business objectives; 3) inability to build and lead a team; and 4) inability to change or adapt during a transition (Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995). Table 2 illustrates how data from each study contributed to the development of the four enduring themes of derailment. The majority of the derailment studies conducted out of the Center for Creative Leadership have been qualitative in nature and relied on in-depth interviews to secure data. This research method was appropriate in these studies because the researchers were seeking information about a phenomenon, executive derailment, that has not been the focus of the previous research and working to build a theory of why top leaders derail. The studies discussed above have provided a foundation for the understanding of executive derailment as it pertains to for-profit business sector. It is necessary to delve further into the derailment literature and examine studies that focus on the non-profit sector.

### **Executive Derailment in the Non-Profit Sector**

Research on executive derailments within the non-profit sector is scant. Three studies focused on non-profit leaders who derailed were found. One study is a dissertation that examined the successes and failures of chief nursing officers (Vautier, 1996). Tropman and Shafer (2004) examined the four stages of problems that non-profit executives encounter. Another study by Calabrese and Roberts (2001) examined the derailments on K-12 educational leaders. These studies are examined in detail below.

Table 2

*Summary of Derailment Literature within the For-Profit Business Sector*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>McCall &amp; Lombardo (1983)</b>	<b>Morrison, et al (1987)</b>	<b>Lombardo &amp; McCauley (1988)</b>	<b>Leslie &amp; Van Velsor, USA (1996)</b>	<b>Leslie &amp; Van Velsor, Europe (1996)</b>
Problems with Interpersonal Relationships	Insensitive to others Cold, aloof, arrogant	Poor relations	Problems with interpersonal relations Isolates self	Poor working conditions	Poor working conditions Organizational isolation
Failure to Meet Business Objectives	Overly ambitious Betrayal of Trust	Too ambitious		Authoritarian	Authoritarian
Inability to Build and Lead a Team	Poor Performance Failure to staff effectively	Performance problems Can not manage subordinates	Lack of follow through Difficulty molding a staff	Poor performance Inability to build and lead a team	Poor performance Inability to build and lead a team
Inability to Change or Adapt During Transition	Unable to adapt to a boss with a different style	Unable to adapt to a boss or culture		Unable to adapt or develop	Unable to adapt or develop
			Strategic differences with management	Conflict with upper management	Conflict with upper management
	Unable to think strategically	Not strategic	Difficulty making strategic decisions		

Source: Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996, p. 17.

In a dissertation, Vautier (1996) examined the critical attributes of the success and derailment of chief nursing officers in acute care hospitals. Chief nursing officers (CNOs) were chosen because they are reported to have the highest rate of turnover in the positions within the acute care hospitals (Vautier, 1996). Data were collected via survey from 142 hospital CEOs and chief nursing administrators to determine the perceived causes of both the success and derailment of CNOs. The researcher designed and used a survey to measure perception of environmental, job, and personal attributes attributed to the CNO's role. Hospital CEOs and chief nursing officers were asked to answer the survey while thinking of two CNOs, both a person who is a successful CNO and a CNO who had derailed. Vautier found that derailed CNOs were more likely to work in a hospital that had a CEO who was recently replaced, they were characterized as a change agent and demanding, and the position was centered more on the nursing department than the hospital as a whole.

Tropman and Shafer (2004) examined eight instances of executive derailment in non-profit settings through the use of articles appearing in the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and other national newspapers. Through the examination of these instances of executive derailment, Tropman and Shafer derived four stages of problems that executives in non-profits encounter: detours, prederailments, derailments, and flameout/calamity. Detours and prederailments are not necessarily detrimental to the organization, these stages are defined as stages that executives go through where they are keeping busy but not in meaningful work. Derailments were defined as executive dismissals that were frequently done after a change in board leadership. Flameouts/calamities were very public cases of leadership malfeasance.

Tropman and Shafer (2004) asserted that all four of the stages of executive problematics do not just happen, that they in fact are derived from a point of cause. Two types of causes were identified: precipitating/catalytic and predisposing. Precipitating/catalytic causes were public problems that identify a problem with the leader's personal behavior. Examples included ethical failures, betrayals of trust, and substance use. These behaviors are typically identified by a "catalytic agent" either a whistle blower or shown through the leader's inability to adapt to a new boss, i.e. the board of trustees. Predisposing causes were related to the leader's inability to meet organizational outcomes, such as failure to build and lead a team, meet business objectives, and failure to think strategically; failure with interpersonal relationships, such as abrasiveness; and problems with intrapersonal skills, such as a failure to manage personal emotions.

After examining the cases of non-profit derailments/flameouts, Tropman and Shafer (2004) found that non-profit leaders fail because of a combination of the five C's: conditions, context, characteristics, competencies and change. Conditions and context focused mainly on the culture and structure of the organization. Conditions within the organization such as the absence of control structures, i.e. expenditure limits, contributed to the derailment. Contextual causes included the move toward higher salaries, the stress of dealing with difficult non-profit missions (i.e. homelessness, sexual abuse, addictions, etc.), and the high expectations of a civic leader.

A leader's personal attributes also contributed to the derailments in some cases. Tropman and Shafer (2004) identified eight characteristics of effective leaders that can become negative as the person reaches higher levels of power within an organization. Those behaviors include: from self-confidence to overconfidence; from challenge to stoking; from sidekick to

sycophant; from we to me; from observing ego to feedback deafness; from substance to substance abuse; from need to greed; and from at the top to over the top. Competencies, skills that were once seen as positives turn to negatives, and change within the organization were also found to be contributing factors to the derailment of non-profit leaders.

Calabrese and Roberts (2001) focused on the derailment of K-12 educational leaders. This study was conducted using document analysis on over 50 cases of the derailment of either school principals or superintendents. The researchers examined articles that were reported in major newspapers throughout the United States to ascertain the causal factors related to the derailment of the educational leaders. Calabrese and Roberts found that all of the derailed principals and superintendents demonstrated serious character flaws. Case studies portrayed the derailed educational administrators to be untrustworthy, lacking integrity in business relationships, and engaging in inappropriate sexual behavior (Calabrese & Roberts, 2001). In the majority of the cases that were analyzed, the researchers found examples of bright, capable leaders who abandoned their ethical principles and as a result were derailed from their professional aspirations. This loss of promise in their leadership abilities and the leader's subsequent derailment were found to "illustrate how derailment impacts the entire community disrupting the community and educational process" (Calabrese and Roberts, 2001, p. 274). This finding led the researchers to make the link between an educational leader's failure to act ethically and the impact of those unethical actions on the leader's organization, a link that is missing from the for-profit business literature on derailment. Calabrese and Roberts found that the absence of practicing in an ethical manner to be the foremost cause of derailment in the K-12 leaders.

These limited derailment studies within the non-profit field have shown that derailed managers often have trouble in unstable environments, show personality defects, and are typically unable to adapt to a new environment. These factors are consistent with the findings of the Center for Creative Leadership's research on derailment within the business sector. One critique of the Tropman and Shafer (2004) and Calabrese and Roberts (2001) studies is that they both used only media accounts of executive derailments to secure data and this data shows one side of the events that led to the derailment. Further investigation is needed to gain the perspective from people within the organizations that suffered a derailment or the perspective of the derailed leader to see if the same themes would emerge. The literature on derailment within the non-profit sector provides very little insight into the field of education, especially within the field of higher education. The study on derailment within K-12 education illuminates a new theme, the ethics of leadership, which was not previously cited in the findings of the studies conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The four enduring themes of derailment from the research conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership provided the conceptual framework upon which this study was founded. Although these themes are not meant to be all encompassing, they do present the most accurate representation of derailment and factors associated with derailment. The four enduring themes as cited by Leslie and Van Velsor (1996) imply that executive derailments can be classified in one or more of the following categories:

1. Problems with Interpersonal Relationships;
2. Failure to Meet Business Objectives;

3. Inability to Lead a Team; and
4. Inability to Change or Adapt during a Transition.

The conceptual framework provided through the research conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership outlines the major causal factors of executive leadership derailment in the for-profit business sector. This framework was used as a lens for the researcher to examine the findings of the present study and the findings were compared and contrasted to see if similar themes emerge from the study of leadership derailment in the field of higher education.

### **Summary**

Leadership effectiveness is an important field of study for organizations. Having effective leaders who act in an ethical manner is essential to developing trust within organizations and can lead to more effective organizations (Aviolo et al., 2004). Effective leaders are those leaders who have the capacity to learn, the capacity to change, and managerial wisdom (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). Effective leadership in higher education can be described as people who are energetic visionaries who have the ability to lead different groups of people to a common goal (Fisher, 1988).

Despite the breadth of literature related to leadership effectiveness, some leaders still do not flourish. Studying the actions of the leaders who derail is crucial to the study of leadership effectiveness in a broader context. Research on leadership derailment provides future and current leaders with information on ineffective leadership behaviors and could help leaders avoid the same pitfalls of the derailed leaders.

While there have been several studies conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership on the subject of derailment, those studies have focused mainly on mid-level business executives

who derailed on their way to senior level leadership positions. Throughout the CCL literature on executive derailment, four enduring themes have emerged: 1) problems with interpersonal relationships; 2) failure to meet business objectives; 3) inability to build and lead a team; and 4) inability to change or adapt during a transition (Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995). Within the for-profit literature on derailment, there are scant amounts of research on leaders who are at the apex of the organization and then derail. Furthermore, the research on derailment in the non-profit sector is also limited to mid-level leadership derailment. The literature on derailment within the field of education is severely limited and was focused on superintendents within the K-12 arena. No studies have been conducted on leadership derailment within the higher education field. The present study explored the factors and events associated with the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents.

## **Chapter III**

### **Research Design and Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors and events associated with the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents. This qualitative research study was guided by three research questions:

- 1) What factors are perceived to be associated with the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents?
- 2) What events are perceived to be associated with the derailment of the president?
- 3) What relationship, if any, may be found between derailment factors emerging from previous Center for Creative Leadership research and factors emerging from this study?

This chapter provides a detailed description of methods and procedures used in the conduct of the study including the design; the research methods, including the site, population and sources of data; data collection procedures; and data analysis procedures. The matter of data trustworthiness, including reliability and validity, is addressed in the final section of the chapter.

#### **Research Design**

A qualitative research approach, instrumental case study design, was most appropriate for this study because of the purpose of this study. Since little is known about the factors and events associated with the derailment of a public, Master's level president, it is imperative that the

approach be one that is exploratory, in-depth, and descriptive. Qualitative research approaches are most appropriate when the researcher is seeking to get “a more detailed understanding of the central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2005, p. 45). Patton (1990) asserts that “qualitative methods permit the researcher to study selected issues in depth and detail” (p. 13). To more clearly understand the factors associated with presidential derailment in public, Master’s level colleges, a constructivist approach was used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of constructivist inquiry is “to produce a depth of understanding about a particular topic or experience” (Manning, 1999, p. 12). Since the purpose of this study was to explore the factors related to presidential derailment and very little is known about this subject in the context of higher education, a qualitative approach allowed for a deep, solid understanding of presidential derailment at public, Master’s level colleges.

A case study is a qualitative design which utilizes focused interviews, document analysis and other means to gather information about a program or event (Yin, 1994, 1998). Yin (1994) suggested that case studies are often the favored approach “when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (p. 1). Case studies are used to “understand complex social phenomena” and allow for “an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 1994, p. 3). The current study sought to explore the question of why presidential derailments occur and the derailment events that occurred within the past several years at the institution being studied; thus, making the case study design attractive to the researcher.

Stake (2005) used the term instrumental case study to delineate cases that are examined “to provide insight into an issue” (p.445). This study employed the instrumental case study design because each individual site or case was chosen due to its unique experience with a presidential derailment at their campus. This study included a multi campus set of case studies designed to elicit multiple perspectives related to presidential derailment.

### **Research Sites and Population**

The population was public, Master’s level colleges in the United States. The target population, or sampling frame, was public, Master’s level colleges that have experienced a presidential derailment within the last ten years. For the purposes of this study, derailment was determined by a president who involuntarily leaves the college or university within five years of taking office. From the sampling frame, four sites where a presidential derailment occurred served as the sample for this study. A minimum of four individuals who worked closely with the derailed president were interviewed at each institution.

The sites consisted of public, Master’s level colleges that had experienced a presidential derailment within the last ten years. The sample was initially drawn from a list of colleges or universities compiled by the researcher using *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to search for cases of presidential derailment and their institutional type was verified through the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education. The researcher researched documents, specifically targeting current issues of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and a website, [www.insidehighered.com](http://www.insidehighered.com), which records collegiate current events, to establish a list of names of presidents who have derailed. The researcher solicited assistance from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities; however, they declined to be of assistance.

Another option for securing names of institutions that have experienced a recent derailment included the use of a search firm and the researcher soliciting selected state governing boards to ascertain the names of presidents within the system that left non-voluntarily after a short tenure. One partner from a search firm provided the researcher with initial leads, but the leads did not develop into sites for the study. After initial inquiries of these sources, the researcher compiled a listing of all public, Master's level institutions from the listings of the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education and conducted an internet search of each institution's presidential history to identify schools that had a short-term president. Once institutions were identified, the researcher conducted additional searches to learn the nature of the presidential departure.

Twenty-six schools within the population were found to meet the criterion for this study. In the beginning, a purposeful sample of ten institutions was selected. Purposeful samples use "information-rich cases" to enable the researcher to glean important information from the participant that is central to the topic being studied (Patton, 1990, p. 169; Yin, 1994). Once institutions were identified, the current president was contacted by letter and asked to participate. A copy of the invitational letter is attached as Appendix A. After the letter was sent to presidents, the researcher contacted the president to follow-up and request participation. Many of these phone calls were not returned by the presidents or terse declines were sent via email. The researcher continued to contact all of the schools within the sample until four sites were secured. In the end, a convenience sample of four institutions that agreed to participate was used.

Once access to the institutions was granted, the president was asked to identify one member of the board of trustees of the college or university, one vice president that was in the derailed president's cabinet, and one faculty member that was familiar with the derailed president's tenure at the college or university as well as his or her departure. These participants were chosen because each one worked closely with the derailed president or could provide knowledge of the president's tenure. All participants had numerous opportunities for interaction with the derailed president and provided valuable insight into his or her behaviors preceding and surrounding the derailment. Each participant was contacted via letter to ask for his or her participation in the study. The participant invitation is attached as Appendix B. The researcher followed each letter with a telephone call to confirm their willingness to participate and to schedule an interview.

Four separate one-on-one interviews were conducted at each of the four institutions that experienced a presidential derailment. The researcher began by interviewing the current sitting president about his or her perceptions about the derailed president. The researcher then interviewed a member of the board of trustees, a vice-president, and a faculty member. All three of the participants from each site had been involved with the institution at the time of the derailment and were identified by the current president as people who are information-rich (Patton, 1990). Interviews were conducted with the participants until saturation was achieved. Saturation occurs with data when information being collected is repetitive and fails to offer any additional information that could reveal additional understandings (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998). Data collection continued until the researcher reached "the point of redundancy" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202).

In addition to purposeful sampling, chaining was utilized. Chaining assists the researcher by asking participants to identify other people who may have pertinent information to the study (Patton, 1990). Each of the initial participants was asked to identify other people that may have intimate knowledge of the derailed president's actions. Those people who were identified as being "information rich" were then contacted to see if they would be willing to participate in the study. This method yielded five additional participants across three cases.

### **Research Methods/ Sources of Data**

Three sources of data were used in the conduct of this study. The sources of data included in-depth interviews, field notes, and document analysis.

The main source of data was in-depth, open-ended interviews with each of the participants. In-depth interviews were used to gain information about the participant's perspective of the derailed president and knowledge of his or her behaviors. The purpose of open-ended interviews is to ascertain the perspective of the participant (Patton, 1990).

Qualitative interviews allow a researcher to "understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 3).

The purpose of the interviews was to gain multiple perspectives about the derailment of the president, thus by interviewing a member of the board of trustees, a vice president and a faculty member this was achieved. The interview questions were adapted from Leslie and Van Velsor's (1996) Success and Derailment Interview Questions. The interview protocol consisted of three central open-ended questions that were followed up with standardized probes by the researcher. The interview protocol is attached as Appendix C. The three interview questions were:

1. What factors did you see as being associated with the departure of the derailed president?
2. What events may have occurred that contributed to or influenced the departure of the past president?
3. Is there anything else related to the departure of the president that you would like to tell me?

All of the interviews were conducted in the same open-ended fashion and lasted approximately one hour. Standardized open-ended interviews were helpful to the researcher because they enhanced the comparability of responses since all participants were asked the same questions and it facilitated the organization and analysis of data (Patton, 1990).

During the interview, probes were used to ascertain additional information. The probes, or subquestions, helped to provide clarification or elaboration of a point the participant made (Creswell, 2005). Probes included such questions as “would you give me more details about that situation?” or “could you explain a little more about the relationship he or she had with the board?” These questions were consistent with examples given by Creswell (2005).

Additional sources of data were used to gain another perspective of the events that related to the derailment of the president. One such data source was minutes from the board of trustees meetings that preceded and succeeded the president’s departure from the university. These minutes gave the researcher valuable contextual information that served to illuminate why certain behaviors and events took place leading to the derailment of the president. The minutes also served as an impartial account of the president’s words and actions in the months leading up to his or her derailment especially since the derailed president will not be interviewed. Another

source of data that was examined is the media coverage surrounding the derailed president's time in office. The researcher searched for archival data including student newspaper accounts of the president's departure, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and local and national newspaper reports prior to the time of the derailment and the coverage of the derailment itself. The media coverage and the minutes from the board meetings provided valuable information about the context surrounding the derailment as well as served as another account to verify the data that was produced in the in-depth interviews.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Approval for the study was obtained from The University of Tennessee's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to the start of the study (Appendix D). IRB guidelines were followed to develop an Informed Consent Form (Appendix E) that was given to each of the participants before the interviews were conducted.

Confidentiality of the participants was assured by the use of pseudonyms and code numbers. Furthermore, each participant was guaranteed that participation would be voluntary throughout the course of the study. Also, participants were assured that the interview data were transcribed and kept in a secure, locked drawer located in the UTK Bailey Education Complex, office number A332.

