

*On Becoming a Woman Leader*  
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## Presidential Advice and Perspectives

*Each time [a person] stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he [or she] sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.*

*Robert F. Kennedy*

*Now I become myself,  
It's taken time,  
Many years and places;  
I have been dissolved and shaken,  
Worn other people's faces . . .*

*May Sarton, "Now I Become Myself"*

During these women presidents' remarkable lifetime journeys, they have stood up for ideas, acted to improve the lot of others, struck out against injustice, and sent out ripples of hope. These successful women have learned about leadership throughout every stage of their lives. They have yearned to make a difference, and they have. They have been driven to develop and grow in their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and they did. And throughout their lifetime of experiences they have become themselves—a gift to so many who have had the opportunity to be influenced by them.

At the conclusion of each research interview, I asked the presidents what advice they would give to girls and women about leadership development. I also asked them to share their feelings about the position of a university president or chancellor in higher education. This chapter focuses on these two broad areas: presidential advice and presidential perspectives.

## Advice

The presidents said that they have been asked often during their presidencies to give advice on leadership development to girls, young women, and women not only in higher education, but also in government and business settings. After analyzing the advice of each president, I categorized it into seven broad suggestions: (1) prepare early; (2) become proactive in your own career development; (3) be a lifelong learner; (4) develop strength and trust in self; (5) embrace challenges; (6) develop general leadership competencies; and (7) look beyond yourself.

### Prepare Early

The presidents were very insistent that leadership development should start as early in life as possible. They suggest involvement during high school and college (or earlier) in a variety of activities, including sports and community, and participation in "critical growth experiences that can become embedded in an individual's skills and habits" as early as possible. One president stated:

Young women should take any opportunity they have to develop leadership. They should volunteer to do things, to participate in the community in strategic ways. I have enjoyed those kinds of experiences throughout my life. Young women should find ways to stretch themselves during adolescence, college, and their early professional years. Every time a young woman challenges herself, she becomes less intimidated and she can find a place for

herself. She must see herself as a leader early so that she can consciously make decisions that will help her learn and develop competencies throughout her life.

One president shared her belief that women need to prepare themselves educationally with the skills needed to have opportunities. She said, "There are certain union cards you have to have. Once you have these cards then you can enjoy what you are doing and look for opportunities when you are ready for a new challenge." One woman spoke of the importance of learning early to build networks and develop healthy individual relationships with people in all settings. She was quick to say that the development of leadership competencies is not a linear process. These suggestions and other types of preparation can be integrated into a variety of experiences.

Service opportunities such as community involvement and academic service were recommended by many of the presidents. One president said many women have come to her seeking advice throughout the years. She said that they tell her of their desire to be leaders, but then complain that they have had no opportunities to gain applicable leadership experience. She told the following story about one particular young faculty member seeking advice:

I had a young woman come to me recently and say, "I'm not a leader, and I would like to be one. How did you get to be a leader?" I asked her some questions. "Do you run a lab? Have you written a grant? Do you manage a budget? Do you belong to professional organizations? Do you chair committees?" After each question I paused, and she said "Yes." Then I explained that she needed to use service to her advantage. I told her that all of those things should count as leadership. Leaders don't have to have titles. I advised her (and have advised others as well) to consider all the things they've done where they have had to make decisions and manage. All of these experiences count in your portfolio of experiences.

Various types of service can provide both experience and visibility. Two presidents suggested that women should intentionally seek visibility particularly during their early professional years if they are interested in leadership. One stated:

It is very important to be visible in a positive way. You need to be recognized as someone that people can work with. You need to be seen as someone who can make things happen. You need to be identified as one who is trustworthy, ethical, and strong.

Being prepared early was mentioned by various presidents as one way to obtain more challenging opportunities. One president spoke of the importance of "seeing yourself as a leader," but warned that this can become "harder the higher up you go. If you haven't done the job before, you may need to grow into it." Another woman gave the following advice:

You can obtain challenging tasks, assignments, or positions by developing your own unique talents so that you can become the very best that you can be. You must learn to lead by sharing your talents, interests, energy, ideas, and by contributing to the innovations needed in whatever discipline you settle upon. Experience is foundational in doing this.

