The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences, events, and circumstances that provided Latino educators the opportunity for ascendancy to the presidency of a California community college. This study aimed to recapture the individual experiences of current Latino community college presidents from working class, immigrant family backgrounds as they ascended to the presidency. Through in-depth, conversational interviews, a chronology of their rich personal, social, and cultural experiences was shared and their stories retold with their assistance. A purposive sampling method was used to identify the participants for the study. Four research subjects participated in the study from the estimated twenty-seven community college Chief Executive Officers in California who are of Latino descent.

This qualitative study utilized a narrative research design that gives voice, integrity, and authenticity to their experiences. While it was not the intention of this study to compare the experiences of the participants, seven common themes emerged from the narratives:

1. The Powerful Influence of Family

2. A Sense of Struggle, Overcoming Obstacles, and Resilience
3. Positive Connections to Schools and Learning
4. Great Benefits from Quality Mentoring Experiences
5. Growth from Participation in Leadership Development Programs
6. An Unusual Commitment and Dedication to Public Service
7. The Impact of Race, Culture, and Gender on the Presidency

By investigating the experiences, events, and circumstances that provided Latino educators the opportunity for ascendancy to the presidency of a community college, a better understanding of this educational journey emerged and informs educational leaders and practitioners of higher education. This study also wished to inform educational policy, programs, and leadership practices that identify, prepare, and increase the number of underrepresented community college presidents, especially Latinos and others who derive from ethnic minority and working class, immigrant communities.
Immigrant Lives and Presidential Dreams: Exploring the Experiences of Latino Community College Presidents

by
Francisco C. Rodríguez

A DISSERTATION
submitted to
Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Presented December 13, 2005
Commencement June 2006
Doctor of Philosophy dissertation of Francisco C. Rodríguez presented on December 13, 2005.

APPROVED:

Signature redacted for privacy.
Major Professor, representing Education

Signature redacted for privacy.
Dean of the College of Education

Signature redacted for privacy.
Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Signature redacted for privacy.
Francisco C. Rodríguez, Author
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Many hands and hearts have selflessly assisted me in the completion of this journey. The following friends and colleagues have provided unwavering support and inspiration. My sincere appreciation and gratitude are extended to each of you – un abrazo cordial.

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Dr. Steve Epler
Dr. Bob Franks
Dr. Jim Grieshop
Dr. Brice Harris
Linda Neal
Dr. Kevin Ramírez
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David Risling
Don Tingley

Colleagues at Cosumnes River College & Los Ríos CCD
Machetes S.A.

In Memory of Chancellor Tomás Rivera
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DEDICATION

Para Mi Linda Esposa, Irma

e Hijos Hermosos, Andrés y Angelica

y

Mis Padres, Francisco y Amelia Rodriguez
Immigrant Lives and Presidential Dreams: Exploring the Experiences of Latino Community College Presidents
PROLOGUE

After eighteen years of working in higher education at the University of California and at the California Community Colleges, both in student services and in academic administration, I was offered the opportunity for my first community college presidency. In July 2003, I began my tenure as president at Cosumnes River College of the Los Rios Community College District in Sacramento, a highly diverse and urban campus of 12,000 students in northern California. In addition to being a relatively young community college president — I was offered the post before my 40th birthday — I am also a first-generation Californian of Mexican ancestry from a working-class family. Like so many other immigrant families, my parents came to this country over 50 years ago to escape their history of poverty and to search for economic prosperity and a better future for their children.

While I am proud of this professional accomplishment, I am saddened and concerned by the fact that I am joined by only a handful of other ethnic minority administrators, especially other Latinos, who hold the top post at community colleges and other institutions of higher learning in the United States. This small number of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of color in the nation is in direct contrast to the growing numbers of students of color who enroll at community colleges nationwide.