Contact was made with the purposeful sample of colleges or universities via letter to the current sitting president to invite the participation of the college or university in the study. This letter explained the purpose of the study, a brief description of what is known about derailment within the business sector, and informed the president that they would receive a follow-up phone call that addressed the following matters: interview scheduling, recommendations for

participants including a vice-president that worked for the derailed president, one member of the board of trustees of the institution that had intimate knowledge of the derailed president, and a faculty member that was familiar with the derailed president. The letter and the follow-up phone call sought to enhance the rapport between the researcher and the participant.

Once the current sitting president agreed to participate in the study and recommended the participants for the study, the researcher contacted via letter the vice-president, a member of the board of trustees, and a faculty member. The letter explained the purpose of the study, invited their participation, and notified them that a follow-up phone call should be expected. The follow-up phone call was used to answer questions and schedule a time for the interview.

Before each campus was visited, the researcher searched newspaper reports and institutional news releases by using LexisNexis Academic, google.com, and the website of each institution. By collecting data before interviews, the researcher was able to have contextual knowledge of the events surrounding the derailment of the president. The information gleaned from these resources provided the researcher with information to probe the participants during the interviews. Board minutes and memos were collected from participants during the interview process.

The ideal format for interviews was face-to-face and every effort was made to conduct the interviews in that manner. In the event that schedules made it impossible for a face-to-face interview, telephone interviews and email interviews were offered to participants. Although email interviews were included in the original design as an option, this researcher did not have anyone that requested that type of interview. When telephone interviews were used, the Informed Consent form was faxed or emailed to the participant prior to the interview.

Participants were assured of confidentiality. The same interview protocol as described for face-to-face interviews was utilized during the telephone interviews.

Fourteen interviews were conducted in person at the convenience of the participant and lasted approximately one hour. During the interviews participant confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms for both the participant and the institution. Five interviews were conducted via telephone due to time constraints on the part of the interviewees and the researcher. Interviews were conducted between September 2008 and February 2010.

All interviews were tape recorded with the consent of the participants and verbatim transcripts were produced after all interviews were complete to assist with the data analysis. Tape recording the interview not only increases “the accuracy of data collection, [it] permits the interviewer to be more attentive to the interviewee” (Patton, 1990, p. 348). Notes were also taken during each interview in an attempt to capture the body language of the participant and any other noticeable delays or behaviors that could not be displayed through the tape recorder (Patton, 1990). Taking notes allowed the researcher to focus on “key phrases, lists of major points made by the respondent, and key terms or words” that enriched the data collection and gave the researcher information sources to help probe the participant on more fully during the interview (Patton, 1990, p. 351). Transcripts of their individual interview were given to each participant to allow for member-checking, if requested.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using an on-going inductive based approach. This approach consisted of the following elements: reading and rereading the transcripts and notes, identifying patterns and themes across and within interviews, coding data, and making comparisons with

respect to themes (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998). While reading the transcripts and notes, the researcher coded the data to draw out the central themes and patterns that help to explain the events and factors that led to the derailment of the president. The codes were then analyzed and synthesized into themes (Patton, 1990). Once the data were analyzed and themes emerged, the findings were compared against the Center for Creative Leadership's (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996) four enduring themes of derailment to ascertain whether or not the findings related to the derailment themes found in the business sector. It is important to let the themes emerge from the data and to use the theoretical framework as a guide to the themes (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

In the proposal stages, the researcher proposed using computer software packages, such as Atlas.ti and Transana, to assist with the data analysis. However, after the researcher began an inductive analysis of the data, themes emerged and negated the use of this software for this study. "Thick, rich descriptions" of the central phenomenon were easily identifiable through the coding and analysis completed by the researcher (Patton, 1990).

Using the minutes from the board meetings as well as any media accounts of the derailment, document analysis was employed. Document analysis provided "a behind-the-scenes look at the program that may not be directly observable" (Patton, 1990, p. 245). By analyzing the documents, the researcher was privy to information that was objective and informative which provided the researcher with valuable information that could prompt the researcher to ask detailed questions that they might not otherwise have known to ask (Patton, 1990). The data uncovered during the document analyses were then compared to the findings from the interview data to see if similar themes emerged.

After the initial themes were produced, the researcher afforded each participant an opportunity to review the themes to see if the themes were an accurate portrayal of what they remembered occurring. Participants found the themes to be consistent with their recollection of events. The researcher also used peer debriefing to assist with the development of the themes. Two peers were given copies of the transcripts and asked to read through the data and list relevant themes that emerged from their analysis. After the peers developed their themes, the researcher and peers discussed the findings. This analysis afforded the researcher another opportunity to ascertain whether the themes emerged from the data.

### **Trustworthiness of Data**

The trustworthiness of the data, also known as the reliability and validity of the study, was assured by the use of triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing. Triangulation is the use of multiple sources to create and ensure the validity and the accuracy of data (Patton, 1990). Denizen (1978) argued that triangulation is important because “no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors...Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed” (p. 28). Triangulation was achieved in many different ways. Two sources of triangulation were the media coverage and the minutes of the board of trustees meetings which provided an objective account of the events as they transpired. Another source of triangulation was the multiple perspectives of the current sitting president, vice president, the board member, and a faculty member.

Member checks were utilized by the researcher to ensure the accuracy of the participants' interviews. Each participant received a transcript of his or her interview, if requested, and was asked to verify that what he or she said as being accurate. Participants were given the

opportunity to review the themes that emerged from the data analysis to ascertain whether or not they believe that those themes are representative of the factors associated with the derailment of the president at their institution. Member checks are necessary to establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Peer debriefing was an important step in ensuring the trustworthiness of the data. Peer debriefing is “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.308). This peer debriefing session was conducted between the researcher and two peers who were well versed in qualitative methodology. The independent reviewers were given the transcripts to read through and asked to identify themes that emerged. The researcher met with the reviewers to discuss major themes that emerged to ensure that consensus was reached.

Confirmability added to the trustworthiness of this study. Confirmability was ensured by the researcher because she kept a detailed journal of the inquiry process, all copies of the taped interviews, the transcribed copies of the interviews, and copies of all other sources of data, including the minutes from the board of trustees meetings and the media coverage surrounding the derailment of the president (Davis, 2002).

Transferability of findings is also important to qualitative research studies so that readers can determine if the study can be applied to other contexts. Readers should be given enough information about the setting to determine the degree to which the study’s findings could be applicable to other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the use of thick descriptions

and explanatory data leading to the derailment of the presidents was employed to assist readers with the transferability of the findings.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Presentation of the Findings**

This in-depth case study investigation of the factors and events associated with presidential derailments at public, master's level institutions was started in October 2007 and completed in February 2010.

Four public, master's level institutions served as the data collection sites for the research. In addition to in-depth interviews, data were collected from national and local newspapers covering the events leading up to and including the derailment, personal correspondence between participants in some cases, and minutes from the board of trustees' meetings.

The research questions guiding this study were:

- 1) What factors are perceived to be associated with the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents?
- 2) What events are perceived to be associated with the derailment of the president?
- 3) What relationship, if any, may be found between derailment factors emerging from previous Center for Creative Leadership research and factors emerging from this study?

Using the research questions above to guide the study, in-depth interviews were conducted with people who had intimate knowledge of the derailed president, his or her leadership style, and the factors and events leading to the derailment. Nineteen interviews were completed from four sites. Interviews were conducted with the current sitting president, a

member of the derailed president's senior leadership team, a faculty member who was familiar with the derailed president's tenure, and a board member who served during the derailed president's tenure.

Three interview questions guided the qualitative inquiry. These questions were adapted from Leslie and Van Velsor's (1996) Success and Derailment Interview Questions. The questions were:

1. What factors did you see as being associated with the departure of the derailed president?
2. What events may have occurred that contributed to or influenced the departure of the past president?
3. Is there anything else related to the departure of the president that you would like to tell me?

Participants were probed to elicit more information as needed during the interviews. Also, during the interviews chaining was used to identify participants who might also be able to provide additional information. Five participants were identified through the use of chaining.

Using data collected from the interviews as well as the analysis of information gleaned from public records and media sources, a wealth of data was available to analyze which resulted in the following findings.

## **Results**

### **Case Study 1 - University A**

#### ***The university environment.***

University A is small, public master's level university located in a rural area within the southwestern United States. The University has an enrollment of over 3,500 students, and employs approximately 120 faculty members and 520 staff members. The student population consists of 58% undergraduates and 42% graduate students.

University A offers twenty-eight undergraduate majors and twelve master's degree programs. University A has extended its educational offerings to eight centers throughout the state including a distance education program. University A is governed by a board of trustees who are appointed by the governor.

***Derailment themes.***

Interviews for case study one included the current sitting president, a board member, and a vice president who worked with the derailed president. The faculty member withdrew from the study in the final stages of the study. Due to changes at the institution, another faculty member could not be confirmed for this site. Analysis of the data collected during the interviews resulted in three derailment themes and three significant events leading to the derailment.

*Derailment theme 1.* The overarching derailment theme was the president's failure to understand and value the institutional culture. Many participants viewed the president's leadership style to be contrary to the nature of the college presidency. The derailed president came from a background in the fields of law and government. His leadership style was very different from what faculty and administrators were accustomed and one participant cited his tenure as "a failed experiment. He just had the wrong set of leadership skills."

The majority of the participants noted that his leadership style was not congruent with the expected norms of university culture, such as shared governance, cultivating relationships, and

seeking open dialogue among constituencies to bring about consensus driven changes. One example of his style of leadership was in his dealings with the board. He merely saw the board as a set of people that were there to support his desires and not to provide oversight to his presidency. One participant stated that,

He would really, he would, again, he was really cordial to the board, he clearly made his own decisions. He didn't consult the board in major decisions that were being made and he didn't feel like he needed to. He felt like he was the president of the university and he could do what he pleased and how he pleased.

His prior experiences in the political arena required a somewhat different leadership skill set than a college president's leadership skill set. Participants used words such as "very manipulative", "very aggressive", and "non-participatory" to describe his leadership style. One participant noted that "you didn't cross him or else you were you were going to basically get yourself in trouble. I, I was curious about the dynamic that his kind of leadership would provide for the university environment." Another participant noted that he,

Rather than using proven university process to move the faculty, he basically brought his political skills to use those to get a desired result and that clearly was a very huge clash um, it created an environment where there wasn't mutual respect, there was distrust, um and he, you know, as a result could not lead the university. The faculty completely shut down and they did everything they could to stop the progress that he was trying to accomplish.

The political nature of some of his decisions led to lawsuits and allegations of racial discrimination. As another example of the president's lack of understanding of university

culture, a media source said that “faculty leaders and others complained that the president excluded them from decision-making and punished those that spoke out.” These instances will be explored later in the events leading to derailment section. From his prior set of experiences, the president was accustomed to leading in a way that was more focused on the thoughts and vision of the leader without taking in to account the key constituencies with whom the president must interact with to effectively lead the institution.

*Derailment theme 2.* Derailment theme 2 involved the president’s inability to work with key constituents. The most obvious and perilous tensions arose between the president and the faculty. From the beginning, the faculty did not feel that this person was the best choice for president. A local newspaper stated that “(president’s name omitted) – who had no university management experience prior to taking the (university name omitted) post – was snubbed by the school’s faculty when it came time for them to recommend their choice for president.” A blog about the president also supported this sentiment and said that the faculty were disappointed that (name omitted) was chosen and mentioned that the president had said that his first step was to establish a relationship with the faculty. Unfortunately, a positive relationship was never cultivated between the president and the faculty.

The derailed president was unable to understand how the faculty play an important role and contribute to the management of the university through shared governance. One participant was giving an example of the president’s interest in establishing a new major at the university and said that

So, I think those are kind of things that he would get really excited about that the faculty really hadn’t bought into or thought were important and he would just say this is where

we're going. The faculty would sit on the sidelines and say no, we're not. That was where, that was really where the conflict existed. He had one view of how to get to a place and the faculty had a different view.

The president also wanted to change the tenure system on campus. One participant noted that he never liked the tenure system and "couldn't wrap his head around it." He wanted to bring a sense of accountability to the faculty. One participant said that his efforts to engage the faculty into the school community was not well received by the faculty and the president became disillusioned when the faculty members were not as involved as he would have liked them to be. As a result of this disillusionment with the faculty, according to board minutes, a year into his presidency he presented the board with a proposal entitled "Faculty Standards of Professional Practice." One participant noted that when the president "tried to hold the faculty more accountable, they bucked." An additional key factor in the escalating tensions between the president and the faculty was the denial of tenure to four faculty members which resulted in campus unease and ultimately caused the university to be placed on the American Association of University Professors' censure list. This will be further explored in the derailment events section as it played a large role in the board's decision to terminate the president.

Another key constituency group that the president was unable to work with was the state legislature. According to the board member, the derailed president had strong "political connections" that the board had initially favored; however, the former president had also made some pretty strong enemies and as a result the school's state funding was actually lowered during his tenure. One participant stated,

And I think that the thing that we failed to understand was that over the span of 30 years he had great successes, but he built huge guild of enemies right in the place where he had to go back and ask for money. So, you know people in politics they don't forget things very easily and I think that what he saw was he had his very loyal troops that supported him in there that did everything they could to help the university out and he had people who hated him that did everything they could to stop him from being successful and the university got caught in the middle of that. It was really bad and it was not good for us from a funding point or program standpoint.

The final key constituency group that the derailed president failed to work effectively with was the board of trustees. During the president's short tenure, the board leadership and composition changed dramatically. According to newspaper articles and board minutes, the chairman of the board was replaced less than a year into the president's tenure. The president had his own view of leading the university and that view often differed from the board's view. When asked about the derailed president's relationship with the board, one participant said,

It wasn't a relationship that was mutually, um, beneficial to one another meaning he basically decided he would lead the way he wanted to lead and the board was merely the official, um, official board that had a function, and despite how they would go about it, he would still do his own thing.

The president in his dealings with the board failed to understand the role of the college president and the importance of balancing the desires and wishes of the board in relation to the president's vision for the university. Throughout the president's tenure, the dynamics of his relationship with the board were turbulent.

A year and a half into the president's tenure, according to board minutes and local newspaper accounts, the president's duties were reexamined and renegotiated. The board decided to turn over the day to day responsibilities of leading the university to the vice-presidents and give the embattled president a more focused and limited role, so that he could focus on the external relations, such as fundraising and working with the state legislators. This change was supposed to encourage a more positive, successful tenure as president. When asked about this change of duties, a participant said, "it was the board's belief that they wanted him to be successful and we wanted to do everything we could to put him in an environment where he could be successful." According to one participant, the board felt that the president was a very effective communicator and an outstanding advocate for the university and its role in educating the type of students that were enrolled there. A participant stated,

We believed that you know to be successful with him as president at the time that it would be better if he had external duties and he turned over the day to day operations and the university to someone who is more experienced in the management and delicate balance of some of the operations.

Again, the president's lack of ability to understand how to lead a university caused problems with his relationships with the faculty, the board, and his senior leadership team. Despite the renegotiation of presidential duties, the president did not allow his vice-presidents the authority to manage the internal operations of the university. The participant went on to say,

Now despite his continued, you know, say so that was happening, he, even for his provost and the VP for academic affairs, he was such a strong presence that they wouldn't make any decisions without his acknowledgement or his participation. So even though the

board had clearly separated what he could and could not do um, his presence on the university and how he managed his vice presidents were such that they still sought leadership from him.

One participant said the vice-presidents urged the board to reconsider their decision to split the president's duties between internal and external duties, citing the fact that they needed someone who could provide leadership to all areas of the university. Despite the belief that the vice-presidents were correct, the board did not feel that the president was capable of leading the university forward in a productive, healthy way. One participant said,

And I think that to much degree his vice presidents were right. You have to look to a president to not only provide leadership, not only externally, but internally. It's not fair to the institution to carve up duties and say the president is going to do this or that, you have to have a president that is responsible for the engine as much as they are the menu that is being offered to their passengers. But we were trying to separate it and we learned very quickly that it wasn't going to work....

Within four months of the renegotiation of duties, the president was suspended and later relieved of his duties.

*Derailment theme 3.* Derailment theme 3 involved the president's failure to build and lead a team. Within two months of taking office, the president completely changed the composition of his senior leadership team. All new vice-presidents were hired and many lacked a strong background in higher education. One participant noted that the derailed president just "really didn't have the experience or the depth of knowledge to understand how to select, um, people for very critical positions within the university." One participant noted that "he made

some personnel decisions very early in his tenure that, um, were very controversial.” One example is his selection of provost. The provost that was chosen was a law professor from a school that the president had once attended. One participant noted that the president’s choice for a provost seemed rather strange,

Again it seems that from a distance, reading about it in the paper, I do recall it seemed strange to me at the time that an attorney who had minimal higher education experience would choose to hire another attorney with minimal administrative or academic experience....that didn’t seem, um, uh, the best decision in the world.

According to one participant, the derailed president “chose not to follow advice that some offered him to hire a provost that would handle much of the academic, and day to day operations of the university.” His choice for a provost, who was a law professor, to lead a faculty where no law school existed was an interesting choice and one that did not help to ease tensions with the faculty.

The president also lacked administrative skills, as well as academic leadership experience. One participant noted,

I don’t think that he had much management experience either and running the (former leadership position omitted) is uh, which he did, is just not the same as running a complex organization like a university and um, I think that both of those were. There certainly have been politicians who have been successful, become successful university presidents, but as often as not that doesn’t work terribly well, because they are significantly different skill sets and experiential knowledge that uh, uh, are very helpful in these jobs.

Another participant wondered who was giving him advice because some of his decisions were inconsistent with the views of the senior leadership team. According to the data, it seemed that the vice presidents were for the most part unwilling to challenge the president. Most of the participants viewed the vice presidents as merely “yes men” to the president. One participant when asked about the level of input from the senior leadership team said,

I don't know because we always viewed them to be great, loyal troopers. We never could really count on their independence which is really sort of sad for a board because you really shouldn't have to worry about that. You should know that when a president is making a decision that it is inclusive and well thought out and that everyone has developed.