### Become Proactive in Your Own Career Development

The presidents spoke about the importance of "gaining experience, moving through the ranks, and challenging oneself to do and learn different kinds of things throughout one's career." This doesn't specifically mean that careers need to be structured and planned well in advance. In fact, some presidents outright discouraged this. As Chapter Five explained, the presidents did not have formal

career plans, but they did have a wealth of unique experiences, positions, and opportunities that provided them the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to lead. One president explained:

To develop leadership you need to have had experiences that lead you from one step to another. In my judgment, I would also say that it is not a very good idea to have it all planned out. If you do this then it will make you crazy. You won't enjoy what you are doing at the moment. The most important preparation for whatever comes next is to be the best you can in the job you are currently in and love every minute of it!

Another president reiterated this with the notion that doors are naturally opened when women are high performers in their current jobs. She explained, "I thought each position was the greatest job in the world." She believes that "being focused and committed to what you are currently doing is crucial." A third woman declared, "You must do well in every single task you are given. Everything is important, and you must do your very best in all that you do." In fact, every president made a similar statement advising young women to do the "absolute best job in whatever it is" no matter how important or seemingly insignificant it may appear. As one president noted, "You must lead by seizing opportunities when they present themselves."

The presidents also believe that women should accept positions they are truly interested in. One stated that accepting a position just because it provides a "different" experience is not a good enough excuse. The presidents advised that women should closely consider their interests and passions. As one president said:

A truly exciting experience is when an opportunity comes along that you find interesting. If you have appropriate experience, then you should do it! However, sometimes you don't think you have the experience,



when in fact you do. As women we tend to devalue our skills. But it's the interest level that is so important! If it sounds like a challenge, and you really think, "Boy this would be fun to do," then you ought to do it. In most cases, you will have the skills that you need. Women have so many skills already. The women I talk to are often women who have raised children and never worked. The skills they gained raising children are powerful. This has all been true of my life. I accepted every job I've ever had because it was really interesting to me. Sometimes I wouldn't have thought of putting myself forward, but people have encouraged me. Ultimately, I think everyone has an obligation to reach beyond themselves to improve society.

The presidents provided some suggestions regarding how to obtain challenging assignments if current assignments do not provide these opportunities. One woman advised:

Look for gaps, things that are not being done. Don't sit back and say, "Why isn't someone doing something about this?" Instead you should say, "How can I help?" Although the focus is on the organization, by looking for gaps and volunteering to find solutions you make a difference and gain experience.

One president spoke of looking down the road at some career goals, and figuring out generally what kinds of skills you'll need to do those future jobs successfully. She explained:

If your current job doesn't require doing those things, ask somebody to give you those responsibilities. Offer to do that work and say, "I don't know anything about the budget of this university. I need experience." Say, "I have no experience working with the legislature, and I

want a career in public higher education. Can you help me work with the legislature?" Seize the experiences that you need to have; don't wait for them. You may not need all of the formal steps along the way in various positions, but you do need to make sure you have the opportunity to develop and practice the skills critical to authenticity.

Some of the presidents recommended that emerging leaders need to be very careful about position choices, particularly if they are interested in high-level educational leadership. For example one president advised, "Don't start your career with a community college if you want to be in a research institution, and don't take a job in student affairs if you want to obtain an academic leadership or presidential position down the road." The presidents believe that women should take new and challenging assignments, but that they must be cautious to make sure the experiences will be credible and are related to the leadership goals they may have in mind.

Three presidents said specifically that women need to have an academic background if they are interested in academic leadership. They suggested that women need to consider their career choices early in their lives to determine whether there is a specific route to some choices. One president stated:

Academics should run universities because the most important decisions are the ones that reaffirm the values and the traditions of the academy. That judgment is not available if you aren't part of it. I would suggest that if you want to be a university president, you should come up through the academic ranks. If you don't have this background, the rest of us have to teach you the other things you don't know. In fact, if you are not an academic often you won't clearly understand what you don't know. You'll just assume you get things when in fact you do not.