Why is this important? In my view, serving as an ethnic minority administrator adds value to the ethos and performance of a community college. In my case, it has allowed me to be alert and sensitive to the issues of disenfranchised populations, and to practice my cultural knowledge in addressing the needs and interests of an
increasingly diverse student body, staff, faculty, and surrounding community. Leadership from diverse perspectives can also nurture a positive campus climate and foster organizational readiness for diversity initiatives, programs, and activities that can lead to improved student success. It also can shape an atmosphere of trust, collegiality, and respect on campus – key ingredients for success at any level.

Being a president of color, however, also creates an unwritten and necessary burden – and I would add, obligation – to serve with distinction so that the career pathways to the presidency for Latinos, and other ethnic minorities and women, remain open and become more commonplace. Due to the racial bias that still exists, I recognize that my margin for error is far less than my majority counterparts and that my approach to leadership, my body of work, and my decisions will be heavily scrutinized. But I am also cognizant of the tremendous influence for positive change and the lasting impact we can have on institutions of higher education.

By way of background, California’s population is almost one-third Latino, with the majority concentrated in K-12 public schools. The California Community Colleges is the largest segment of higher education and workforce preparation in the country and consists of a statewide system of 109 public community colleges serving over 2.5 million credit and non-credit students. The system comprises 72 single and multi-college community college districts. Of the 109 community college CEOs at the time of this writing, Latinos hold 27 (25%) presidencies in California (see Appendix A) – an impressive one in four – but just 6.5 percent of community college presidencies held nationally.
At the latest census, California — by a wide margin — has the highest number and percentage of Latino CEOs in the nation's community colleges and is broadly recognized as the state affording the most opportunities at the CEO level for higher education administrators from underrepresented communities.

Lastly, from its humble beginning over 100 years ago in Joliet, Illinois, the United States now has 1,158 community colleges and serves over 10 million credit and non-credit students annually, by far the single largest provider of higher education and workforce preparation in the world (see Table 1).

Of note is the exponential growth of colleges during the 1960s and the relative stagnation since then, especially from the 1980s to present time. This lack of growth of community colleges over the last 25 years, and what could be characterized as public divestment in the funding of community colleges, is in direct contrast to the population swell that has occurred nationally during the same period of time, particularly for students from immigrant communities who have come to our country in search of economic and educational opportunities.
Table 1

Growth of Community Colleges in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th># COLLEGES</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>1,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,158</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2004a
CHAPTER 1

FOCUS OF STUDY AND SIGNIFICANCE

To go North, ir al norte, continues to be a beacon of hope for many who dare to explore immigrant life and its opportunities. The United States, land of pioneering spirit and opportunity for economic and social rewards, remains the goal for many of the earth’s peoples.

— Julia E. Curry Rodriguez

Community college leaders pride themselves on their commitment to American democracy and to serving their communities (Weisman & Vaughan, 2002). This commitment must be acted on through the recruitment, selection, and retention of community college presidents who mirror the nation’s racial and ethnic diversity and the profile of students who attend our nation’s community colleges. More needs to be done, however, to fulfill this promise.

In 1988, a national report, Building Communities: A Vision for a New Century, was presented by the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges and spoke to the need of increasing the representation of ethnic diversity among community college presidents:

There is a clear and pressing need to increase diversity among community college leadership... There are 37 Black, 32 Hispanic, and 8 Asian chief executive officers in the nation’s community colleges. Blacks and Hispanics are underrepresented among all administrative and faculty groups. (p. 42)

In 1993, The American College President 1993 Edition (Ross, Green, & Henderson) surveyed community college presidents and compiled the responses of 2,423 presidents who were in office in 1990 and derived the following profile:

The typical U.S. college president is white, male, and 54 years old, nearly the same profile as in 1986... Typically, the college president holds a doctoral
degree, has served as either as a president or vice president in his or her previous institution. Slightly more than nine percent of the 1990 presidents were members of minority groups. African American presidents constituted 5.5 percent; Hispanic (Latino), 2.6 percent; Asian American, 0.4 percent; and Native American, 0.8 percent.