In addition to making radical changes to the senior administrative team, the president also made some other controversial human resources decisions. He dismissed two long-serving and well-respected satellite campus directors and replaced them with an alleged political crony and a person that was on the search committee that hired him. According to a local newspaper,

Some of those hiring calls were a major factor in deteriorating relations between the administration and the faculty. (Name omitted) cleaned house in top administrative ranks. One vacancy was filled with a political crony and two others by promoting faculty delegates to the search committee who had supported his bid for the presidency. Another administrator he terminated claims discrimination in a lawsuit.

A participant echoed the sentiment of the media account and said that the president removed

A very highly regarded director from the (satellite campus name omitted), and uh, from his position and replaced him with a former legislator who really didn't have a resume

that suggested he was a good choice for the job. And he did that similar things with a couple of other positions. So he was, he was judged by many to have removed basically competent people from their positions and replaced them with people who weren't, uh, who didn't bring the experience and the qualifications that you would expect to find for someone in those jobs.

In addition to relieving these administrators of their duties, he also fired a faculty member based on allegations of improper behavior some ten years prior to her employment at the university. According to local media reports, this tenured faculty member was a faculty leader who had spoken out against his leadership, even before he became president. The faculty member was later reinstated and cleared of any wrongdoings after a lawsuit.

In summary, a participant said “he wasn't committed to bringing in experienced academicians to make and help advise him on some of those important decisions.” Not only did his personnel decisions continue to put key constituents on alarm, but they also caused problems with accreditation and the American Association of University Professors. These problems will be discussed in the following section.

### ***Events leading to the presidential derailment.***

*Derailment event 1.* One critical event that led to the derailment of the president was the denial of tenure of four faculty members. The derailed president recommended that four of seven tenure track faculty members be denied tenure even though the faculty members' departments were in support of their tenure proceedings. Allegations arose that tenure was denied based on racial discrimination and subsequent lawsuits were filed. According to a local newspaper, after this board meeting, over two dozen tenured faculty members wrote letters to the

school's accrediting agency about how the president was "promoting an atmosphere of fear, hostility, and intimidation." Many people alleged that the derailed president was using tenure as a way to send messages to people who had disagreed with him on campus matters. One participant noted,

Lots of it, um, I think was believed to be politically driven um, and you know, whether we are sure or not there was a feeling on the board, that he could potentially use something as important as tenure as a way of send messages to faculty that if you didn't abide by his set of rules, that even if you were tenured that you could be placed on administrative leave for interesting charges, that you know were never even true as in the case of faculty member, or you would be denied tenure when you should have been granted it.

Another participant said,

He was, through all of these decisions rightly or wrongly he um, he was perceived as a racist, um, and uh, (long pause) trying to think of the right words, um, um, (long pause) um, and an arrogant and um, ineffectual administrator.

As a result of these tenure denial decisions and the faculty's public outcries, the institution was placed on the American Association of University Professor's (AAUP) censure list. The events regarding faculty tenure and promotion decisions also caused the university's accrediting agency to move the school's review date ahead of schedule by two years.

*Derailed event 2.* Another event that contributed to the derailment of the president was the escalating mistrust between him and the board of trustees. The mistrust stemmed from the president's decisions on tenure denials and other hiring decisions as well as other decisions he

had made. As a result of these decisions, the president was named in several lawsuits alleging discrimination. One participant stated,

There was a you know, just a, a period of time that the board was able to observe his leadership and determine through a series of decisions that it just wasn't right for the school. Whether it was um, dealing with procurement issues, certainly his presidential fund that was well publicized, to the core issues, the lawsuits, the, the um, the way that he was managing the faculty, the um, denial of, recommendations of the denial of tenure which the board denied that thinking we could trust him which you have to do with your president and the realization through those lawsuits that he really didn't have the depth of experience to make uh, to make objective decisions on who should be granted tenure and who shouldn't.

The lawsuits were a chief factor in the growing mistrust between the president and the board. The lawsuits stemmed from the tenure denial cases, as well as the personnel decisions that were mentioned in derailment theme 2. Several participants mentioned these lawsuits as an important event that contributed to the derailment of the president. A blog reported that over \$750,000 was paid out to settle the lawsuits.

The growing rift resulted in a board meeting where the president and the board discussed a critical change in presidential responsibilities. During this board meeting, the board decided to give the president a more external role and relieve him of his day to day responsibilities on campus. According to interviews and board minutes, this restructuring of leadership duties was an attempt to give the president duties that were more of a match to his particular skill set. According to one participant, the board wanted the president to be successful and they believed

that by letting him focus on fundraising and more external duties that he could have a successful presidency. However, four months later the president was suspended, and later relieved, from his duties.

*Derailment event 3.* The third tangential derailment event was the media's coverage of his presidency and the belief that the coverage did influence public opinion in a negative way from the beginning. At the onset of his presidency, the media were abuzz with the events surrounding the president's inauguration proceedings. One participant noted that they felt that the ceremonies surrounding the events set the tone for the media's response to his entire presidency. The participant said,

I don't think it was ever his personal agenda to have the inauguration, but at that point a lot of the stuff, I'll use the term celebration that was occurring around him, around (name omitted) being on campus, a lot of it was coming from the board chair at that time.

The events surrounding the presidential inauguration included a dinner and a golf tournament which raised money towards a presidential lecture series. However, when the letters were going out to people around the state, it was perceived in the media to be more of a political fundraising event. One participant stated,

I don't know who got those letters, but people were sent those letters and I think what happened was because of his political background a lot of political individuals were sent those letters and it may not have looked like it should have. It looked like he was doing a political fundraising instead of doing a fundraising for a lecture series. I think that, I think if I were from the outside looking in that's how it would have been interpreted.

Looking back in retrospect, one participant noted that,

We would have these conversations about how this had to be an elaborate and it really got its grandioseness from all of the hoopla. You know was it him or was it everyone else around him wanting to make it happen?

There was a lot of pomp and circumstance surrounding his inaugural proceedings and it is hard to distinguish whether it was meant to raise money for his presidential lecture series or because he wanted a lot of flair for his inauguration. While this event did not lead directly to the president's derailment it is indicative of the media scrutiny that was present during his tenure because of his previous status as a public figure.

#### ***Summary of derailment themes and events for University A.***

In sum, the president at site one derailed after only two years at the helm of the university. According to the participants in this study, the derailed president failed to understand and value the university culture. As a result of his background in politics, he often approached matters with an aggressive, non participatory political nature that led to his inability to work constructively with the faculty, as well as the board. He was also unwilling to hire vice presidents, particularly a provost, who could supplement his lack of academic leadership experience. Three main events contributed to his derailment. Those events include the denial of tenure to four professors, a growing mistrust between him and the board, and his tenuous relationship with the media.

#### **Case Study 2 - University B profile**

##### ***The university environment.***

University B is a medium sized, public master's level university located in a rural area within the southeastern United States. The University has an enrollment of 7,100 students, and

employs over 250 faculty members and over 300 staff members. University B is part of a university system, composed of three universities, one medical school, and three special institutes, and governed by one board of trustees. The student population consists of 94% undergraduates and 6% graduates.

The campus is in a period of growth, and has led the system in its online degree program for nontraditional students. University B offers 47 undergraduate majors and six graduate degrees. University B offers degree programs in three satellite locations and has established strong partnerships with local high schools to facilitate dual credit programs.

***Derailment themes.***

For this case study, the president immediately following the derailed president was interviewed, along with a member of the senior administrative team, a senior faculty member who was serving in a key academic administrative position, and a board member. Chaining of these participants resulted in two more interviews of faculty members, both of whom served on the faculty senate during the derailed president's tenure. Analysis of the data revealed four themes related to the derailment of the president. Four events were seen as being central to the derailment of the president.

*Derailment theme 1.* Derailment theme one centered on the president's failure to understand and value the institutional culture. All participants expressed a frustration of the derailed president's inability to understand and value the institution's culture. One of the vice presidents who worked with him had served as the interim president before he got there and was assigned the task of helping the president during his initial transition into the office. This participant observed that the main reason why this president derailed was that he failed "to grasp

is exactly that balance of learning the culture and because you can't implement change unless you know the culture because the different culture, the very nature of it, may require a different kind of act." Despite this vice-president's guidance, the president failed to understand and value the culture of the institution he was leading.

All participants identified the campus culture as being "collegial, consensus building, and genteel;" however, the derailed president exhibited many behaviors that were in constant conflict with the nature of the campus culture. In marked contrast to the institution's former long-serving and highly regarded president, the new president did not value the collegial, consensus building culture of the campus. One participant said,

He was not one as a leader to try and understand the culture of the institution. Uh, he came in and had some ideas and I guess I would describe his leadership style as not participatory, it was not consensus building. It was here's what we are going to do, now let's do it.

The derailed president failed to take the necessary time to learn about the institution and develop relationships with key people before implementing major changes. One example of this is the president's decision to reorganize the academic divisions. This will be discussed in more detail in the events leading to the derailment section, but is important to note here as well. Within six months of taking office, the president set about to reorganize the academic divisions into colleges. The reorganization was viewed by two faculty members interviewed to "spread the power base.... He did not like power bases except in the chancellor's office, and I suspect that might have had something to do with it." Although there was a committee appointed to study the reorganization, the consensus among faculty was that the reorganization was going to happen in

the manner in which the president thought was best and that the results of the committee's study did not matter.

Another example of his failure to understand and respect the culture of the campus was evidenced in his arrogant attitude. Many participants viewed his behavior as having an air of superiority to the members of the campus community. One of the participants felt that the derailed president acted as if the current faculty and administrators were not smart enough to know how to operate a university. He said that he felt the president's attitude was "you guys don't really know what you are doing, but don't worry I am here to save you." This sentiment was shared by a faculty member, who said, "His premise was he was smarter than anybody here, and that we hired him to lead us out of the dismal doom that we were headed to." The same participant went on to say "his perspective was I'm the anointed one. I was elected to do this because I am smart and I can talk and I can....So don't get in my way. I know what is best for you type of thing." Despite the fact that the university was moving in a favorable direction and experiencing the highest growth system-wide, participants expressed frustration that the president still felt that he was the one who was chosen to save the campus.

The final subset of this theme was the president's apparent lack of willingness to value the collegial culture of the campus. One participant mentioned that,

This campus culture was one of a lot of mutual friendships, you work with people, and I discovered that when I got here that you could get people to do whatever you wanted you just have to approach it the right way.

The same participant said,

You can get everything you want out of the people here, you just have to lead them, you couldn't push them. If you push them they were going to break and push back. And that's really what it starts with, he came in and his personality, I don't think it was a good match for the campus.

The president failed to form the kinds of collegial relationships that the campus constituents expected of their leader. All participants noted that in the majority of instances when he would make a decision he would just announce it, often times there would be no attempts at consensus building. One faculty member highlighted this by saying, "with him, it was just he would come out and it would be this is what we are going to do. And so, he didn't adapt well to the very openness of this campus." His unwillingness to respect the culture of the institution caused anger, turmoil and grief among faculty and administrators. One senior faculty member remarked that,

I despised their leadership style. I wanted to get them out of that role where they were hurting the community, hurting the university, and hurting the employees, hurting the culture of this campus, which I had known not to change since I started as a freshman in the 1960's.

This behavior also led to derailment themes 2 and 3 in that the president was unable or unwilling to work with his senior leadership team and key constituents in collegial and mutually respectful ways.

*Deraiment theme 2.* Deraiment theme 2 was the president's failure to build and lead a team. One issue within this theme was the president's choice of a vice president for academic affairs. This decision will be expounded upon in the events' section, but is important to examine

here. The vice president for academic affairs was responsible for denying tenure and promotion to several well-respected junior faculty members on campus and one faculty member had this to say,

They simply got one sentence letters back from (vice president for academic affairs – name omitted) saying tenure denied or promotion denied. They would set up a meeting to go and talk with (vice president for academic affairs – name omitted) and he said I don't know that's just what (president-name omitted) told me to do.

One faculty member, said “we always felt like, the faculty felt like the vice chancellor was a hatchet man. And that goes back to the search. (President - name omitted) was looking for someone that he could manipulate and play.” The vice president for academic affairs caused numerous problems among the faculty and was seen as one of the main factors related to the president's derailment.

Another sub-theme was the president's unwillingness to take advice from his senior leadership team. One participant said,

I was trying to say I really suggest that you do this, then after about six months I'm like he's not going to listen to anything. ...but I just saw that he really wasn't interested in other comments I would make and it wasn't just me.

Within his senior leadership team, there was significant turnover in that two vice-presidents stepped down upon his hiring. Also, one participant noted that “the ten administrative leadership positions immediately below the chancellor level had been occupied by twenty-three different individuals: two years, ten positions; twenty-three individuals.” Toward the end of his

tenure, even the board felt that it was necessary to have one of the vice presidents intervene and “get him to narrow his projects.”

*Derailment theme 3.* Derailment theme 3 focused on the president’s failure to work with key constituents. Four key constituency groups that the president failed to foster and maintain effective relationships with were key alumni and donors, faculty, the academic deans, and the local community.

One group of key constituents that the president was unable to work effectively with was the academic deans on campus when he was appointed president. Four out of the five deans that were serving when he came to be president had resigned within the first year of his tenure. During the reorganization of academic departments which will be addressed in the derailment events section, the deans quickly determined that they were unable to work with the president and sought new positions. According to one participant, the deans were concerned about the lack of input that they had within the reorganization process and felt that the organization structure that was imposed “really breaks where I want to take the college.” Another participant said that the deans who left did so because “they just didn’t want to work for this guy.” Only one dean remained at the campus throughout his presidency. The president’s choice of a provost also led to ill feelings between the president and deans as well as the faculty.

In addition to the academic deans, the president also had a difficult relationship with the faculty. One participant noted that during the president’s tenure “there was an exodus of faculty.... We had approximately 48 faculty and some 60 during the last two years that left, out of a faculty total of about two hundred and forty. Well, anyway, there’s lots.” Faculty felt like he did not value their input and one participant noted,

You get the impression he thinks we're not smart enough to have credible input to that.... University faculty who are the smartest minds in the world are not going to tolerate that. And, while he was smart and capable, for him not to be understanding of this is just hard to fathom.

Another participant noted an interaction that the derailed president had with a chair of excellence within his college. This interaction highlighted the president's inability to provide positive direction to faculty members as well as his lack of communication skills. The participant said,

The chair of excellence was concerned about maybe the chancellor's going to pull away some money that supported the chair of excellence. So he just would ask for a meeting, the chair at the moment. He went over there and stayed for an hour. And he started, at the beginning, he said, "What I'm here for is to try to...." The chancellor said, went into this long, mini-tangent explanation of what he thought about.... He was rambling all over the place. The chair of excellence was sitting there, and the chancellor had already told him he had an hour, so he knew that the hour was up at, let's say, 10:00. And he'd looked at his watch, and it was five 'til 10:00 and he still had never asked his original question. And he said, "I finally just had to be rude and say, 'Chancellor, I'm concerned about it.'" And the chancellor said, "At this point, everything's up for grabs. I can't tell whether you've got a job here or not. We've got to tighten the budget" or whatever he told him. He came back here; he was scared to death. And I said, "That's the way he is; don't worry about it. You're going to be okay." He said, "I can't. I'm sorry." So he started applying (he was chair back into my college). The next thing I know, he's got a dean's job at (another institution – name omitted).

The president also had trouble maintaining positive relationships with alumni and major donors of the university. One participant noted,

I'd had donors tell me, "I will never give another dollar to the university." I can't say all of them, but I talked to several substantial donors. "I will never give another dollar to the university. That man is a maniac" or "that man treated me like I was, didn't count, or whatever."

The president made fundamental mistakes with alumni and donors, including not listening to their desires and wishes and alienating them. One participant gave two examples of this:

There was one man that owned, he's dead now, but he owned, at the time, a, I'm going to say I think it was around a 600-acre farm. It had a really nice facility on it that he would let groups come out and, take a group of 50, and have like a retreat, have a place to.... He told me that he had come to the chancellor about giving him a will to give that to (campus name omitted). And the chancellor brushed him off. And I don't remember exactly how he put it. He said, "He brushed me off." He said, "I thought maybe he misunderstood, so I waited a few days and I came back later." And he's the kind of guy that dresses in overalls. And he said, "He not only brushed me off; he insulted me." He said, "I wouldn't give the university one penny as long as that man is working in that capacity." Now that's just an example. Another example: one of the people who raised money, and I'm certainly not going to say who it is, but raised money for the campus, had taken him out to meet a donor. And the chancellor talked the entire time. And, instead of listening to what the donor wanted, and, the employee told me later, he said, "He'll never go with me on another trip again."

Again, the president failed to understand how important it was to cultivate and promote key relationships with alumni and donors.

Another key constituency group that the president failed to foster positive relationships with was the local community. The school is in a very small, rural community that had always maintained a positive town and gown relationship. According to one participant, the president failed to establish a strong community base that could have rallied to his support. The participant said,

He really didn't get out into the community, so there wasn't a strong community base to say I saw (president's name omitted) downtown and saw him at church, or I saw him at the Rotary meeting and you know so if somebody said something, someone might say, you know I didn't see that. Probably caused by, I think he would have been a lot more engaged in the community and the campus if, uh, hadn't (personal issue that affected the president omitted).

*Derailment theme 4.* Derailment theme 4 was the president's lack of effective communication skills. Due to the small size of campus, the president's lack of communication was evident from the beginning and led people to mistrust the president. One participant noted that the campus had always been "very open and communicative".

The derailed president did not interact in meaningful ways with different constituencies on campus and this was a very different form of leadership than the campus had seen in years past. One participant noted that because of his lack of communication that he did not think that people "had the opportunity to see how bright he was." His communication style also caused people to describe him as insincere. One participant said,

He made a dashing impression, but he did not make a personable impression. He would come on the scene, and he was a great barker. He was a good speaker. But once you were around him a little bit, he didn't have sincerity. One of his great failings was a lack of sincerity. In fact, he even said one time, "I can fake sincerity as well as the next guy." He told a group of us that, and that was right after I met him. And I knew right then, that this guy, I didn't form an opinion. I thought, well, maybe he's got a little arrogance, but we can work with that.