A majority of the presidents spoke of the value of being a faculty member for eventual academic leadership. One woman explained:

My advice to young women interested in academic leadership is that they become faculty members if they can. This is important because faculty is what differentiates this sort of place from any other kind of place. If women don't know what it is like, then they won't get it, and they're just not going to be as effective as they might be otherwise. Even if an individual can teach part-time, that will be helpful. Even if women are not going into high level academic leadership, being a faculty member can still help individuals understand the students, which is important in any type of position within higher education.

The presidents were very clear that rising leaders should take responsibility for their own career development. Some women are given opportunities by mentors and others, whereas other women are not. As one of the previous quotations outlined, women need to look for gaps and assertively suggest projects and solutions. A woman can volunteer to do work that helps her learn specific things she doesn't already know. The bottom line is that each individual must take responsibility for her own career development. If she wants to become a leader, she must consciously look for opportunities and then embrace them.

### Become Lifelong Learners

Taking opportunities to continuously develop and learn more about themselves, others, and the world around them was an important component of the presidents' advice for rising women to become lifelong learners. The themes of lifelong learning that emerged from the interviews focus on the following: the search for opportunities; observation, reflection, and assimilation; education; self-knowledge; and competence versus authenticity.

The presidents recommend that women of all ages continually seek and obtain ongoing development and learning. Continuous improvement in knowledge and skills is the only way one can develop effective leadership capabilities. They suggest that women develop the ability to learn from everything around them—opportunities, situations, and other individuals. One president made the following statement:

You encounter choices and decisions all along the way in everything you do. Most of them are small, and many seemingly unimportant. Yet each requires a special clarity, the ability to see beyond the immediate issue, to contemplate the broader one, to weigh the benefits, to be aware of consequences, and to be informed and knowledgeable. We can all learn from these choices and decisions, and they can help us become strong and inclusive leaders.

Learning from a large number and variety of people has been important to most of the presidents. As one explained:

I don't just have one or two role models. However, there are so many times that I have learned from just watching. Sometimes it is their speaking or negotiation skills. Often I watch how people interact effectively in meetings, and I implement those behaviors. I remember when I was a very new administrator with no experience in meeting facilitation. I used to watch people run meetings, and I think that helped me a lot. Watching and paying attention to how people do certain things has been a great help to me. I'm certain it can be helpful for all.

One president spoke of President John F. Kennedy's statement "Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other." This

president added, "Take this tool on your journey to leadership, and you cannot go wrong." Two presidents spoke of the importance of learning by "doing your homework" on all aspects of your job and higher education in general. Two presidents also added that rising women leaders should be readers. One of them said:

Read stuff. Most people know their discipline, but they don't know anything about higher education. That was one of the things that happened to me when I was an ACE fellow. I started realizing there was a literature about teaching and about higher education. It was so interesting to me, and I think it is interesting to anyone interested in administration down the road.

Being a lifelong learner leads not only to continuous personal development but also to a more complete and in-depth understanding of oneself. The presidents felt that the most effective and successful leaders are those who (1) can understand themselves, and (2) have the self-monitoring skills that allow them to see themselves accurately in the eyes of those around them. Coming to understand oneself through self-reflection is central to success. As one president noted, "I really think the most important reflection is what goes on inside your head about the kind of person you are, what excites you, what drives you, and what makes you feel good about yourself." This self-knowledge is an empowering element in personal and professional development. Another president said:

Reflection can be the most enriching experience if you are willing to deeply acknowledge your own frailties and your own limitations, and then let that knowledge empower you when you turn to take the next curve in the road. You see it coming and this time you are prepared and recognize it.

If you truly understand who you are, then your decisions and behaviors will be based upon more accurate information. This can be helpful in putting yourself in situations where you are most likely to be successful. For example, one president stated:

If I were at a small liberal arts college where I had my arms around details everyday, I would be nuts, and I would be making the people around me crazy. I have to have the complexity inherent in a large institution. I know that about myself, so I wouldn't take a presidency just to take a presidency. It must have the right set of characteristics and challenges. I really think it is important to spend time reflecting on who you are.