More recently, Weisman and Vaughan (2002) released a research brief, *The Community College Presidency*, which presented the results of a 2001 study of community college presidents using Vaughan’s Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS). The CLS has been conducted in 1984, 1991, and 1996 (Vaughan, 1986; Vaughan, Mellander, & Blois, 1994; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998). Three significant findings resulted from a comparison of data from 2001 and previous surveys: a near three-fold increase in the percentage of female presidents, an increased rate of presidential retirements, and, as it relates to this study, a lack of sizeable increase in the percentage of minority presidents (Weisman & Vaughan).

The increase in female community college presidents is encouraging, more than doubling in a 10-year period, from 11 percent in 1991 to nearly 28 percent in 2001. Current statistics show the percentage of women CEOs (chief executive officers) has dropped off to 26.5 percent (AACC, 2004; Blount & Associates & Lindley, 2005).

Concern, however, should be raised with the modest progress that has been made related to the representation of ethnic and racial minorities in the community college presidency. According to Weisman and Vaughan (2002), in 1991, approximately 11 percent of the community college presidents identified themselves as members of an ethnic or racial group. In 1996, that segment had increased about
three percentage points, to slightly more than 14 percent. Since then, there has been a
slow, but steady increase in ethnic or racial minority representation at the presidential
level, currently close to 20 percent (AACC, 2004; Blount & Associates & Lindley,
2005).

Leadership development programs, professional development and mentoring
programs, innovative doctoral programs in education, and other initiatives are
underway to recruit and select prospective CEOs, and to support and retain community
college presidents who reflect the nation’s racial and ethnic diversity (see Appendix
B). These efforts, however, have yet to significantly produce a more balanced
representation of said groups at the CEO level.

This study aims to explore the individual experiences of current Latino
community college presidents in California as they ascended to the presidency. A
chronology of their rich personal, social, and cultural experiences will be explored and
their stories will be retold with their assistance.

RESEARCH FOCUS

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, events, and
circumstances that provided Latino educators the opportunity for ascendancy to the
presidency of a community college.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that will be answered through this study are:
• What are the significant experiences, events, and/or circumstances in the lives of Latino presidents that resulted in their being selected to be president of a community college?

• What cultural and/or institutional advantages or opportunities did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? What was their impact?

• What cultural and/or institutional obstacles did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? What was their impact? How were they overcome?

SIGNIFICANCE

There are three major reasons for the importance of this study: (a) to better understand the experiences of Latino community college presidents as they ascended to the presidency; (b) to contribute towards the paucity of literature available on Latino community college presidents; and (c) to provide insights for educational policymakers and practitioners into the recruitment of prospective CEOs, and the training, support, and promotion of incumbent presidents, who are currently underrepresented in the executive ranks.

While great strides have been made to achieve racial and ethnic diversity within the student body at community colleges, the representation of ethnic minority presidents has not kept pace with the increase in racial composition of students. A profile of the ethnicity of community college students is provided by Table 2, which when compared to Table 3, gives a sense of the disparity between the backgrounds of
students in community colleges versus those of the chief administrators who serve them (AACC, 2004).

Table 3 shares results from a recent study of community college presidents conducted by the AACC (2004b), Blount & Associates, and Lindley (2005) and describes the distribution of community college presidents by race and ethnicity as follows:

- Asian American/Pacific Islander (1.5%)
- Native American (2.8%)
- Latino (6.5%)
- African American (8.5%)
- White/Caucasian (80.1%)
Table 3

Characteristics of Community College CEOs, 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>% of All CEOs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>80.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 40</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 44</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 – 49</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 54</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>55 – 59</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 – 64</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>65 or older</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
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Table 3 (Continued)

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<thead>
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<th>Characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tenure as CEO</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 2.5 years</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 – 4 years</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 9 years</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 14 years</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 19 years</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 24 years</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 29 years</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or more years</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Highest Level of Education**

- Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.) 85.0%
- JD 2.0%
- Master’s 11.0%
- Other 1.0%