Another issue with the president's lack of communication skills was that he was perceived as someone who "talked more than he listened". Many participants noted that "he liked to talk." One participant said,

He had little patience for listening to other people; and if you asked to meet with him about something, he would talk for about 95% of the time, and you'd have to really whisk to get your question in before he was out of time. He loved to talk. He did not like to listen.

Another participant said, "over and over and over people would go to him and try to present a case or talk to him and never get a chance to say anything." Still another participant concurred that when he was interviewing on campus he quickly realized the president was not a good listener. The participant said "I don't know how many people told me that the (name omitted) talked a lot. Well that comes back to he talks, but he doesn't listen."

The derailed president also made statements that were "brash" and "off the cuff". These statements led participants to believe that he lacked the interpersonal skill of understanding how he was perceived by others. One participant gave this example,

He did not know how people felt because he did not listen to people. He did not try to gauge their reactions. It's as if, "I don't really care what you think. I'm in charge" kind of thing. He once made the statement that "I like to be in charge of the money and give it out as I see fit." He made that statement in a group of the administrators one time. He said, "I like to be sugar daddy." He sounded like a moron, but he really wasn't. He was really smart. But that was one thing that he was very ignorant on: how people perceived him and how to be a leader.

His lack of listening skills caused people to leave campus. This lack of interaction, perceived insincerity, and lack of intrapersonal perception led to mistrust and frustration from all constituencies within the campus community, except for the board.

According to participants, he also lacked the ability to articulate his vision and solicit buy-in from the campus community. One participant said,

You know he was not an incompetent person whatsoever. He was very bright and had good ideas; but if you have a good idea and you burn down the barn to get it implemented, then the horses aren't any better off.

Many of the participants also cited the visionary nature of the president, but noted that he was unable to communicate that vision because of his poor communication skills. One participant said he was

The most visionary individual I had ever met. He had a lot of excellent ideas for what a university could be and where it could go. He could not translate that into action. He just by his personality, he didn't stop talking.

Another participant said that he felt the president often tried to “do everything by force. At least at the very time I was here and that was because he lost the backing of everybody on campus because he was moving too fast or making too many changes and forcing change.” Despite his good ideas and intelligence, people on campus felt like he often burned bridges and lacked the finesse that was necessary to implement change at this institution.

Another manifestation of his lack of communication with the campus community was his failure to respond to email communications. The participants who interacted with him from a senior leadership team perspective were especially quick to note that he “just did not respond to email.” One participant noted that he felt that “he thought it was below him so he never did respond.” Members of the leadership team would send him emails and “say here’s a suggestion on something or I think you are doing a good job this, or I’ve got this idea. He did not respond to email.” Participants perceived him to be arrogant because of his lack of email responses. One person said,

Even though he was outgoing you know, I just couldn’t get over, I mean you can be tied up with emails, I can understand that, but I mean it was kind of a joke when you send something to him it just kind of goes in to a black hole, I mean nobody, I mean he doesn’t, it was almost like I am above that, he just I am the chancellor and you, and then there all the little folks.

In fact, the very event that illuminated his lack of ability to lead the campus to the board was in direct response to his failure to respond to an emailed letter asking for a private meeting to discuss his leadership on the campus. This event will be detailed in the following section, but is important to note here as well.

In conclusion, the president's lack of communication led to a climate of fear and distrust among many members of the campus community. All participants noted that they personally, as well as their perceptions of the general consensus on campus, could not trust him as they felt like he made decisions that were in his own best interest and not what was best for the institution. One participant expressed this feeling of mistrust by saying,

You know in a warm, embracing culture I think, it's natural that you want your leader, or at least you perceive your leader to be a person that whatever decision they make, be it right or be it wrong, the heart of they are going to try and do what's best for the institution and I think that there was a feeling that he wasn't there yet.

***Events leading to the derailment.***

*Derailment event 1.* The first event that led to the derailment of the president was the reorganization of the academic structure. Within six months of the president taking office, the University was undergoing a massive reorganization of its academic homes which resulted in the current structure. Faculty members and key administrators were asked to serve on a committee to oversee the reorganization, but many felt as if the decisions had already been made by the president and the committee was merely for show. The underlying feeling on campus was that of mistrust and uncertainty during this reorganization.

*Derailment event 2.* Upon his hiring, the derailed president immediately sought a Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs/Provost. Again, there was a search committee but one participant who was intimately involved with the search process felt that the process was "preordained" from the beginning. The president made certain to tell the search committee to include women and minority candidates, and according to one participant became angry when he

found out that one of the deans on campus was included in the final pool. The participant felt that from the beginning the president wanted an outsider to fill this key position. The president chose a provost that came from African aristocracy and was, according to all participants, unable to work collegially with the deans because from his cultural perspective the deans were beneath him. The administrators who were also part of the senior administrative team had no problem working with him, but did note the problems and the tensions the faculty and deans encountered with the provost. One vice president said “I was his equal culturally, so I could work with him. But his deans, he treated them as culturally inferior because of his background and that helped to solicit animosity toward (president-name omitted).” Every participant interviewed mentioned that the president’s choice of a provost was not a good fit for the campus that resulted in campus turmoil and mistrust which ultimately, led to the president’s derailment.

*Derailment event 3.* Derailment event 3 was related to a piece of real estate on campus that one college operated. The president felt as if he knew better what to do with this land and set about to push forward his agenda. One participant said that he was “pretty much taking for the campus and did not let any (college name omitted) folks from our faculty, or me, have any input to that.” Another administrator who worked closely on this deal realized early on that the president had not been truthful with him. The participant had been promised an operating budget for this piece of property but when he got to the institution he realized that the president had other intentions. The participant said,

I said “where’s the operating budget” and he said “well you are going to have to take it out of your physical plant budget” and I said “no.” So he and I were ready for

confrontation right away because I was promised one thing and the reality was another one. So he was trying to force that through in that way. I didn't appreciate that.

The administrator felt like the president was trying to forcefully control and manipulate this situation to his benefit. The academic administrator who had been managing this property had to involve state commissioners because of the president's failure to compromise on this matter. Eventually, this event spurred the college's leader to respond in a very public way which is outlined in derailment event four.

*Derailment event 4.* At University B, a critical incident was the culmination of all the preceding events which had occurred and ultimately led to the departure of the president. After months of an unforgiving and escalating climate of distrust and fear, the lone tenured senior leader on campus confronted the president via email and asked for a private meeting with him to discuss his leadership and its effects on the campus community. The senior leader told the president that he would go public with his letter if the president failed to respond.

The president, who was at a system wide meeting in another city on the opposite side of the state, did not satisfactorily respond to the senior faculty member's email. The president's only response to the faculty member was to call within a half hour and say that he was shocked by this and that he had not had time to read the entire letter. It is important to note that the letter was five pages long. Due to the president's lack of a meaningful response, the faculty member then sent the letter to the campus community, system leadership, and local news outlets. One participant who worked closely with the president remembered calling him after the email was sent and saying,

You need to get back here and he didn't seem to think it was that big of deal. So he really didn't get back on campus for about two or three days later, and um at that time faculty were walking with picket signs and the news media was here and (a system administrator – name omitted) was sent down to assess the situation.

In the days following the email, the faculty and departments began sending letters and emails around the campus in support of the senior dean's email and called for the resignation of both the president and the provost. One participant said,

Departments, and I don't remember how many, but most of the departments on the campus, their tenured faculty would send an email and said, "We, the tenured faculty of X department support this effort to remove (president name omitted) or support (sender's name omitted) memo." And one department after another was doing that.

Two days after the email was dispersed, the students rallied in support of the academic dean. Despite this public outcry, the president "hunkered down" and leaned on the people within his senior leadership team to issue letters of support. Two senior administrators did send letters of support to the system as well as one faculty member. The participant who sent the letter that initiated the president's removal from campus said, "if he had contacted me and wanted to talk about it or try to work something out, I would have talked to him, but he never contacted me." Again, the president's lack of communication skills led to his derailment.

Within two weeks, the president was relieved of his presidential duties and given a position at the system level. The provost was also reassigned to other duties on the campus until he could secure another position.

### ***Summary of derailment themes and events for University B.***

The president at site two derailed after two and a half years. His failed presidency was a result of his failure to understand the culture of the institution he led; his failure to build and lead an effective senior leadership team; his failure to work with key constituencies including key alumni and donors, faculty, the academic deans, and the local community; and his lack of communication with the campus community. Four events led to the growing mistrust on campus which eventually rendered him ineffective at leading the institution and thus influenced the board's decision to relieve him of his presidential duties. Those include the reorganization of the academic structure on campus, the appointment of a provost who was not a good fit for the campus, the misallocations of a piece of real estate that was managed by one of the colleges, and the letter outlining all of these events sent to the campus community by the lone senior tenured member of the campus community.

### **Case Study 3 – University C**

#### ***The university environment.***

University C is a small, master's level institution located in the southeastern United States. The school was one of the leaders in wireless technology in its state and boasts a thriving online program that results in over half of the student body. The University has an enrollment of over 4,800 students, and employs over 350 full-time faculty and staff members. The student population consists of 45% undergraduates and approximately 55% graduate students.

University C is comprised of four colleges and three divisions, one of which is an online division, featuring over 26 undergraduate majors leading to a bachelor's degree. Several undergraduate programs are available that allow students to complete a degree at a neighboring

state institution. There are also several pre-health programs available to students, including programs that allow students to complete 2-year degrees in allied health areas on campus. Graduate students may pursue thirteen master's degrees and one education specialist degree with three concentrations. The online studies program offers two undergraduate degrees and sixteen graduate programs.

*Derailment themes.*

For this case study, the current sitting president who was a key academic administrator during the derailed president's tenure, a senior member of the derailed president's leadership team, a faculty member, and a board member were interviewed. Chaining of these participants led to the identification of another participant who was appointed to a senior administrative position within the derailed president's cabinet. Examination of the data resulted in four themes which led to the derailment of the president. One major event was critical to the derailment of the president.

*Derailment theme 1.* Derailment theme 1 was the president's problems establishing and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships. There were three central issues related to this theme: the president's anger issues, his lack of trust, and his need for an enemy.

The derailed president would often have fits of rage that would be directed at whoever was available at that point. When discussing reasons why the president was not given a contract extension, a local newspaper quoted a board member as saying,

(President –name omitted) has an unfortunate management style with his subordinates when he loses his temper. He also has been known to ignore members of his administration who have disagreed with him and to refuse to speak to them for days and

weeks on end. ...The way he treats certain subordinates appears to have led to a climate of fear among his staff at the University as they wonder who will be his next target. His temper was cited as being very easy to excite and one of his main problems when working with people. The derailed president was a leading administrator at the college when the former president was leaving and was subsequently selected as president. One participant said that the former outgoing president, who was a good friend of the derailed president when he served under him as provost, had warned him about his temper. The participant said that “although the outgoing president warned (president name omitted) that he was going to sabotage his own candidacy because of his temper, he attacked many people who used that damaging information to question him and to oppose him.”

Another participant gave an illustration of the president’s anger by telling about the time he was serving on a committee and asked the president, who was then provost, to welcome people to campus during a ceremony if the president was unavailable due to an emergency. The participant said,

He became furious, he shook his fingers in my face, he walked around his office, he told me that he did not play second fiddle to anyone and if we had wanted him to bring greetings to the audience we would have asked him and he did not play second fiddle. Basically that was it that he was angry, and I mean man was he angry.

Many of the participants also mentioned that he had a tendency to phone people at all hours of the night when he was disturbed by something that was happening on campus. One participant said, “I would get those calls typically, his timing was always dreadful. Friday afternoon, 5 o’clock, and then an hour of tirades, just made your weekend so wonderful.”

Another participant also noted the lack of respect of people's personal time during these telephone tirades,

I understand from talking to board members, he would call board members on his side and talk to them for two or three hours at night. I've talked to some of his senior staff at that time, like the provost and so forth, and he'd call at 11:30 at night, 1:00 in the morning, just be upset about something, and just wanted to talk. A young man who worked here, in institutional advancement I think, took most of that or the brunt of that, and he told me, "God, when the phone would ring at 1:30 in the morning, I knew who it was, and he just wanted to talk."

According to participants, his inability to control his anger would also manifest itself during these phone calls.

The president's inability to trust others also led to his problems establishing and maintaining effective interpersonal relationships. One participant noted that this lack of trust could have been the result of a previous failed presidency in another state. The derailed president served as provost at the institution before he was appointed president. During the interview period, someone from his previous institution sent packets of material about his failed tenure at the other institution to every faculty, board, and staff member on campus. Despite this information, he was still hired as president at this institution. A participant said,

He was a very kind person, but he had been so scarred in (state omitted) that when he came here I don't think there was trust. I don't think he trusted people anymore, and I think in some ways he would jump to conclusions over issues that he did not understand.

Due to this mistrust, the president often accused people of trying to sabotage his efforts on campus. One participant told a story about the president accusing him of trying to sabotage his bid for the presidency by “trying to drive him crazy.” The participant had simply suggested another person for a position on campus and when the president, who was then provost, talked with someone else on campus they made the remark, “oh that person will drive you crazy” which the president took to mean that the participant was nominating that person to the position in an attempt to drive the president crazy so that we would not have a successful presidency. The president went on to call and berate the participant for his nomination. The participant recalled the president saying,

“You know, I want to be the president and you are trying to prevent it by driving me crazy” and I said “I do not even know what you are talking about. Are you in your office? And may I come and let’s talk about this?” I was, I tried to be calm, but you, I could not describe how he was, and you would have to see or hear him in one of his moments like that.

The participant noted that after this altercation, their relationship never recovered because the president always believed that he was trying to sabotage him. The participant said, “it was a very traumatic event. And I never felt, I never felt from that point on that I had his confidence again.”

Another personality trait of the president that caused him to be unable to build positive interpersonal relationships was his need for an enemy. The derailed president was a man who liked to be challenged and would bring about enemies because of his nature. One participant said,

Well, (president name omitted) seemed in order to exist not only needed a challenge, but he needed an opponent. He needed an enemy. When it seemed that in the absence of any real conflict, he would create one and then he would go at it in that intense, obsessive, monomaniacal way. He spent a lot of time in a state of high indigene, intense ire.

This need for an opponent was also addressed in his failure to work with key constituencies, namely the board, and his failure to lead a team. When people disagreed with him they were not only wrong, participants said that he viewed them “as the enemy.” Another participant said “I came to believe that (name omitted) loved controversy. If things were going smoothly, he just wasn’t comfortable. He just liked controversy.” The derailed president would use his need for an enemy to unite his supporters. One participant said,

He would rally his allies and supporters against a common enemy and it seemed as this ultimately became a self-destructive behavior and as I said alienated folks who had at one time admired his qualities, saw his strengths, and fully supported him.

Another participant said, “he was the architect of his own downfall, because of that adamancy, because of that fever,...that those whom he was opposing, in many instances because of his need to have a target, his need to have an enemy.”

In conclusion, the president was unable to build and maintain positive interpersonal relationships because of anger issues, lack of trust, and his constant need for an enemy. One participant summed up his leadership style by saying, “he had a very difficult time with interpersonal relationships. And he had a temper that, just all of a sudden, would flare up.” These interpersonal issues resulted in his failure to work with the board as well as his failure to build and lead his senior leadership team. Both of these themes will be discussed below.

*Derailment theme 2.* The president's failure to work with a key constituency group was derailment theme 2. The president and the board were unable to maintain a positive and healthy working relationship. From the beginning, the board and the derailed president did not have the best relationship. The board was split on hiring the president in the first place because of the information received from his prior institution as well as concerns about his ability to be an effective president. One participant noted that he, after talking with other board members, probably influenced their decision about whether to hire the president more than he should have. In hindsight, he said that "he talked enough there, probably I meant to, to vote him in as president, which was very bad...it was bad."

The derailed president was unable to build healthy trusting relationships with the board and others on campus because of his lack of trust. According to one participant,

But when he got to be president... he just didn't have, I don't think he had enough people there at the university, looking back over it now, that believed in him and trusted in him. So if you've got people that don't believe in you, that don't trust you, it's hard for you to bring stability to a university. And when everybody just has heard so much about what you've done in other places, anything that he'd done, at the least little sign of something, that they just shut down. That doesn't help him. They were all afraid of him. And he was a guy that did not keep his word.

Another problem with his inability to work with the board was his unwillingness to compromise.

One participant said,

I don't think he was, he just wasn't able to bend, or whatever, or, you'd have, you'd come up to him with an idea, and he just couldn't, at a lot of times, he just couldn't see it. It's

hard to talk to him, like things like that. He was almost like he was in a cubicle, somewhere off by himself. And there was just, I think, there was so much mistrust.

The problems with the board came to a head during a real estate deal that was the major impetus for his derailment. The real estate deal will be discussed in detail in the derailment events section. The president and the board were unable to work together in mutually beneficial way. The board became an impediment to the president's ability to lead the university. One participant said the following of the relationship between the board and the president, "ultimately, got to that point because of micromanagement of the board. The board wouldn't move. The board wanted to tell (president name omitted) how to run the university and so forth." The university was placed on probation by their accrediting agency because of board interference during this time period.

*Derailment theme 3.* Derailment theme 3 was the president's failure to build and lead a team. There are three main issues within this theme which include his failure to build consensus, the president's alienation of his senior leadership team, and his need for unfailing loyalty.

The president was seen by many of the participants as someone who believed they practiced collaboration, but in reality it was only collaboration if you shared his opinion. Participants noted that he often had trouble building consensus among various stakeholders on campus. The president was a talented strategic planner, and would often hold strategic planning meetings with the senior leadership team and deans. The participants all viewed him as visionary, but sometimes he would have trouble trying to get people to buy into his vision. One participant said, "he had a great idea of where we needed to go, the vision, the strategic planning to get there: a real details person. But I think that sometimes he got lost in that."

The president had a troubled relationship with his vice presidents for many reasons. He had forced the resignation of one his vice presidents by stripping him of all his duties. Early on, he had alienated his provost and the other vice presidents that did not agree with him on every single issue. The vice presidents also frequently fell victim to his fits of rage and anger. One participant said,

I don't think he had enough people there at the university, looking back over it now, that believed in him and trusted him. So if you've got people that don't believe in you, that don't trust you, it's hard for you to bring stability to the university.