The presidents believe that rising leaders must be clear about their own principles of leadership. One president explained:

I believe what works today is value-driven leadership, which is the sum of competence and authenticity. Competence refers to your experiences, preparation, and accomplishments, while authenticity refers to your character. It is important to know how you see your place in the world while being confident, centered, and committed to your own values. Understand how you choose to work, think, handle disappointment, and connect with people. Understand how you react to fear, anxiety, and frustration. You must have a sense of self. And finally, you need to understand which traits are important to you in this value-driven leadership you are developing in yourself (for example, empathy, sincerity, compassion, humility, ethics, moral standards, veracity, trust, integrity, openness, communication, courage, relationships, diversity commitment, willingness to serve others, learning, intellectual vigor, and/or the ability to focus and motivate).



The presidents advised that emerging women leaders should ask questions and be as informed as possible. Women should look for areas of curiosity and interest, and then study and learn about each of them. They should "allow differing ideas and perspectives to stretch their thinking." They should find opportunities that allow them to use creativity, innovation, and discovery. Finally, they should have positive experiences in ethical and respectful environments that allow for the effective development of leadership.

### Develop Strength and Trust in Self

Knowing yourself leads to trusting yourself and your leadership capabilities. This, in turn, leads to increased confidence, both in yourself and those you lead. All of the presidents spoke of how critical it is to be an individual and a leader who trusts herself and has internal and external strength. One president stated, "Successful leaders have a personal and professional strength that gives them backbone and energy to lead." Although the presidents spoke highly of the ability to collaborate and compromise when needed, they said that values are never something to be compromised. One woman stated, "Be sure your values are in sync with your organization, and never compromise them!"

Another study participant spoke of the importance of trusting yourself.

Trust your own judgment. Hold fast when you think you're right. Don't back down. If you back down when you really believe you're right, then you lose credibility. In fact, the next time you make a firm decision, nobody will believe you. They'll say, "She'll change her mind." I really believe you have to trust yourself. If you find out you're wrong, you can certainly back down and learn from the experience. But if you make a hard decision and you believe you have done the right thing, it's really very important to stay with it.

Other presidents used the phrase, "Listen to your gut." Learning to believe in yourself and your abilities is foundational in developing leadership throughout a lifetime. This internal strength and self-trust should eliminate, or at least decrease, fear. Fear breeds insecurity, which, according to one president, "isn't a good thing when it comes to leading." As another president noted, "To lead one has to be unafraid to make decisions and then act." It is personal strength and confidence that removes fear.

### Embrace Challenges

The willingness and ability to embrace challenges has been a strong emerging theme throughout this book. It is no surprise then that it was one of the seven primary streams of advice the women believe is important for emerging leaders to hear. One president said simply, "You must embrace challenges and learn from them." Another stated, "Continually challenge yourself to do different kinds of things." A few women made statements such as, "Don't be afraid to think and dream big." Having the right set of challenges available is particularly motivating to individuals who are driven and ambitious.

Girls and young women can learn early in life that it is acceptable to take certain risks. They need to have experiences in which they demonstrate self-esteem and self-concept by challenging themselves and having many successes and occasional failures. As one president noted, "These experiences increase self-efficacy and the desire to continue accepting and seeking challenges." If this habit is created early in life it can be particularly useful in the ongoing development of emerging leaders. One president explained, "You need to find ways to stretch yourself. Each time you do you become less intimidated and more confident." The presidents suggested that women should not fear putting themselves forward to take on new challenges.

The presidents believe that rising leaders need to clearly understand that stretching and challenging yourself is a lot of work

and may result at times in certain unintended consequences. One president explained:

Young women need to clearly understand that becoming and then being a leader is a lot of hard work. There's a great deal of personal sacrifice that comes with it, including some that affect your family. I think my ambition has actually been a strong contributor to my divorces and other family struggles. However, I have clearly enjoyed what I have done, and I don't have any regrets about it.

If you decide that you want to challenge yourself and assertively develop leadership skills and competencies, one president gave the following advice:

You have to learn how to not stress out about the little stuff. You need to develop the skills to be able to handle large amounts of data and tasks. You have to learn to be flexible and ride with things. Although I had some preparation and experience, I didn't feel the load and complexity until I actually had a substantial leadership position. It's not just the weight, but it's the amount of stuff. Remember, universities are little cities.