Source: AACC, 2004b; Blount & Associates & Lindley, 2005

The imbalance in representation becomes clear when comparing the racial and ethnic backgrounds of students enrolled at community colleges and the chief executive officer of their campuses, where in 2002, one-third of enrolled community college students in the nation were from ethnic and racial backgrounds (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004b).
In reviewing the literature on community college presidents, an abundance of past educational studies have focused on the qualities, experiences, and leadership characteristics of four-year college and university presidents. Fewer, but a growing number of studies, have described the ascendancy of all groups to the presidency at our nation’s two-year community colleges and technical colleges (Vaughan, 1986). Within this context, research on the experiences and voices of ethnic minority community college presidents, with the specific experiences of Chicano and Latino community college presidents, is almost absent. There is a need to hear the voices and understand the experiences of members of this underrepresented group and to extend the scope of the existing research in this area.

The usefulness of this study has significance at many levels. It adds to the dearth of literature on the subject, affords the reader a better understanding of paths to the presidency, and provides insights for current and aspirant presidents who have been historically underrepresented in the executive ranks of community colleges. The study also shares stories not often told of a journey not often taken by Latinos, especially those who are first-generation Americans from working class, immigrant families. By telling their story in an authentic way, it may provide the hope and inspiration necessary for Latinos and others to aspire to the same goals.

SUMMARY

With the nation’s demographics changing rapidly – and with community colleges enrolling significant percentages of students from Latino, African American, and Asian backgrounds – it is practically and ethically imperative for two-year
institutions to have administrations that reflect the diversity of the United States (Bowen & Muller, 1996). The increase in female community college presidents is encouraging. Concern, however, should be raised that there has been a modest increase in ethnic and racial minority representation at the presidential level in close to fifteen years. Training and mentorship programs, leadership development opportunities, and doctoral education programs are underway to recruit, train, and retain community college leaders who reflect the communities they serve. These efforts, however, have yet to significantly produce a more balanced representation of these groups at the CEO level.

It is the intention of this study that by investigating the experiences, events, and circumstances that provided Latino educators the opportunity for ascendancy to the presidency of a community college that a better understanding of this educational journey emerges and informs educational leaders and practitioners of higher education. This study also informs educational policy, programs, and leadership practices that identify, prepare, and increase the number of underrepresented community college presidents, especially Latinos. This study also tells a story of struggle, perseverance, and, ultimately, triumph against the odds. It is a story not often told of travels not often taken by first-generation community college presidents who generally hail from working class, immigrant families.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Valuing diversity means understanding that everyone does not experience the world in the same way and that the richness of these different and differing experiences improves the quality of life for all. Valuing diversity means getting over the issues of race and gender, and focusing on the best interests of the institution and the community when selecting a college president.

– George B. Vaughan and Iris Weisman (1998), The Community College at the Millennium

This chapter provides a summary of literature that supports the need for a study of exploring the experiences, events, and circumstances that provided Latino educators the opportunity for ascendancy to the community college presidency. The literature review is divided into three major sections, each contributing towards the focus and design of the study: (a) Latinos in the United States: A Selected Profile; (b) Achieving Administrative Diversity in Higher Education; and (c) Latino Leadership in Higher Education.

The first section, "Latinos in the United States: A Selected Profile," provides a current demographic snapshot of the Latinos in the United States. This section is designed to provide an overview of the Latino community, including a discussion on the rapidly changing racial landscape and commentary regarding the rich diversity within the Latino community. The section provides a context for the study of Latino culture and, in particular, these educators – the subjects of this study – who derive from the Latino community, and who aspired to and, ultimately, succeeded in
obtaining a community college presidency. A review of the educational attainment of Latinos concludes this section.