The president began alienating people within his senior leadership team because of his need for unfailing loyalty and support. One participant talked about how the president's need for loyalty caused him to alienate those within his senior leadership team. The participant said,

He slowly alienated, slowly sometimes, everyone, his most loyal supporters down, because he demanded unquestioning, blind loyalty, fall on your sword for me loyalty.

Even when they knew he was not doing the right thing. That he was going too far.

One participant recalled a conversation that he had with the derailed president when he was leaving.

And I remember that last conversation with him, and him asking me a question. And I'm sure it was a hard question for him to ask. He said, "Did nobody want to have a last farewell, to buy (president name omitted) dinner?" And I said, "I never got a call." I didn't say it exactly like that. I said, "(president name omitted), I don't know why there wasn't something." But he meant of his inner circle of vice-presidents and deans and that

sort of thing. There was a small reception for him before he left. And he wanted it, I think, something....

In the end, the alienation of his inner circle caused him to question why no one wanted to do something special for him when he was leaving the university. The relationships were broken to the point that people did not want to interact with him on a personal level when he was leaving.

The president's demand for unfailing loyalty from those around him caused many people on campus to turn away from him when they believed that he was going too far. One participant said that "as we move along chronologically, that ultimately (president name omitted) wanted to have either undying loyalty or incredible loathing and hatred. There was almost no in-between, no neutral position there." During his tenure as president, one of his senior leadership team was going behind the president's back to the board, and when the president found out about this he searched out everything he could about this person until he could find something on him to warrant relieving him of his duties. When recalling the president's decision to strip this person of his duties, one participant said, "I told you that he broke no disobedience, if he thought you were in any way betraying him, he was going to bring you down."

The derailed president at the end of his tenure was viewed by many within his senior leadership team to be "self-destructing." One participant said,

The truth was, he wasn't here moving forward. He was self-destructing. The um, the university, he was alienating people. You know, (person on campus – name omitted) was one that he had alienated big time. And even down to the point that at the end, he was alienating people. And I had pretty much been blocked out. I don't know if you know what a provost does, but a provost runs the university while the president is out doing

presidential stuff. And that's not a good thing for the president and the provost to be at odds. (long pause) So from that, it started with the board, but he had a lost within the university community, I think that there was one person, and the support was kinda outward. This guy is a good guy, he was smart, he knew right from wrong. He knew the difference between right and wrong. But in the community, divided. Some of the people would have walked the plank for him. He could inspire people. If you had read the articles from (state name omitted), one of the guys who had organized that smear campaign here, said if there was a book entitled, *1001 Ways to Alienate People*, (derailed president – name omitted) would have written it.

*Derailment theme 4.* Derailment theme 4 was the president's lack of effective communication skills. Participants cited the president's inability to converse with people, his failure to listen, his failure to build consensus, his failure to entertain alternative opinions, and his unwillingness to compromise as the primary factors of his lack of communication skills.

The derailed president lacked basic communication skills, such as his inability to converse with people. The president was extremely competent in the area of strategic planning and management. However, many of the participants felt that during these long planning meetings, that "he would talk to us, but I never felt that when we had these meetings that he would talk with us."

Failure to listen was another example of how the president lacked communication skills. As mentioned above, the president liked to talk to people on campus but not with them. Many participants cited his failure to listen to others as a factor in his derailment. One participant said, "he wasn't an administrator that listened very well. He basically had his own agenda." Another

participant said, “he was not a good listener. Once he made up his mind on something, he simply would not change it.” One participant talked about how the president, when the trouble with the board had reached its pinnacle, refused to speak with the members of the board. The participant felt like it was important for the president to work on the relationship with the board members because “like them or not, you have to work with them.” According to participants and local newspaper accounts, the derailed president was unable and unwilling to repair the relationship.

Participants also cited the president’s unwillingness to entertain alternative opinions as a factor of his derailment. One participant said,

I think (president’s name omitted) was very vindictive. And he was a, kind of a dictator. If you did it the way he wanted to do it, you were gold. Now, I understand I understand sometimes you have to be like that. But then, on the other hand, you can’t just rub everybody wrong all the time. You can’t do that. You’ve got to be flexible. In anything you do today, you have to be flexible. There are some things you don’t, you know, integrity, heart, things like that, you don’t have to be flexible.

His inability to compromise was also a major factor in his derailment. Several participants noted a picture that the derailed president had framed in his office. The picture was of an animal that was black and white. All participants said this picture basically summed up his unwillingness to compromise, in that “he was either black or white, with him there was no gray.” Speaking of the president’s inability to compromise, one participant said “well, if all of life is either black or white, then there is no room for compromise. That’s not a good position for a president to be in with his board, his faculty.” The participant also mentioned a personnel

situation where this character trait reared itself, “when he went after someone, again it’s that (animal name omitted). Black or white, you are guilty as hell or you are innocent. It didn’t matter the circumstances.” The president was viewed by the participants as someone who was not able to see multiple viewpoints and this inability influenced all of his decisions in a way that eventually led to his derailment at this institution. One participant said that he talked with him about his unwillingness to compromise and when recalling the conversation with the derailed president saying ““that’s a sign of weakness, (participant name omitted), when you are willing to compromise.’ Wow. Okay. I’m not talking about compromise, I’m talking about reaching our goal. And he could never see gray.”

This factor, his unwillingness to compromise, was fundamental to all the other factors in that the president was never willing to communicate with people who he viewed as having an alternative opinion. This unwillingness to openly communicate with those that disagreed with him caused him to have problems with interpersonal relationships, led to an ineffectual and tenuous relationship with the board and his senior leadership team.

***Events leading to the derailment.***

*Derailed event 1.* Derailment event 1 centered on the board of trustees and the president having a disagreement about how to proceed with a real estate transaction. Less than a year into the president’s tenure, the university began courting a very wealthy prospective donor who was a friend and a client of an influential board member. The school awarded this prospective donor with an honorary degree and according to one participant, “you could really tell they were courting him.” The derailed president made very positive remarks about this person when they were bestowing the degree and it led a participant to believe that the university

was setting him up for a major gift. The participant even remembered thinking that when he did give a gift the university would do anything for it. The participant said, "I felt the university was really kowtowing to him for some great gift to the university. You could tell by the way it was said when he got his degree. You know I just thought, could they make it less obvious."

The prospective donor offered the university the rights to use a large piece of property that he owned in another part of the state. The piece of property was a large, gated hunting preserve that included fully stocked ponds and an abundance of animals. The plan called for the university to build hotels and convention/meeting facilities on the property. The school would be responsible for the land and facilities on the property for 100 years, after that time the property would go back to the donor's family. The school would use the facilities to entertain important dignitaries and other influential donors. The school could also use the facilities and hotels as an experimental classroom on hotel management for students. The school would also immediately receive a gift of \$50,000 to furnish new computers on campus.

Throughout the proposal and negotiation phase, the prospective donor was legally represented by the most influential board member. After reviewing the contract, the president and others at the university felt that it was not a deal that was beneficial for the university because they would in essence invest in the property for 100 years only to have it taken away at the end of that term. Despite the fact that two other institutions had already opted not to pursue this deal, the school's board felt it was a good deal for the institution. One participant said,

So it became clear, crystal clear, that this was not good for the university in particular. It seemed like we were getting an awful lot, and this particular board member made it seem like we were getting an awful lot, but in actuality we were, the board member and the

owner of (property name omitted) would be making out like bandits, the university wouldn't, and (president name omitted) caught on to this. And it put him at odds with the most powerful member of the board who stomped off the board in public protest when the deal went south.

The president's unwillingness to accept this deal caused him to fall out of favor with the majority of the board.

The board also began having inner turmoil as a result of this real estate deal because half of the board members sided with the influential board member and the other half sided with the president. The board member who was legal counsel to the prospective donor was a long serving and influential board member whose familial ties led him to have influence with the governor, the legislators, and some people within the community. One participant described this board member as someone who was "known and feared locally because of his significant influence and power and his lack of reluctance to get what he wants from anyone he can." During this negotiation process, the board member relinquished his spot on the board, but used his clout with the governor to have the replacement board member be his law partner.

The derailed president, as addressed early in the derailment themes, enjoyed having a foe to battle with and so he became publically embattled with the board members who were in support of this real estate deal. The president would write jingles and draw cartoons about one particular board member and call him the resigned board member's lackey. The president would publically berate the former influential board member. The president also garnered support among community members and had them sign petitions in support of him and his leadership of the university. The local news media also provided extensive coverage of the deal and its

subsequent fallout. This caused great consternation and turmoil among the board members. One participant even talked about how the local community members would harass the board members and write inappropriate things about their family members on the roadside because of their opinions on the real estate deal and opposition to the president.

The majority of participants that were interviewed felt like the president was right in denying the deal because it was not good for the university. The board member was the lone participant who supported the deal and thought that it would have been good for the university. Despite their support of the president's choice to not accept the deal, the participants all believed that he approached the situation in a manner that was unbecoming of the leader of the institution. One participant said that the president's reactions and public scorn of the board was

It was below him, but he was so intensely angry about the injustices that were going on here, and he probably should have been, he should have been angered, but did he handle it in the right, of course not. He accosted this guy verbally out at the baseball field. And you don't do that to a board member, it's just not, it's not decorous to do so, it's just not appropriate. I don't care what they've done. So he had reason to be mad, but the way that he handled it.

This event was cited by all but one participant as the one event that caused the president to fall out of favor with the board and thus derail. It is important to note that as one participant put it, "this board was not without sin," and later the institution was placed on probation by its accrediting agency for board interference.

***Summary of derailment themes and events for University C.***

After serving two years at the helm of the university, the derailed president and board could not reach an agreement of a coveted contract and the president was relieved of his duties. The derailment was a result of the president's problems with interpersonal relationships, his failure to work with key constituencies, his inability to lead a team, and his lack of effective communication skills. One major event, a real estate deal with the university that was proposed by a very influential board member, was the impetus for the trouble with the board that eventually resulted in the derailment at site three.

**Case Study 4 – University D**

***University profile.***

University D is large, public master's level university located in a metropolitan area within the northeastern United States. The University has an enrollment of over 19,500 students, and employs approximately 640 faculty members and 500 staff members. The student population consists of 78% undergraduates and 22% graduate students.

University D offers over 100 undergraduate majors and master's degree programs. University D is part of a large system of master's level institutions within the state. The president of University D reports to a Chancellor. University D is governed by a system level board of trustees who are appointed by the governor.

***Derailment themes.***

For this case study, the current sitting president, a senior member of the derailed president's leadership team, and a faculty member were interviewed. Chaining of these participants led to the identification of two additional participants, one of whom was an

academic administrator during the derailed president's tenure, the other was a faculty leader within the system. No board members would agree to be interviewed at this institution. Examination of the data resulted in five themes which led to the derailment of the president. Four events were critical to the derailment of the president.

*Derailment theme 1.* The first derailment theme was the president's failure to understand and value the culture of the institution. There were two main issues within this theme – his failure to understand and value the mission of the institution and his failure to understand his role as president within the system.

The derailed president served an institution whose mission is to educate the people of the area and to take those students at whatever level they are and educate them. The central university system's mission purports that a measure of excellence is the "value-added" that graduates of the university were seen as possessing once they completed their degree. According to participants and media reports, the president never really bought into this mission of the institution. He was an outspoken proponent of more stringent admissions policies and the diminished role of remedial education at his four year institution. These opinions were in direct conflict with the mission of the system and the institution that he led. In fact, he made public statements to a political association of the city wherein he described the students using expletives and derogatory comments and saying that the concept of "value-added" as a measure of excellence did not make the university a great university. These statements were later used verbatim in the association's report as well as being highly publicized in the media.

The other issue within his failure to understand and value the culture of the university was his unwillingness to work collaboratively with the central administration. The derailed

president was unwilling to understand and appreciate that his presidency had to be within the confines of the system. One participant said,

I think that anyone who would be president in the (name withheld) system has to be very willing to work in a very tight system. The presidents do not have the flexibility that you would have in lots of other places....so this is not a good fit.

The president was viewed as someone that was in conflict with the university system's goals and mission. During his presidency, he advocated for merging his institution with a local community college and forming one large university outside of the purview of the university system. One participant stated that during system-wide retreats with the chancellors and other central administrators,

He would be a very difficult person in the room. He would talk a lot and object, and so I'm sure that it was tough, because I've had this described a number of times, for the chancellor to have someone really sort of flaunting his independence when the chancellor's trying to get specific things done that had to be done in the community spirit.

The president's inability to transform his leadership style to fit within the system's long established workings caused friction and escalating mistrust between the system administration and the president which eventually led to the derailment of the president.

*Derailment theme 2.* Derailment theme number two builds on theme number one; the president was unable to work with key constituencies during his presidency. Several participants noted that the president was not the campus's choice for president during his hiring, so that made the necessity for building relationships with the various constituencies even more important. One participant said, "at the beginning, to be fair to him, he came in without the support of the

faculty or administration or even the student body....His selection, I would say, for most everyone, was a surprise from the beginning.” According to some participants, the president was selected by the system administration as someone who might be more willing to operate within the confines of the system which made his later actions against the system more harmful to his presidency. The president was viewed as someone who would move from one constituency group to another. One participant illustrated this by saying, “he went from one group...That’s the other thing. He kept surviving by getting another support, another idea, another thing, you know; keep moving, but eventually, there’s no place else to go.” The president was seen as being unable to work with the faculty, the system administration, and the local community. Many participants talked about how the president never really took the time to establish those relationships and build the necessary rapport needed to get his agenda accomplished.

The president failed to develop a meaningful working relationship with the faculty during his tenure. Several participants noted that the derailed president was not the favored candidate among the faculty during the selection process, and the president failed to build trust and alliances with the faculty. One participant said that he “was not the choice of the faculty.” Another participant talked about how the derailed president was never viewed by the faculty as someone who was concerned with intellectual pursuits, despite his impressive educational background. The participant noted that the derailed president, “never seemed to any faculty as somebody whose primary interest was in intellectual affairs or intellectual issues. He was interested in building up athletics, to an inordinate degree.” Another concern of the faculty was that he was never viewed as a proponent of the faculty. One participant said,

When he would talk to the faculty, he liked to talk tough. He liked to say “we’re going to raise standards. We’re going to get smaller. The budget’s going to be more constrained. We’re going to go out and raise outside money. We’re going to do more with less.” He did that over and over again. He never, really, struck the faculty, in my opinion, as being an advocate for faculty. It was always “we have to change. This is something that has to be fixed, and fixed now; and here’s how we’re going to fix it.”

The development of a faculty retrenchment plan was seen by many as another example of how the president did not advocate for the faculty. Within his first year of taking office, the system directed the colleges to draw up plans in case of budget cuts. The retrenchment plan called for several faculty lines to be cut and in the past, according to a participant, presidents had “protected faculty lines over everything.” The retrenchment plan will be discussed in detail in derailment event number two, but the faculty did not look favorably upon the plan and it further diminished his credibility with this constituency group. Designing the plan within the early stages of his presidency could have been one of the downfalls of the plan and one participant said, “he may have been too green, or maybe just...He believed in flashy gestures for change.” Another participant noted that his ideas and the plan “couldn’t help, because as I said before, the faculty was suspicious to begin with....I just think it probably did not have the support per se from the faculty.” The president’s constant need for change and the faculty’s increasing apprehension for someone that they did not view as a trusted ally was detrimental to the building of this important and necessary alliance.

As evidenced in the preceding theme, the president did not establish a positive working relationship with the central administration of the university. There was an intense history of

conflict between the college presidents and system chancellor(s) when this president took office. Some participants felt like the president was hired because the system chancellor felt like he would work well within the system and not cause tension within the system. However, this notion of him working as an ally for the system did not work as well as the system chancellor probably envisioned. Within, eight months of his assuming the presidency, he was named as a finalist for another presidency. Participants remembered this event making the system chancellor “furious” and served as the first of many instances wherein the president chose not to “play within the confines of the system.” Additionally, the president went on to publicly denounce the system’s mission of remediating students and design a plan that would call for merging with a community college to form a university that would not be governed by the system. This constant tension eroded the confidence and goodwill of his initial ally, the system’s administration. One participant described the president’s failure to work with the system and his ultimate derailment by saying,

So he comes in and as you might expect he is trying initially to follow through and ingratiate himself with the agreement he had with (system – name omitted). What happened then, I mean, if you wanted the whole thing, is he overstepped what (system – name omitted) wanted to do; and when he felt that he needed to, he then tried to end run around (system – name omitted). And he did not really work with them; and when that happened it was over. He started to play games with (system – name omitted).

In fairness, it is important to mention that the president was hired by a chancellor, who according to participants, chose the president “to shake things up” at the college, and that chancellor left after a year and a half of the president taking office. Despite this change in

leadership of central administration, the president did not work well with the new central administration and this caused significant tension between the system, its board, and the president. The president's actions that were seen to be in direct conflict with the system and eventually, according to one participant, caused the system to be so enraged that they

Were going to move on him. And once they start to move on you they can kill you, because they start asking for orders. It's like the police stopping a kid for spitting on the street, because it's against the law. You normally don't arrest someone for spitting on the street. So you have all these rules and you use them when you want to: when you want to hammer someone. And they decided when they were going to put the pressure on him, and they did. They undercut his support in different places.

Another important constituency group that the president failed to work effectively with was the local community. One participant noted that the president had a tumultuous relationship with the neighborhood association and "was fighting them tooth and claw about various initiatives." One such initiative was the president's idea to create a residence hall within the local community. Instead of garnering support within the local community, his lack of political ingenuity led to a public disagreement between him and the opposed community leaders. The president simply did not seek out guidance or input from the local community and they fought back. Most participants thought that the idea of a residence hall for students was a good idea; however, the derailed president failed to gather the needed support. One participant said, "so the idea of a dorm: that was a good idea. And that was a case where maybe it was a case of bad execution because he got into a fight with the neighborhood." This negative publicity was not good for the university or his relationship with the system.