One president gave this summarizing advice:

If there is any advice I can share it is that, if you are lucky, life is long, and life is good. However, no successful leader escapes this life without having her share of bumps, bruises, and sometimes fractures. It's never pleasant, but if the difference you can make outweighs those bumps, bruises, and fractures—it is worth it. Those people like me who thrive on challenges are driven forward. If you want to make the kind of difference that matters, embrace challenges and start preparing yourself now.

### Develop General Leadership Competencies

The ten participants provided a number of recommendations regarding the development of leadership competencies. I have summarized these in the following list:

- Be clear with yourself about the skills needed to be successful in leadership.
- Hire the right people, have confidence in them, and then get out of their way and let them do their jobs. Focus on building a great team.
- Gather around you people from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, experiences, and viewpoints—seek commonalities and new approaches. Let the differences freshen and inform your thinking.
- Involve, engage, enlist, and profit from including others in everything you do.
- Always do your homework so you are prepared.
- Accept that the position of a leader is a position of power. Embrace power. Take it, and then give it away. The more power you give, the more you have. You lose power when you fail to empower others.
- Have a positive attitude. A positive outlook, even on a bad situation that others may have created around you, deters the naysayer from the next level of criticism. Understand the nature of public scrutiny and criticism, and then continue to focus on the positive.
- Be aware of the language you choose when talking about issues, and engage in discussion, exchange, and debate. Language helps set the tone and can be



inclusive or exclusive. Language has the capacity to elevate the discussion and bring out the best in others.

- Don't take yourself too seriously.
- Build powerful support systems with family, friends, professional organizations, colleagues, peers, bosses, researchers, and so forth.
- Participate in leadership training and networking opportunities.
- Always be ethical and honest.
- Remember that gender is only one of many issues to consider when there are challenges and issues.
- Build the ability to see beyond the immediate issue so that you can contemplate the broader ones.
- Consider whether you are an organizational or individual contributor. Figure out if you are interested in effectively enabling others. This brings clarity of understanding if you have the capability to lead such a complex organization.
- Articulate a forward-looking, poignant, encompassing vision to set the tone and direction of an organization by developing the courage to aim high while remaining realistic and seeking wise counsel.
- Learn to put yourself into another's shoes and have that kind of empathy. It's hard to serve and lead others without an understanding about what motivates or discourages them.
- Learn to create an appropriate structure to support the vision.

- Have strong change agent skills.
- Understand what it means to leave behind a private life.
- Avoid burnout in a pressured environment by learning and doing new things.
- Insert and find humor in everyday things—including yourself! Remember to make yourself a priority at times so that you can be renewed.
- Move on when you need to move on. Leave a position when the excitement is gone.

### Look Beyond Yourself

Leadership is not really about the leader herself. It is about the organization, followers, and those who are being serviced. The presidents believe that leaders who are focused too much on themselves lose sight of the true organizational needs. These individuals fail to recognize the interplay between all of the subsystems within and without the larger organizational system. One piece of advice given over and over by the presidents was that leaders need to "think beyond themselves." Three presidents spoke specifically about the role of a female leader to lift other women. One explained:

You must lead by example for those who are coming up behind you. You must lead by reaching back and helping others. That is a responsibility you have.

Another stated:

Always remember that as you climb up the ladder you've got to pull up other women with you. I really believe that it is our responsibility as women leaders to bring others along. There are many amazing women who just need opportunities.

A third spoke of this responsibility for all positions, including that of a faculty member. She explained:

Even faculty who are strong researchers need to reach beyond themselves and create better places for their students and for their community, whatever that may be. In today's world the pressure is on faculty members of the higher education community to be selfish and to do whatever it takes to take care of themselves. They believe that they have to do that. Yet it's still a world that requires people to give of themselves over and beyond the job. It's still a world that needs individuals to help make things better around them. It is clear that there is a tendency to look after ourselves, but that is a pathway that will not lead to a happy life.

A number of presidents recommended that, although they have encouraged women to take opportunities that give them personal and professional development, a leader-in-training should focus first on the needs of the organization. Leadership development should never be done at the expense of the organization. One president said she always thought to herself, "What do I need to do to support this organization, help this organization, and build programs that support this organization?" She said that keeping the focus continually on what is good for the organization has provided her with plenty of opportunities for personal experience and growth.