*Derailment theme 3.* The third derailment theme was the president's inability to build and lead a team. Participants viewed his working relationship with his cabinet and also his choice of a newly hired administrator to be central to his derailment. The president was according to participants given the directive "to shake things up at the college" from the university's central administration. One way to accomplish this was to make many changes at the cabinet level among the vice-presidents and removed many long serving administrators; however, several of these administrators were replaced with junior level administrators from within the college. A participant verified this by saying, "in his defense, when he was brought in to shake things up, one of the things that he was directed to do is remove much of the administrative leadership and academic leadership and replace them." Participants felt as if the new vice-presidents worked hard to protect the college from the president's leadership. When asked how these administrators protected the university from him, one participant provided this example:

Well, one thing was he was spending a lot of money. And he didn't pay a lot of attention to whether the budget would allow it or not. And so, some of the finance people would make sure that it didn't get processed so that the expenditure didn't occur. To keep the budget in balance. Or he might want to do something that they knew would be quite unacceptable to the central administration, so they would probably present it in a way that wasn't entirely straightforward so that the request would be denied, but the people who were already involved would be telling the central administration that they already knew that it would be denied. That was the sort of thing that they did.

Not only did the president not have the support of and faith from his vice-presidents, he was also viewed as someone who did not seek counsel from his vice-presidents. One participant said "he

had basically had, uh, a limited number of people that he worked with or worked through shall we say.”

Another aspect of his inability to build a team was his selection of two administrators that worked closely with him. The derailed president was seen as someone who had his “lieutenants” and often did not seek opinions from those outside of his circle. The derailed president surrounded himself with “yes people” and others who may have encouraged him to do things for their own benefit. A faculty member from within the college was promoted as a leading administrator and was viewed as some participants to be instrumental to one plan that the president advocated for that caused him to fall out of favor with the system, the proposed merger of the college and the community college to form a university. One participant said,

I actually think he only got himself into real trouble when (name omitted) took over. It allowed him to get off track in ways in which (previous administrator’s name omitted) and other people kept him from doing certain stuff that was really stupid. I’d put myself in that category, too. He had some people around him who kept him from doing well stupid things before. And then they were gone and he was surrounded by yes people, or, worse than that, people who let him do stupid things for their own reasons.

The president’s selection of an administrator that he had worked with on another campus was also cited as a contributory factor of his derailment. This person was given a position at the college that was a mid-level administrative position; however, he was “given a broader and broader portfolio” that did not fall in line with his hired responsibilities. The president and this administrator were seen by participants as having “a very small inner circle. Actually, at this

point, it wasn't a circle. It was a line of two." One participant remembered telling the derailed president that hiring this individual was his worst mistake.

The president's failure to build a strong leadership team was detrimental to his presidency and participants viewed this as an example of how he was unable to distinguish between people and ideas he should take seriously and those that he should not. One participant said,

He listened to a crazy idea and he ran with it, which is something he lacked the common sense not to do. His judgment was not good in lots of cases. Having good judgment is one of the key things any president can have. You've got to be able to judge people; you've got to be able to figure out whose advice to trust and which ones to nod and smile but then not follow through on those. He didn't have that.

*Derailed theme 4.* Derailed theme number four was ethical failures on the part of the president. The president, in many of his interactions with the college community, was perceived as being dishonest. One participant talked about how several administrators left the college during his tenure because they felt that the president was not "being honest in his statements, proclamations to the community, and so on." Examples of the instances where college community members regarded his statements as dishonest, and thus eroded the confidence of various constituencies, will be examined within this theme. Another important aspect of this theme was the president's failure to spend within the budget.

One such incident involved his public response on campus after being named as a finalist for another presidency within eight months of taking office. One participant said this of the president's denial of his candidacy when the news got out,

...some on campus, and I don't know if it happened with the university, he denied it.

And I don't know, we were at a public event and I quietly said to him "Look, the (name of newspaper omitted) has just published this." So he just denied, and then he tried to put some spin on it. The then provost, myself, and a number of others were not only taken aback by this, but taken aback uh, by the sort of glib denial which made us question his credibility which would mostly come back to haunt him in a bigger way.

The president's denial of his status as a finalist hurt his credibility among the college administration and faculty.

Another instance in which the president was perceived to be dishonest was when he was talking to the faculty about his retrenchment plan. When the plan spread through the faculty, he knew the plan was being seen as negative and his immediate reaction was to distance himself from the plan. One participant remembered the president's response to the faculty as, "but his first reaction was to say that was not my plan. It was just a draft, it was a quick denial. Not only did this undermine his relationship with the faculty, uh but also this question of credibility."

Another instance where the president was perceived by many as being dishonest was in his handling of the funding raised for the research center. The research center was seen by many to be the "last straw" for the president and ultimately caused the system to release him from his duties as president. This event is described in detail as derailment event 4. One participant commented that,

The main thing was his having promised a lot on the (research) center and brought in (researcher's name omitted) and promised a lot of money, and then the money wasn't there. And he lied about it. And the trustees felt that he had lost all credibility. And it

was played out very publically in the (names of three national and local newspapers omitted). A president can't survive that kind of bad publicity when all of the papers said it, editorially and in the news columns. They were questioning his credibility as a leader.

Another participant noted that his dishonesty was hard on the faculty too. He said,

some of these things, including and especially that last straw with the lying about having the money: that, at the university level, imperiled the faculty in particular, ...there were moves afoot among the faculty. Some of them had directly contacted people at the central office. It was a classic erosion of confidence.

The president's dishonesty about the research money was very widely covered in the national and local newspapers. Major newspapers were giving this event large headlines and prominent coverage and asserting that the president had deceived the system and the campus community.

Another aspect of this theme that led many on campus to question his credibility was his inability to stay within the university's budget. His overspending caused several problems for the university, as well as caused the university's private foundation to restrict his spending. One participant noted that the university's budget, under his leadership, had been overspent by several million dollars. One participant said,

So increasingly there was this business of spending. Either the college has both, obviously, its budget; but there is a foundation that essentially has been contributed by alumni, and so on. There came a point at which the foundation worked, severely restricted his access to money. Of course, we were too late.

Another participant said this about his poor fiscal management,

It was just the refusal to believe that, sooner or later, he would have to pay the piper, that the resources are finite, and you cannot force people to give you more money, especially when other people or other units of the university are acting responsibly. There were some things on which the spending was rather odd, particularly when it came to soft money. There were some judgments about how he did this. He was a believer in you do things in a big way. But the truth is that there was no fiscal responsibility there.

The president's failure to act ethically with finances and also his perceived dishonesty resulted in a loss of credibility with all of his constituencies.

*Derailment theme 5.* The derailed president was unable to communicate effectively. This lack of communication was manifest in the president's unwillingness to build consensus, his frequent tendency to "shoot from the hip," and his failure to effectively articulate his vision for the university.

One way the president failed to communicate effectively was his inability to articulate his vision for the college. All participants noted that the president would talk about his "grandiose ideas" without really doing his due diligence to see if the plan would work at the institution. One participant noted that "he overreached all the time. He wanted headlines. He wanted to be massively successful....He was always pushing for some sort of major change, to get headlines." The derailed president liked to gain headlines and thus talk about his plans for the college at any venue he could. One participant said, "he ran around. He had all sorts of ideas he threw up. He seldom did his homework seriously enough that anyone who didn't like what he was doing couldn't stop it at the door easily." Participants noted that the president could not understand

that things could not be done. The derailed president lacked discernment; that is he was unable to effectively assess an idea/plan to see if it was politically viable at the institution.

Another aspect of his inability to communicate effectively was his unwillingness to build consensus. For a president who had several “grandiose ideas”, he failed to lay the groundwork necessary to get the support of any of his major constituencies. All of the participants noted that in many instances he failed to solicit feedback from the various constituency groups. One participant said, “he just, simply, would want to announce that they were going to do it, and do it; didn’t get the buy-in from people.” One participant mentioned a newspaper article that was written about the president that basically according to this participant summed up his troubles at the college,

It’s a president comes in who thinks that his job is to go ahead and identify bold new gestures and doesn’t go ahead and prepare the way politically to go ahead and insure that these have a chance of being adopted and is not willing to go ahead and build those bridges, doesn’t go ahead and put in the time. He likes to tell people the way it’s going to be. And that didn’t work.

Another aspect of this inability to communicate effectively was his tendency to “shoot from the hip.” Several of the participants cited the president’s frequent tendency to speak without having a carefully thought out answer. One participant said, “that when pressed, he would improvise, and not always well.” Another participant went on to talk about the general consul’s perspective and said that “there was a lot of stress and strain because he would simply decide something and then they would have to try to make sure that it was an appropriate thing to do.” Many times his abrupt comments would be recorded in the local newspapers, for example

the derogatory statement he made about students wherein he used expletives, was an example of where participants regarded the president as speaking without thinking about the consequences. When describing this event, one participant noted that many faculty, alumni, and students were in support of high standards, but that when the president made that statement,

He shot from the hip again. He opened his mouth up in a way that would create a negative response in other areas including, of course, (system name omitted) which felt that he was putting a, bad-mouthing (system name omitted) as a whole.

In the end, participants perceived his inability to understand that his ideas could not be carried out, his frequent tendency to speak without thinking about the consequences, and his unwillingness to build consensus as arrogance.

*Events leading to the derailment.*

There was a series of events that began to erode the relationship between the president and the system. One event also served to disillusion the faculty even more than they already were with him, the unpopular retrenchment plan, and when these other events happened he had no constituency group that really advocated for him to remain as president. One event, the failure to produce funds that he claimed he had for a research center, served to completely erode the confidence of the system and that is when he was released from his duties. These events will now be explored in detail.

*Derailment event 1.* The first event that contributed to his falling out of favor with the system was the announcement of his candidacy at another institution within eight months of his taking office. A major national newspaper broke the story and announced his name as a finalist for the presidency at another institution. This caused immediate reaction from the system

chancellor. One participant said, “the chancellor was absolutely incensed and severed his relationship with the university. I think actually he was forced to withdraw from that search.” This initial event served as the first of several actions the president made to sever his relationship with the system level administration.

*Derailment event 2.* The second event that led to the president’s derailment was faculty retrenchment plan. This event led more indirectly to his derailment, but is worthy of including because it served as another example of his inability to work with a key constituency group and caused turmoil and tension among those he held in trust.

Throughout his tenure, the president was leading the institution in a time of severe budget restraints. All the presidents within the system were given a directive to develop a retrenchment plan and to discuss ways in which the college would cut costs. The president with a small number of faculty members, mostly from the sciences and his “favored” allies, drew up a retrenchment plan that caused outrage among the faculty. In the plan, he specifically called for several departments to either be abolished or significantly restructured in a way that the faculty felt was detrimental to the mission of the college and their scholarship. According to one participant,

He came up with some plans, some of which were, appeared to be vindictive, you know the English department had given him some trouble and so it was going to be, the term used was abolished and reshaped in the sense. Math and English, the social sciences, were being, were going to be decimated by such a plan.

The faculty was enraged by such a plan, and the plan was never enacted, but as the president and his team were designing the retrenchment plans, they never sought the widespread buy-in that is

needed when a college is looking at restructuring the academic organization of the college. The retrenchment plan served as a means for many faculty members to further distrust the president.

*Derailment event 3.* The third event that contributed to the president's derailment was his plan to merge his institution with a local community college and create a university. His proposal was seen by many participants to be coming from another of his trusted allies that had plans of his own that may or may not have been in the best interest of the president or the college. Despite this, the president still knowingly went public with this proposal and it created immediate tension with the system. Under this proposal, the newly created University would be outside of the purview of the system and would increase the president's autonomy and control. The president's proposal was on the heels of a report commissioned by the board of trustees that discussed how the colleges in the system needed to be more centralized and have a clear and focused system leadership. One participant said this about the president's proposal and the timing of it in relation to the system,

They're saying that we need to go ahead and have a university in which everybody moves more in lockstep. Well, clearly a president out there in the (city name omitted) who's proposing establishing his own university, that is proposing doing all kinds of things that never seem to happen, he's not going to be seen as a team player. And so, eventually the group that had the authority to remove him was the chancelleries' message to the board of trustees. And that's exactly what happened.

Again, the president's inability to work with a key constituency group, the system, contributed to his derailment.

*Derailment event 4.* The culminating event that led to the derailment of the president at the fourth site was the plan to create a multi-million dollar research center. The research center would have been a remarkable center to have on campus and was to be led by a world-renowned scholar on the subject; however, many people felt the college did not have adequate support for a research center of this magnitude. He also did not have the full support of the project from the system that he needed, according to one participant. The president set a fundraising goal of several tens of millions of dollars and in the end fell short of his goal. Through support of private donors and the system, he came within approximately 80% of his fundraising goal, which according to administrators who were familiar with the budget, would have been adequate to start the center. However, according to participants his arrogance got in the way and he demanded that it stay at the predetermined amount that he had stated. He began courting additional donors and one European pharmaceutical company offered support and would work through the researcher to make the gift. The president began telling the university administration and the media that he had all of the money to fund this research center. The system chancellor wanted to see evidence that the money had been allocated for the center by the outside sources; however, the local media found that the researcher had no idea about the funds from the pharmaceutical company. The system chancellor told the president he had a deadline to produce evidence of the gift or he would be released from his position. One participant said that his arrogance got in the way of the deal and he was insistent upon raising the originally stated amount. The participant said,

No. It had to stay at that. And eventually it got him into this absolutely ridiculous situation in which, you may or may not have found this in your research, he was given,

finally an ultimatum: raise it by such and such date or all bets are off. And he claimed he had it.

When the president claimed he had the resources, but did not produce the evidence of the money, the local media ran articles that stated that he misled the university administration and was not being honest about having the money. One participant said that when the researcher knew nothing about the money coming from the outside source, “that, basically, was sort of the last scandal.” Within days of the article, the president was released from his duties.

#### ***Summary of derailment themes and events for University D.***

The derailed president served the institution for four and a half years. The main factors that led to his derailment included his inability to value the culture and mission of the university, his inability to work with key constituencies, his inability to build and lead a team, his ethical failures, and his inability to communicate effectively. There were four events that contributed to his derailment in varying degrees. Those events included his being named a finalist for another presidency, an unpopular retrenchment plan that called for academic restructuring, a proposal to merge his college with a local community college, and finally, his failure to secure his predetermined amount of funding for a research center.

### **Cross Case Analysis**

#### **Derailment Themes across Cases**

Six derailment themes emerged from the data collected in this study. In order to answer research question 1, the factors leading to derailment and the frequency with which they were observed are presented. A table that summarizes the themes and their frequency follows (Table 3).

**Failure to understand and value the institutional culture.** The first derailment theme involved the president's failure to understand and value the culture of the institution. This theme included behaviors that were viewed as not believing in the nature and mission of the institution and an unwillingness to understand the culture of the institution they were leading. Examples included presidents who were unable to change their leadership style to be more collegial, a president's unwillingness to impart the institution's mission and an unwillingness to view their role within the university system. This theme was observed in three of the four cases.

**Inability to work with key constituencies.** The second derailment theme involved the president's inability to work with key constituencies. This included behaviors that caused friction or turmoil within the president's various constituency groups. The constituency groups included faculty, governing boards, state legislature, alumni/donors, the system administration, and the local community. This theme was observed in all four cases.

**Failure to build and lead a team.** The third derailment theme was the president's failure to build and lead a team. This theme specifically related to the presidents' inability to form an effective senior leadership team. Examples of this included hiring decisions related to provosts, surrounding themselves with "yes men", alienating members of the senior leadership team and having vice presidents who felt the need to protect the university from the president. This theme emerged in all four cases.

**Lack of effective communication skills.** The fourth derailment theme was the president's lack of effective communication skills. This theme centered around the presidents' inability to communicate his or her vision effectively. Examples of this included a failure to

listen to others, not soliciting feedback, making brash statements, being unwilling to compromise, and a perception of insincerity. This theme was observed in three of the four cases.

**Problems with interpersonal relationships.** The fifth derailment theme involved problems with interpersonal relationships. In this case, the president had severe anger issues, was unable to trust others, and had a need for an enemy that severely impeded his role as president. This theme occurred in one of the four cases.

**Ethical failures.** The final derailment theme involved ethical failures of the president. This theme resulted in a perception of a dishonest president who would make false statements and was fiscally irresponsible. This theme was observed in one of the four cases.

### **Analysis of Events that Led to Presidential Derailments**

In response to research question 2, the analysis of events leading to the derailment of each of the four presidents identified some similarities. The events surrounding the derailment of the presidents were varied among the cases; however, the events that occurred in all four cases resulted in the loss of support from key constituencies. Each case had its own unique set of events or one event that perpetuated this loss of support from key constituencies. Twelve events were related to the derailments of the presidents in this study.

In case study one, three events were viewed by participants as being critical to the president's derailment. The president's recommendation to deny tenure to professors that resulted in the university being placed on the Association of American University Professor's censure list, an escalating mistrust between the board and the president fueled by the president's actions, and the negative media coverage of the president's tenure were all seen as precipitating events that led to the derailment of the president.

Table 3

*Summary of Derailment Themes*

Derailment Themes	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Case 4
Failure to Understand and Value Culture	X	X		X
Unable to Work with Key Constituencies	X	X	X	X
Unable to Build and Lead a Team	X	X	X	X
Lack of Effective Communication Skills		X	X	X
Problems with Interpersonal Relationships			X	
Ethical Failures				X

Note: X indicates that the theme was exhibited in the case.

In the second case, there were four events that led to the president's derailment. An unpopular academic reorganization, the hiring of an unpopular candidate for a key academic position, a dispute of how the university would use a piece of land owned by one of the colleges, all precipitated the main derailment event, a public letter delivered via email to various constituencies, including the system administration, campus community, and the local media, calling for the resignation of the president.

In case study three, one event led to the derailment of the president. A very public disagreement over a real estate deal by the president and the board led the board to dismiss the president.

In the fourth case, four events were critical to the derailment. An early public announcement of the president's candidacy at another institution, a faculty retrenchment plan that called for academic reorganization, a plan to merge the institution with a local community college to create a university that would operate outside of the system, and the president's failure to secure funding for a research center all led to the derailment.