The women explained that if presidents are truly looking out for those around them instead of focusing on themselves, they typically do a few specific things. First, they give their best in all that they do, even behind the scenes. Second, they take time for others. Third, they are "honest and ethical—beyond reproach—throughout their lives." This is crucial if the leader cares about the institution and those who are served by it. Fourth, they respect others. One stated, "Always remember the words *respect* and *trust*. It is essential to earn

the respect and trust of your immediate colleagues and to return the favor to them." Finally, they serve as leaders with a spirit of sincere care and concern for others. One president explained, "You can build a reservoir of good will that will come back in a time you need it."

## Presidency Perspectives

The presidents also shared some interesting perspectives related to the office of a university president and higher education in general. Three presidents spoke of early women presidential pioneers and the lack of mentoring they provided. One explained:

Women who were about five years ahead of me in major administrative posts were, as a group, unwilling to get involved in supporting other women in leadership development. They were intent upon being very male-like. Women of my generation were much more willing to reach out. We didn't think that it made us look weak to reach out and support other women. On behalf of these first women academic leaders, I'm not sure any of us can ever really understand what they had to go through to break through that glass ceiling during those years. They are all retired now, but they were pretty chilly to the rest of us. There is no excuse for this now. We must support each other.

Another participant in her late sixties provided some very interesting insights on her theory about the reasons some women were able to obtain positions in earlier years. Of course these are only one woman's feelings, but the theory does provide an interesting and humorous perspective.

I predict that generations from now will never understand what I'm about to say. Those of us along the fault lines do understand. I was the kind of woman that was

not threatened by male leaders. I dressed like their wives dressed and looked like their wives looked. I didn't show up at work without a bra and in sandals. I looked smart and knew what their expectations were for me. A lot of very talented women felt compromised if they didn't flaunt the fads of the day, and they would come in deliberately braless and in pony tails. It was totally inappropriate. In fact, no man could have gotten ahead that way either. It was a bad road that some women went down early on. I never saw dressing and acting professional as a compromise.

Interestingly, I remember having a discussion when I was an ACE Fellow. One woman said, "I hate these clothes." I said, "Actually, I kind of like them. If you hate them, why do you wear them?" Her response was, "If you are going to assassinate Caesar you've got to dress like Caesar's guard." There was a lot of that in the beginning.

I was already part of leadership groups before the men figured out that I was going to lead the group. That was an important survival skill for early women presidents. You'll notice that, with the exception of Hannah Gray who always would have dressed the way a man would have dressed, many of us are short. We were not physically intimidating women. In fact, many of us presidents were gathered at an event one day, and we laughed as we realized that we were in a room full of midgets—we were all short women! We jokingly decided that we got to our positions because we were short enough to walk between the men unnoticed. Because we were not intimidating in that sense, we concluded that maybe we had disarmed them long enough to become known. And after we were known, there was no longer an issue. The men knew what we could do and supported us.

The presidents then spoke briefly of their feelings about the presidential position specifically. One noted, "I have a great deal of respect for the office of the president and the leadership role it embodies." Another president explained:

I just can't tell you what a privilege and honor it is to serve as president of this university. It is not one that I earned. It is a place that is so important and so valuable, and I just don't want to screw it up. Like the Athenian state, it is our responsibility to make it better and more beautiful by the time we are done.

A president with responsibilities for a state education system shared these insights on how this position can make a difference for the larger society:

I really believe that a president or chancellor can truly make a difference with regard to important things for others. It is a matter of doing the right things. I have worked really hard to make things better. I think that's what ethical leaders do. When you get into these positions, you have the opportunity to carry out your values and to make a difference at such a large scale, even globally at times. You can spend an awful lot of your time doing other stuff, but you must try to keep your eye on what key issues are important to you, the students, the institutions, and the state. If you do this you can make a difference that will matter to many.

Although the office of a president should be respected, one woman spoke candidly of what makes a large impact on that the office.

I have a great deal of respect for the office of the president and the leadership role, but in the end all of us are smarter than one of us. It is not about me, and it is not

about the president. It is about us and about building the best team we can. It's about being willing to talk candidly about the problems we have to take on and the challenging changes we have to work into the culture.