Although there were not widespread similarities between the events leading to the derailments it is important to note that similarities did exist among the events. Proposed academic reorganizations at two of the institutions were precipitating events that gave the faculty pause for concern and the faculty's outcry encouraged the governing boards to begin looking more closely at the derailed presidents' actions. Two cases involved disagreements over real estate deals that ultimately led to the presidents' derailment. Two of the cases also involved poor decisions related human resources decisions made by the president.

In all of the cases, the events or succession of events caused the relationship between the board and the president to deteriorate, and within months sometimes even weeks of these events occurring, the presidents resigned. All of the events caused the presidents in the study to be heavily scrutinized by faculty, members of the board, and the local media. This public scrutiny gave voice to the concerns that many people on the campuses had and was in essence what accelerated the growing mistrust between the governing boards and the presidents. The

escalation of mistrust between the boards and presidents led to the derailments at each institution.

### **Relationship between Corporate Derailment Themes and University Derailment Themes**

Research question 3 asked what relationship, if any, may be found between derailment factors emerging from previous Center for Creative Leadership research and factors emerging from this study. To answer this question, the present study's findings must be examined against the four enduring themes of corporate derailment found by Leslie and VanVelsor (1996). Table 4 presents findings from both studies and then a comparison will follow.

Three derailment themes from the public, Master's level universities studied were directly related to Leslie and VanVelsor's (1996) four enduring themes. One theme, failure to communicate effectively, observed in the present study was a subset of one of the corporate themes, problems with interpersonal relationships; however, a stronger emphasis was placed on communication skills in the present study. Two themes, the inability to work with key constituencies and ethical failures, were specific to public, Master's level institutions.

The strongest comparison between the present study and the corporate derailment themes was the failure to build and lead a team. All of the presidents studied were unable to formulate a senior management team that helped them to be successful at the institution. Participants from all four of the cases perceived this theme to be a major factor in the derailment of the presidents.

The second theme that was apparent in the present study was that of the inability to change or adapt during a transition. In Leslie and VanVelsor's findings, this theme encompassed leaders being unable to adapt to a different boss, unable to adapt to a new culture, conflicts with

Table 4

*Comparison of Derailment Themes*

Leslie and VanVelsor's (1996) Corporate Themes	Public, Master's Level University Themes
Problems with interpersonal relationships	Problems with interpersonal relationships
Failure to meet business objectives (lack of skills)	<i>Not observed</i>
Failure to build and lead a team	Failure to build and lead a team
Inability to change or adapt during a transition	Failure to understand and value the institution's culture
<i>Not observed</i>	Inability to work with key constituencies
<i>Not observed to this degree</i>	Unable to communicate effectively
<i>Not observed</i>	Ethical failures

upper management, and the inability to think strategically. In the present study, this theme was specifically seen as the failure to understand and value the culture of the institution. The distinction between the two is important to the setting of this study, institutions of higher education. All institutions, especially colleges and universities, have a unique culture and mission. In higher education, the culture and mission of the institution must be valued and respected by all members of the campus community, especially the president. For this study, this theme has been illustrated as the failure to understand and value the culture of the institution. This theme was observed in three out of the four cases.

The last theme that was related to the corporate theme was problems with interpersonal relationships. In the corporate theme, this was manifested through behaviors such as aloofness,

isolation, arrogance, being overly ambitious. Similar findings were observed in one of the public, Master's level cases.

One of the themes from the present study, unable to communicate effectively, is related to Leslie and VanVelsor's theme of problems with interpersonal relationships. However, in the corporate studies this subset of the theme was not as prevalent or recorded as often as the other behaviors frequently used to illustrate the theme. In the present study, participants frequently cited the president's inability to communicate effectively as a major factor that contributed to the derailment. Therefore, the researcher felt that it was important to classify this as a separate and distinct theme.

## Chapter V

### Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Leadership in colleges and universities is important (Birnbaum, 1992; Bogue, 1994; Bornstein, 2003). Given that the average tenure of presidents in public, Master's level institutions was 9 years in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, presidents serving less than five years are in the minority (American Council on Education, 2007). Leadership derailment in colleges and universities is costly in numerous ways, such as the negative emotional and psychological impact on the people who work, attend, and support the institution, the negative public relations cost that occurs when the events that led to the derailment are played out in the media, and the financial costs associated with contract buy-outs, attorney fees, and frequent presidential searches. It has been said that by understanding the behaviors and events that led to derailment, derailments can be avoided (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996; Lombardo & Eichinger, 1992). Hopefully, this research can help future leaders of public, Master's level institutions avoid the costly consequences of leadership derailment. The present study sought to extend the Center for Creative Leadership's scholarship on executive derailment focusing on public, Master's level college presidents.

Utilizing a conceptual framework adapted from Leslie and Van Velsor (1996), 19 in-depth interviews, field notes, board minutes, media records, and a personal journal identified six derailment themes within the selected four cases. The themes were then compared to the Center for Creative Leadership's four enduring themes of derailment to see if there was a relationship. The purpose of this study was to explore the factors and events associated with the derailment of

public, Master's level college presidents. This qualitative research study was guided by three research questions:

- 1) What factors are perceived to be associated with the derailment of public, Master's level college presidents?
- 2) What events are perceived to be associated with the derailment of the president?
- 3) What relationship, if any, may be found between derailment factors emerging from previous Center for Creative Leadership research and factors emerging from this study?

This chapter presents a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings in relation to the conceptual framework as described in Chapter II, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of the Findings**

#### **Derailment Themes of Public, Master's Level Institutions**

To answer research question 1, an inductive data analysis process was used to synthesize the data obtained through interviews and document review. Data were coded and analyzed by institution and then examined across cases. Six derailment themes emerged from the data in the four cases offered. The themes and the frequency with which they were observed are as follows.

**Failure to understand and value the institutional culture (Inability to change or adapt during a transition).** The first derailment theme involved the president's failure to understand and value the culture of the institution. This theme included behaviors that were viewed as not believing in the nature and mission of the institution and an unwillingness to

understand the culture of the institution they were leading. This theme was observed in three of the four cases.

**Inability to work with key constituencies.** The second derailment theme involved the president's inability to work with key constituencies. The constituency groups included faculty, governing boards, state legislature, alumni/donors, the system administration, and the local community. This theme was observed in all four cases.

**Failure to build and lead a team.** The third derailment theme was the president's failure to build and lead a team. This theme specifically related to the presidents' inability to form an effective senior leadership team. This theme emerged in all four cases.

**Lack of effective communication skills.** The fourth derailment theme was the president's lack of effective communication skills. This theme centered on the presidents' inability to communicate his or her vision effectively, their inability to establish consensus, and their inability to listen to others. This theme was observed in three of the four cases.

**Problems with interpersonal relationships.** The fifth derailment theme involved problems with interpersonal relationships. In this case, the president had severe anger issues, was unable to trust others, and had a need for an enemy that severely impeded his role as president. This theme occurred in one of the four cases.

**Ethical failures.** The final derailment theme involved ethical failures of the president. This theme resulted in a perception of a dishonest president who would make false statements and was fiscally irresponsible. This theme was observed in one of the four cases.

### **Events Leading to the Derailment of Public, Master's Level Presidents**

Research question 2 asked what events led to the derailment of the president. While there were some similarities between events, each case had its own separate and distinct events that led to the derailment of the president. The similarities between events included two schools that had presidents who had disagreements over real estate deals, two institutions had unpopular academic reorganization plans, and two sites reported that unpopular hiring decisions of key academic personnel led to the derailment. A summary of events for each site will be given as well as the derailment theme(s) that corresponds to each event.

In the first case study, three events were seen as being critical to the president's derailment. The president's recommendation to deny tenure to four faculty members related to the president's inability to work with key constituencies. The escalating mistrust between the president and the board was directly related to the president's failure to understand and value the culture of the institution, his inability to work with key constituencies and his failure to build and lead a team. The negative media coverage of the president's tenure was a result of the president's inability to work with key constituencies.

In the second case study, two events, the unpopular academic reorganization and the real estate deal, were both related to the president's inability to work with key constituencies. The president's decision to hire a vice president of academic affairs that was not a good fit for the campus was related to the president's failure to understand and value the culture of the institution and his failure to build and lead a team. The final precipitating event, the letter calling for the president's resignation, was a culmination of all four themes evidenced at this site, but

particularly the president's failure to understand and value the institution's culture and his lack of effective communication skills.

The third case study had one precipitating event, a disagreement over a real estate deal. This event exemplified the president's failure to work with a key constituency group, the board of trustees. The president's problems with interpersonal relationships and his lack of effective communication skills were also identified during the details of this event.

In the fourth case study, three events were seen as being directly related to the president's inability to work with a key constituency group namely the system administration: the president's candidacy for another presidency early in his tenure, his plan to create a University and pull away from the system, and his failure to secure funding for a research center. His unpopular faculty retrenchment plan was seen as a result of his inability to communicate effectively and work with a key constituency group, the faculty.

### **The Relationship between the Factors of Derailment of Public, Master's Level Presidents and the Four Enduring Themes of Leadership Derailment**

In answer to research question 3, there was a relationship between the Center for Creative Leadership's findings on corporate derailment and the derailment factors of presidents at public, Master's level institutions. The three themes were: the inability to build and lead a team, problems with interpersonal relationships, and the inability to change or adapt during a transition (a failure to understand and value the culture of the institution). One sub-theme of the CCL's problems with interpersonal relationships was found to be a significant problem within derailed presidents at public, Master's level institutions: lack of effective communication skills. Two

themes were unique to public, Master's level presidents who derailed. These themes were the inability to work with key constituencies and ethical failures.

## **Discussion**

### **Presidential Derailment Themes and the Conceptual Framework**

This study examined the factors and events associated with the derailment of public, Master's level presidents. The conceptual framework that was used to build this study was taken from the Center for Creative Leadership's research on executive derailment (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996; Lombardo, Ruderman, & McCauley, 1988; Lombardo & McCauley, 1988; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Van Velsor & Leslie, 1995). The findings for this study supported three of the four enduring themes for executive derailment. However, there were some unique factors and caveats within the themes that are worthy of attention.

First, the inability to work with key constituencies was unique to derailed presidents of public, Master's level institutions. One of the most important aspects of college president's job is the ability to effectively interact with a variety of constituencies (Bogue, 1994; Bornstein, 2003). Bogue (1994) asserted that the college president's responsibility to competing stakeholders is one of the unique factors of higher education leadership. All of the derailed presidents in this study had problems working with at least one major constituency group. In all of the cases the president was unable to build an effective working relationship with the board of trustees. The nature of the relationship between the board and the president makes it essential that the relationship is mutually beneficial. Michael, Schwartz and Balraj (2001) found that board members expect presidents to be able to cultivate a healthy relationship with the board and the chair. Bornstein (2003) also found that in order to achieve legitimacy, that is developing

relationships of trust and influence that help the president build social capital, relationships with a variety of stakeholders must be developed. In all of the cases, the presidents just simply failed to work well with faculty, board members, local media, and the top management team and when problems arose that precipitated their derailment they simply did not have the necessary social capital to weather the storm. This failure to work with key constituencies was also a direct result of the derailed presidents' inability to communicate effectively.

In the Center for Creative Leadership's research on executive derailment, failure to communicate effectively was categorized within the problems with interpersonal relationships theme (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996); however, it was never a major finding within the theme. In the previous CCL's research, the theme of problems with interpersonal relationships focused more on the executive behaviors such as being aloof, overly ambitious, authoritarian style of management, and less on the actual communication style. It was only in the last CCL study that lack of effective communication skills showed up in this theme. Due to the nature of a college president's duties, it is imperative that they communicate effectively with all of the various constituencies (Barnard, 1938; Bornstein, 2003). Poor communication skills, such as failure to build consensus, listen effectively, to think before speaking, plagued three out of the four presidents within this study and were cited as major reasons for their derailment; therefore, the researcher felt that it was important to let lack of effective communication skills stand alone as a major factor of the derailments of these presidents.

Another interesting finding that occurred in three out of the four cases was the derailed president's inability to understand and value the culture of the institution that they lead. Literature on effective leadership both in higher education and the business world points to the

necessity of a leader's ability to understand and value the culture of the organization they lead (Hall, 1994; Javidan, 1992; Fisher, et al, 1988; Bogue, 1994). This theme was represented in the executive derailment literature as the inability to change or adapt during a transition, but due to the importance of institutional culture and mission in higher education the researcher chose to label the theme the president's failure to understand and value the culture of the institution. According to Hall's (1994) review of the literature one of the main responsibilities of an effective non-profit leader is to be a spokesperson for their organization and if the president does not value the culture it makes it very difficult for them to act as effective visionaries for the institution. Michael, Schwartz, and Balraj (2001) also found that board members expected an effective president to be able to understand and value the culture of higher education and the institution they serve. Bornstein (2003) found that one way president's establish legitimacy with their various constituencies is by understanding and supporting the cultural context of the organization they serve. Participants at the sites constantly referred to the president's inability to understand and value the organization's culture. Members of selection committees and boards of trustees should take particular note of this because it is essential that institutions have leaders who believe in what is happening at the institution. This buy-in and support for the mission will likely increase the president's ability to interact with key constituency groups. As one participant said, "if people believe that the president is acting with the best intentions of the university they will work hard to support that president."

Due to the increased media attention on leaders who fail because of ethical breaches, it was surprising to find that only one derailed president in the present study was viewed as acting unethically in his or her position. Since this study only examined derailments at four institutions

it would be interesting to see how many other cases of presidential derailments were caused by ethical failures. When examining media accounts on derailed presidents within the population of public, Master's level institutions to ascertain sites, the researcher noticed that several derailed presidents' integrity had been called in to question in local and national media reports. After conducting a review of major newspapers, Calabrese and Roberts (2001) found ethical concerns to be the number one factor in why school superintendents derailed. It would be extremely interesting to see if a similar methodology, using media accounts, would produce a higher number of presidents who derailed because of ethical failures. Due to the sensitive nature of the causes of the derailment, many schools that had presidents commit ethical breeches within the sample declined to participate in the present study.

Another surprising related finding was that the participants at each institution were very willing to talk about the positive characteristics of the derailed president or the good ideas that the leader brought to the institution. In all of these cases, the president was not only derailed but the events leading to the derailment were played out in the local or national newspapers. Even through the hard feelings of participants and public humiliation of the campuses, these administrators and faculty members still humanized the derailed presidents and reminded the researcher that even though the presidents had failed each of them had added value in some form or fashion to the institution that they served. It is important to remember that the instances discussed in this research are snapshots of the presidencies of these individuals and may not be indicative of the entire tenure of his or her presidency.

### **Methodological Considerations**

Due to the lack of knowledge on presidential derailments in higher education, the use of a qualitative approach was necessary. To gain more insights and an understanding of presidential derailments in-depth interviews, field notes, media reports, and documentation review were used to gather an ample source of data. Three methodological concerns were identified.

The first concern is associated with collecting data that participants consider to be sensitive. Sensitive topics are dependent on both context and cultural norms and values and are considered sensitive if they are private, stressful, or scared; might cause stigmatization or fear; or if the topic might cause a political threat (McCosker, Barnard, and Gerber, 2001). McCosker, Barnard, and Gerber (2001) found that studying sensitive topics creates methodological and technical issues, such as “mistrust, concealment, and dissimulation between the researcher and participants” (paragraph 4). Due to the sensitive nature of private information concerning someone’s involuntary resignation, obtaining sites for the study was particularly challenging. Not only was obtaining participants difficult at some of the sites, but obtaining the initial permission to investigate the site was a major source of frustration for the researcher. All of the schools within the Carnegie classification of public, master’s level colleges and universities were identified and then the researcher did an internet search to ascertain whether or not a derailment had occurred at that institution. This research gathered a list of twenty-six potential sites within the population, all but the four schools used in the study denied participation citing a variety of reasons including legal issues surrounding the presidential departures, advice of general counsel to not participate, and just a general uneasiness about discussing such sensitive matters.

Once access was granted at the institutions, obtaining participants was more straightforward. One participant from site one dropped out of the study due to feelings of anxiety and an increased sense of departmental and campus politics after gathering her thoughts on the subject matter. In all but one instance, the current sitting president had identified and gained initial consent of the participants that were identified as necessary to complete the study. The remaining institution presented problems securing willing participants and an interview with a board member was not an option. Despite the setbacks, informed participants were acquired and saturation of data was achieved.

All of the participants that were interviewed talked about the necessity of this research due to the negative impact of presidential derailments on the campus community. One board chair said that,

I am pleased to hear that you are doing this paper, I think that it is important, really important for governing boards to look at....If there is anything that anyone can say at the university is that what has happened at the university over the last couple of years is that governing boards rarely can afford to make the wrong decisions when it comes to president....So, I think if there's anything to say out of this that you can rarely get it wrong and boards need to do everything they possibly can to get it right.

Two methodological problems focused on the document analysis portion. One issue was the quoting of supporting media reports in this study that could create problems with confidentiality. Due to the vast amount of information that can be easily accessed on the internet, few direct quotations or citations from any of the reviewed media accounts could be

reported in the findings and references because if searched and found those would lead to a breach of confidentiality. Another methodological consideration concerning the document analysis was the use and importance of the minutes from the board of trustees. As public institutions, the minutes from the board of trustees' meetings were often extremely easy to obtain; however, their actual usefulness was severely limited due to the fact that anytime sensitive information was discussed, such as discussions on human resources issues, members were moved to "private executive session" and the proceedings from the "private executive session" were not disclosed in the minutes.

In spite of the methodological concerns that surfaced within the conduct of this study, the sample in the present study provided an adequate number of interviews and sites for an initial investigation of presidential derailments at public, Master's level colleges and universities.

### **Conclusions**

The present study of presidential derailments at public, Master's level institutions supported the previous research on executive derailments conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership (Leslie & VanVelsor, 1996; Lombardo & McCauley, 1988; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Morrison, et al, 1987). Specifically, the presidents' inability to build and lead a team, their problems with interpersonal relationships, and their failure to value and understand the culture of the institution (their inability to change or adapt during a transition) were found to lead to derailment at public, Master's level institutions. Derailed presidents also lacked effective communication skills, which in turn made them unable to work with various constituency groups. These themes focus on the leader's behaviors, attitudes, and actions.