Finally, a different president provided some profound insights regarding her position:

I have learned not to confuse the high office I hold with the human frailties that I am. It is easy, when your first name is president, to think you are more than you really are. You have to really be honest with yourself about the office and not the person. You see this in corporations too, where leaders lose sight of that fact. They forget and think that since they are so important that all their ideas must be great and anything they want should happen. So many leaders in business and higher education are full of themselves, and *that* is what their success is. The office is noble, but the individual in the office has human frailties that he or she should never forget! Leaders who are both successful and ethical do not.

Three of the presidents, very close to retirement, spoke of the position being exhausting. One explained, "I couldn't have done this job earlier in my life. I was in my mid-fifties when I took office, and it is all consuming. It takes everything I've got." Another explained:

I am a marathoner (I don't mean literally), and I am a sprinter. But I can't sprint a marathon, and that's what it feels like sometimes. Before 8:00 in the morning I'm on my e-mail dealing with some accreditation problems on one campus, athletic problems on another, an audit issue on a third, and that is all before getting the daily

paper. When the morning paper comes I must address all of the issues it brings. Often these issues stack up, and I have to deal with them simultaneously. The mind is willing, but the body numbs. I have wondered how many years I can take of sleep deprivation. This job is all encompassing.

The presidents generally seemed to believe that leadership in higher education has become more complex through the years. One president said:

In the past, leadership has relied on the strength and determination of a single individual. This still holds, but leadership today must also address greater complexities at multiple levels. By that same token, past leadership ultimately was answerable to a relatively small, contained homogeneous community, making ethical leadership easier and clearer. Leadership challenges are no longer single or simple. They intertwine and reach beyond a single community to touch communities across the entire planet.

A number of presidents also agree that higher education should be involved in social change as one of its major purposes. One president stated:

Leaders in higher education can lose sight of this role amid the issues and demands of the moment. It is easy to slip back into a comfort zone, passing on the difficult position, and not rising to the challenge or taking the risk.

Finally, four additional themes that emerged focused on the presidents' beliefs that (1) higher education should be the very essence of change and, therefore, should be a leader in the community; (2) in today's world, education should be responsive and



adaptive to the changing environment; (3) faculty, staff, administrators, and students should be prepared and open to change; and (4) higher educational communities should be more concerned with the "common good" versus the "entitlement" perspectives of the past.

## Final Thoughts

By the time this book is published, some of these presidents may have retired, changed institutions, or possibly changed occupations; but whatever they go on to do, they will always be leaders. It is in their blood, it is in their hearts, and it is in their souls. They yearn to make a difference. They already have, and they will continue to do so throughout their lives.

Studying the lifetime developmental journeys of these ten women has provided me opportunities to think about my own goals, ambitions, and life. I have learned to self-reflect at a level deeper than I had previously done. This has provided moments of uneasiness, moments of amazement, and moments of peace. I would encourage you to allow this book do the same for you as you reflect back upon its content, insights, and advice.

Developing leaders is a crucial issue in today's higher education, business, and public arenas. We need strong, prepared, and ethical leaders in our homes, schools, businesses, nonprofits, churches, communities, states, nations, and world. Women *can* and *must* make a difference. Let us prepare ourselves to become those leaders and, more important, let's reach out to help prepare the girls and young women who can make a phenomenal impact in years to come.

# APPENDIX A

## Research Methods

Based on an extensive review of existing writings, I created a detailed list of open-ended probing questions designed to obtain a wide array of information about the presidents' past experiences and perceptions. Two experienced leadership researchers provided feedback on these questions, and adjustments were made accordingly (see Appendix B for the question categories).

After spending months writing proposals for small grants and recruiting funding for travel costs and support, I was able to secure the basic funding by January 2005. I then sent invitational e-mails and letters to twenty-five women university presidents or chancellors across the United States requesting their participation in the study. Twelve presidents agreed and I was able to interview ten of the twelve presidents who could meet with me between March and June 2005. Traveling to the presidents' university offices for a face-to-face interview was imperative in obtaining the type, quantity, and quality of data needed for this research.

Analysis included:

1. *Transcriptions*: resulting in about 600 double-spaced pages.
2. *Preliminary analysis*: resulting in a categorization of all responses within each interview.
3. *Combined categorization*: resulting in a combination of all related responses (comments, perspectives, and stories) from all