One of the major reasons that the Center for Creative Leadership focused on derailment research was to improve leadership development, thereby creating more effective leaders (Leslie & Van Velsor, 1996; Lombardo & Eichinger, 1992). By understanding the factors related to presidential derailments at these four public, Master's level institutions, current or aspiring presidents and governing boards may be able to identify possible derailment behaviors and work to correct those behaviors before they lead to a derailment. Preventing president derailments would benefit the institution by saving valuable time and resources, not to mention avoiding negative public relations incidents which not only detract resources away from the educational pursuits of the institution but also erode the confidence of the institution's various constituency groups.

### **Implications for Practice**

#### **Board of trustees/ State governing boards.**

1. Boards should ensure that they have conducted a thorough background search on finalists. It is essential that a wide variety of people be contacted about the disposition, communication skills, and leadership skills of the selected candidate. Doing additional research initially could help to ensure that the chosen candidate will be a good fit for the culture and mission of the university.

#### **Sitting college presidents and aspiring college presidents.**

1. College presidents should understand and value the culture and mission of the institution that they serve. College presidents should take care that their value systems are congruent with those of the institution.

2. College presidents and those aspiring to the presidency should work hard to establish positive interpersonal relationships with board members, faculty, and other important key constituencies to ensure that they have a well of good faith to draw upon should their leadership come in to question. When you have established these relationships, it is more likely that people will come to your aid and work with you knowing that your intentions are for the good of the organization.
3. College presidents should remember the importance of good communication skills. Building consensus, articulating vision, and being able to communicate with a wide variety of constituencies are essential skills of academic leaders.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study should be replicated at other public, master's level institutions that have experienced a presidential derailment to confirm the findings of this study. Additionally, researchers could examine private, master's level institutions that have experienced a presidential derailment to see if similar findings emerge or if derailed leaders at public and private institutions face different sets of challenges. Further research is also needed on presidential derailments at the different types of institutions based on the Carnegie classifications to see if derailment themes are consistent among various types of institutions or if unique themes emerge based on the type of campus the president leads.

Extending these findings and examining the complex relationship between board governance and presidential leadership would be an interesting study. Researching the derailed presidents' backgrounds and future career paths led the researcher to ascertain that many of these presidents were in fact hired at other institutions after they were publically dismissed. A future

study could examine the reasons why boards chose to select derailed presidents as the leaders for their institutions.

In the business literature on leadership, there is a stream of research called Upper Echelons theory that asserts that leaders matter. Leaders are the driving force behind the organization and their values, skills and prior knowledge play a role in how they analyze information and make decisions (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1990; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Within the upper echelon theory, the notion of behavioral complexity emerges. The complex nature of the college presidency calls for leaders that are flexible, creative and can draw on a wide variety of experiences. The more diverse experience an individual or team has, the more that individual or team will be able to draw on its behavioral complexity. Hooijberg and Quinn (1992) suggested that behaviorally complex leaders are more effective, cognitively complex and are able to perform a diverse set of roles and skills. Behavioral complexity is the ability to act out a cognitively complex strategy by playing multiple, even competing roles, in a highly integrated and complementary way (Hooijberg & Quinn, 1992). Behavioral complexity is developed through learning exercises that can be created within the organization and will also be a function of prior functional background (Hooijberg & Quinn, 1992). Behavioral complexity is also linked with individuals having a diverse functional background. The more variety a person has had in the career and life experiences the more resources they will have developed that can then be drawn upon during a crisis event. Further research could be completed on the behavioral complexity of derailed presidents to see if certain pathways toward the presidency are more susceptible to derailments than others.

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**APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### Sample of institution's invitational letter

Dear PRESIDENT,

I am a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration at the University of Tennessee, and I am conducting a doctoral dissertation study exploring factors associated with college president derailment. Derailment is being defined as the non voluntary departure of a president/chancellor before he or she completes five years of service.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you and your institution to participate in this study. My study is one of four exploring presidential derailment in different Carnegie class institutions, with my study centering on presidents in AACSB type institutions, primarily public Masters (limited doctoral work) institutions.

The study of executive derailment follows an extensive line of research completed on derailment of corporate leaders and the factors associated with those derailments; this research has been conducted over the past 20 years or so by the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, NC. There has been no research to our knowledge that explores what the factors might be for college executives nor whether the derailment factors among college executives might have any similarity to those in the corporate sector.

If your institution agrees to participate, you would be invited to participate in an in-depth, open-ended interview. The interview should last approximately one hour. With permission, the interviews will be audio taped and then transcribed. I would also ask that you identify a vice president, a faculty member, and a board member who worked closely with the derailed president, so that I may interview them concerning the situation.

Upon completion of the transcription, I would send you a copy of the transcript upon your request. This would give you an opportunity to insure that your transcript is a faithful report of your interview. Your anonymity, as well as the institution's and the other participants, will be assured through the use of pseudonyms.

The risks to the participants are expected to be minimal. Participants will be university administrators, board members, and system presidents that are familiar with a past presidential derailment at their institution.

I will contact you by phone next week to see if you are willing to participate in the study. If you are willing to participate in the study, we would also discuss the names of the individuals you believe would be willing to speak with me about the past president's derailment.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Julie Longmire

**APPENDIX B**

## Sample letter to participant

Dear Participant,

I am a doctoral student in Higher Education Administration at the University of Tennessee, and I am conducting a doctoral dissertation study exploring factors associated with college presidential transitions. My study specifically focuses on presidents who leave the university within the first five years of their presidency.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to participate in my study. **Current president name** has given me permission to use **institution** in my study. My study is one of four exploring presidential departures in different Carnegie class institutions, with my study focusing on presidents in AACSB type institutions, primarily public Master's (limited doctoral work) institutions.

**Current president name** suggested that I contact you for an interview since you served on the Board when **Derailed president name** was at **institution**. The interview should last approximately one hour. With permission, the interviews will be audio-taped and then transcribed.

Upon completion of the transcription, I would send you a copy, if requested. This would afford you an opportunity to insure that the transcript is a faithful report of your interview. Your anonymity, as well as that of the institution and the other participants, will be assured by the use of pseudonyms and the focus on themes rather than specific institutions.

The risks to the participants are expected to be minimal. Participants will be university administrators, board members, and faculty members who are familiar with the former president.

I will contact you by phone on **date** to see if you are willing to participate in the study. If you are interested in participating, we would schedule a time that is mutually convenient for an interview.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Yours truly,

Julie Longmire  
Doctoral candidate

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Protocol

Project: Presidential Derailment at Public, Master's level Universities

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

This is a qualitative research study that will fulfill degree requirements for the Ph.D. in Education. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors and events associated with the derailment of public, master's level college presidents. Data will be collected from four different institutions and will include interviews with current presidents, vice-presidents, members of the board of trustees, and a faculty member. Data will also be collected through newspaper articles and board minutes. All data will be stored in a locked drawer inside the interviewer's advisor's office. Data will also be coded so that no identifying information will be available to anyone but the researcher. The interview should last approximately one hour.

Things to Remember:

- Have interviewee sign the Informed Consent form.
- Obtain permission to audiotape the interview.
- Turn on tape recorder.

Interview Questions:

1. What factors did you see as being associated with the departure of the derailed president?
2. What events may have occurred that contributed to or influenced the departure of the past president?
3. Is there anything else related to the departure of the president that you would like to tell me?

Remember to thank the participant for his or her cooperation and participation in the interview. Assure them of the confidentiality of their responses and the potential for follow-up emails.

## APPENDIX D

### FORM B APPLICATION

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All applicants are encouraged to read the [Form B guidelines](#). If you have any questions as you develop your Form B, contact your Departmental Review Committee (DRC) or [Research Compliance Services](#) at the Office of Research.

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### FORM B

**IRB #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Received in OR** \_\_\_\_\_

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### THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

#### *Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects*

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#### I. IDENTIFICATION OF PROJECT

**1. Principal Investigator Co-Principal Investigator:**

Julie Longmire 332A Claxton Complex Knoxville, TN 37996 (865)974-6285

**Faculty Advisor:**

Dr. E. Grady Bogue 319A Claxton Complex Knoxville, TN 37996 (865) 974-6140

**Department:**

Educational Psychology and Counseling 525A Claxton Complex Knoxville, TN 37996  
(865) 974-8145

**2. Project Classification:** Dissertation

**3. Title of Project:** Presidential Derailment: Case Studies of Public, Comprehensive Colleges and Universities

**4. Starting Date:** Upon IRB Approval

**5. Estimated Completion Date:** May 2008

**6. External Funding:** N/A

#### II. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study is to explore the factors associated with the derailment of public, comprehensive college presidents.

A derailed president will be defined as one who leaves the institution nonvoluntarily within five (5) years of being hired. Prior research conducted in the for-profit business arena suggests four themes associated with executive derailment: problems with interpersonal relationships; failure to meet business objectives; inability to build and lead a team; and, inability to change or adapt during transition. No comparable research has been conducted with leaders in higher education. The goals of this research are:

- To gain qualitative insights into those perceived factors that are associated with presidential derailments in public, comprehensive institutions;
- To extend the research related to derailment in the area of higher education which has not been studied before. Presidents of higher education are important to the viability of the institution and worthy of study. It is important to ascertain the perceived factors associated with presidential derailment in higher education. This research will also help to identify if the factors related to business derailments are applicable in the higher education arena; and,
- To provide governing boards and state agencies charged with the responsibility of hiring presidents with information that may assist in the hiring process of presidents.

### **III. DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

1. The case study participants will include at least four people at each college or university that is studied. The participants include the current sitting president, a vice president who was at the institution at the time of the derailment, a governing board member who was active at the time of the derailment, and the chancellor of the state system. There is a provision for other informed participants to enter the study if two or more people recommend the person to the researcher as an informed participant.
2. The researcher will research the Chronicle of Higher Education and other news sources to ascertain a list of schools that have experience a presidential derailment within the past few years. The researcher will also obtain names of derailed presidents from the Association of State Colleges and Universities. Other possible options for securing names of institutions that have experienced a recent derailment include the use of a search firm and the researcher soliciting selected state governing boards to ascertain the names of presidents within the system that left non-voluntarily after a short tenure.
3. Once derailed presidents have been identified, the researcher will contact the current sitting president about gaining access to the site and participants. Letters of permission will be mailed to the current sitting president.
4. The criteria for selecting a site will be that the college or university must have experienced a presidential derailment within the past few years. The criteria for selecting participants will be that he or she must have been a senior level official at the college or university or state system at the time of the president's derailment.
5. The anticipated number of sites is five with four participants per site. The total number of anticipated participants is twenty.

### **IV. METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

In-depth interviews, field notes, and data analysis will be utilized for data collection. In-depth, one-on-one interviews will be conducted in person at the colleges. A total of twenty interviews will be conducted (5 sites, 4 interviews per site). In the event that the interviews cannot be conducted in person, telephone or email interviews will be conducted. The interviews will last approximately one hour.

There will be three main interview questions:

1. What factors did you see as being associated with the departure of the derailed president?
2. What events may have occurred that contributed to or influenced the departure of the past president?
3. Is there anything else related to the departure of the president that you would like to tell me?

Probes will be used in the instances where elaboration or clarifications are needed.

The interviews will be audiotaped and then transcribed. The researcher will also collect field notes to provide information about the participant's body language, pauses and other behaviors that will not be captured on the audiotape. The participants will be assured of their voluntary participation and their confidentiality. Participants will sign an Informed Consent Form prior to the interviews. Document analysis will consist of any newspaper stories, board meeting minutes, state agency meeting minutes, and other documents that address the presidential derailment. All data from the interviews, the audiotapes, and the document analysis will be stored in a locked office (Claxton 319A) and only the researcher, Julie Longmire, and Dr. Grady Bogue will have access to the data. All data will be destroyed once the study is complete.

Risks to study participants are expected to be minimal; however, participants will be told at the beginning of the interview that each can withdraw, without penalty, from the study at any time.

Data analysis will abide by qualitative research procedures. All data will be analyzed using an inductive process involving: reading and re-reading of interview transcripts and field notes; identifying patterns and themes across and within interviews; coding data for themes; and making comparisons with respect to themes.

## **V. SPECIFIC RISKS AND PROTECTION MEASURES**

Risks to the participants are expected to be minimal. Participants will be university administrators that are familiar with a past presidential derailment at their institution. Participants and institutions will be confidential and only the researcher, Julie Longmire, and Dr. E. Grady Bogue will have access to the data. Participants will be assured of their confidentiality and will sign Informed Consent Forms assuring them of their privacy.

Document analysis will also provide an important part of the data. News releases and other documents available for public review will detail some of the situations related to the presidential derailments in question. The research asks participants to reflect on the factors that they perceive were associated with this past event. All participants will be informed of their right to terminate their involvement in the study at any time.

## **VI. BENEFITS**

The benefits for the proposed study are plentiful. One benefit would be that factors perceived to influence higher education derailments will be illuminated. Past derailment research has said that if factors associated with derailments can be identified, then the behaviors can also be stopped. This is important to creating a learning environment for higher education leaders, whereby, future leaders can learn from the mistakes of derailed presidents. Another benefit of this research is that governing boards or state agencies will be able to use this information when selecting leaders as well as when they are evaluating the performance of the president. This research will also provide valuable insights into the leadership of higher education.

## **VII. METHODS FOR OBTAINING "INFORMED CONSENT" FROM PARTICIPANTS**

Prior to conducting the interviews, participants will be invited to sign informed consent forms. At the beginning of the interview process, the researcher will present and read an informed consent form to each participant. Each participant will sign a copy of the informed consent form and a copy of the consent form will be provided to each participant. The informed consent form is attached.

## **VIII. QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATOR(S) TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

The researcher is currently completing her required coursework for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education. The researcher has taken a qualitative research methods course, as well as two applied research methods courses. The researcher has also studied the current body of derailment literature.

## **IX. FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT TO BE USED IN THE RESEARCH**

Interviews will be conducted at a location which convenient for the participant. In most instances, these interviews will be conducted at the institution. The locations will vary depending on the participants' preferences. All data will be stored in Claxton Complex 319A.

## **X. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PRINCIPAL/CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S)**

**By compliance with the policies established by the Institutional Review Board of The University of Tennessee the principal investigator(s) subscribe to the principles stated in "The Belmont Report" and standards of professional ethics in all research, development, and related activities involving human subjects under the auspices of The University of Tennessee. The principal investigator(s) further agree that:**

- 1. Approval will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board prior to instituting any change in this research project.**
- 2. Development of any unexpected risks will be immediately reported to Research Compliance Services.**
- 3. An annual review and progress report (Form R) will be completed and submitted when requested by the Institutional Review Board.**
- 4. Signed informed consent documents will be kept for the duration of the project and for at least three years thereafter at a location approved by the Institutional Review Board.**

#### **XI. SIGNATURES**

**Principal Investigator:** \_\_\_\_Julie Longmire\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Faculty Advisor:** \_\_\_\_Dr. E. Grady Bogue\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

#### **XII. DEPARTMENT REVIEW AND APPROVAL**

**The application described above has been reviewed by the IRB departmental review committee and has been approved. The DRC further recommends that this application be reviewed as:**

**[ ] Expedited Review -- Category(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

**[ ] Full IRB Review**

**Chair, DRC:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department Head:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (Date) :**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Approved:**  
**Research Compliance Services**  
**Office of Research**  
**1534 White Avenue**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**For additional information on Form B, contact the Office of Research [Compliance Officer](#) or by phone at (865) 974-3466.**

## APPENDIX E

### INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Presidential derailment: Case studies of public, master's level colleges

#### INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in a study on presidential derailments at public, comprehensive colleges. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors associated with the derailment of public, comprehensive college presidents.

The goals of this research are:

- To gain qualitative insights into those perceived factors that are associated with presidential derailments in public, comprehensive institutions;
- To extend the research related to derailment in the area of higher education which has not been studied before. Presidents of higher education institutions are important to the viability of the institution and worthy of study. It is important to ascertain the perceived factors associated with presidential derailment in higher education. This research will also help to identify if the factors related to business derailments are applicable in the higher education arena; and,
- To provide governing boards and state agencies charged with the responsibility of hiring presidents with information that may assist in the hiring process of presidents.

#### INFORMATION ABOUT PARTICIPANTS' INVOLVEMENT IN THE STUDY

You will be asked to participate in an in-depth, open-ended interview. The interviews should last approximately one hour. The interviews will be audiotaped with permission of the participant. After the interview, the researcher will transcribe the interview tapes. In the data analysis stage, you will also be asked to review the major themes that have emerged from your interview data to see if these themes correspond to your recollection of events.

#### RISKS

Risks to the participants are expected to be minimal. Participants will be university administrators that are familiar with a past presidential derailment at their institution.

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant's initials

## **BENEFITS**

The benefits for the proposed study are plentiful. One benefit would be that factors perceived to influence higher education derailments will be illuminated. Past derailment research has said that if factors associated with derailments can be identified, then the behaviors can also be stopped. This is important to creating a learning environment for higher education leaders, whereby, future leaders can learn from the mistakes of derailed presidents. Another benefit of this research is that governing boards or state agencies will be able to use this information when selecting leaders as well as when they are evaluating the performance of the president. This research will also provide valuable insights into the leadership of higher education.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The information in the records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to the researcher and her major professor. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link participants to the study.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, (or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study,) you may contact the researcher, Julie Longmire, at 332A Claxton Complex, Knoxville, TN 37996, and (865) 974-8194. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Office of Research [Compliance Officer](#) at (865) 974-3466.

## **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at anytime without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study before data collection is completed you data will be returned to you or destroyed.

## **CONSENT**

I have read the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## VITA

Julie was born in Oak Ridge, TN and raised in Clinton, TN. She graduated from Clinton High School in 1995. After graduating from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, TN, she taught elementary school for 1 ½ years before deciding to return to graduate school. She completed a Master of Science degree in College Student Personnel at the University of Tennessee. While completing graduate school, she did field work in academic advising and alumni affairs and development.

In October 2002, she began her career in academic advising at the University of Tennessee's College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences. Throughout the last eight years, she has been promoted to Coordinator of Undergraduate Advising for the college. She continues to enjoy working with students to ensure they are able to meet their educational goals.