The second major section, "Achieving Administrative Diversity in Higher Education," analyzes two seminal studies that focus on ethnic minority community college presidents, one specifically on Latinos and the educational pipeline. One study begins with an historical view written twenty years ago by George Vaughan (Vaughn, 1986). New commentary by this well regarded scholar-author of leadership and community colleges will be offered as well. The other study reviewed is a more contemporary discussion by Isaura Santiago (1996), president at Hostos Community College of the City University of New York, where she speaks specifically and convincingly about the need for increasing the Latino leadership pipeline and the necessary commitment to diversity required by the entire higher education enterprise in order to do this. Santiago argues that this elusive goal can be obtained through the implementation of effective institutional and organizational strategies.

Both studies illustrate the major challenges and the educational necessity associated with expanding administrative opportunities for ethnic minorities at community colleges, including the lag in ethnic minority representation in college leadership positions and the reasons for it. Helpful strategies to address these challenges are also offered. Both scholars describe these efforts to diversify administrative representation at the community college level as educational imperatives.
The information provided by these two studies is useful to better understand the institutional and personal obstacles confronted by ethnic minority administrators and what can be done to create opportunities and prepare a new generation of leaders. Thoughtful treatment of the subject of educational and personal obstacles confronted by Latino presidents conforms to the focus of this study and provides guidance in addressing the principal research questions under study.

Finally, the third section of the literature review, "Latino Leadership in Higher Education," focuses on studies that examine contemporary issues in Latino leadership in higher education, especially as it relates to community colleges. There is a paucity of studies that focus on Latinos in leadership roles in American higher education, let alone at the community colleges. In an exhaustive search for and review of literature, the studies highlighted here appear to be amongst the key research available that focuses specifically on Latino educational leaders.

One study is a recent survey of Latino presidents conducted by Gutierrez, Castaneda, and Katsinas (2002) titled, "Latino Leadership in Community Colleges: Issues and Challenges," that appeared in the Community College Journal of Research and Practice. A second study is Roberto Haro’s chapter, “Held to a higher standard: Latino executive selection in higher education,” in The Leaning Ivory Tower: Latino Professors in American Universities (1995). These two studies are critically examined and contribute towards a deeper understanding of the experiences and circumstances that help to explain the challenges associated with aspiring to and obtaining a presidency. The studies also offer perspectives and insights as to why so few Latinos
are selected for key leadership roles in higher education. These studies, which specifically emphasize the experiences of Latino executives in higher education, are congruous with the focus of this study and, ultimately, helped to influence the design of the study. Other studies include highlights from the recently published American Council on Education study (Pérez, 2005) and the 2001 National Community College Hispanic Council survey of presidents (Gutierrez, Castaneda, & Katsinas, 2002).

These three sections were selected because of their appropriateness, relevancy, and contributions towards answering the research questions through a qualitative study that focused on the lived experiences of Latino community college presidents. Each section influenced the research study in its focus, significance and design.

LATINOS IN THE UNITED STATES: A SELECTED PROFILE

Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). According to the 2000 census, 12.5 percent of the total population in the United States is of Latino descent, surpassing African Americans, who comprise 12.1 percent, as the largest ethnic group in the country. This is the first time in our nation’s history that Latinos outnumber African Americans as the nation’s largest racial minority (Rendon, 2003).

Figure 1 projects the rate of growth for the general population in the United States to 2050. It is estimated that by 2050, one of four residents in the U.S. will be of Latino origin.
An examination of the growth in the Latino population reports that Latinos have attained the highest rate of population growth in American history, growing by 58 percent or 22.4 million in 1990 to 35 million in 2000 (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). During this same time period, the white population has decreased from 75 percent to 69 percent – and the forecast calls for this trend to continue (Rendon, 2003), as demonstrated by Figure 2. It is projected that the Latino population will reach approximately 38 million by 2005 and comprise 13.8 percent of the entire population by 2010 (de los Santos & Rigual, 1994; Hernández, 2000).

Furthermore, in 2004, the U.S. Census Bureau projected that with the increase in the ethnic minority population and the anticipated decrease in the white population,
both populations would be roughly equivalent in the year 2050, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The dramatic rate of growth for Latinos has occurred over the past three and a half decades. Looking back, the Latino population in the United States grew by 53 percent between 1980 and 1990, and 61 percent between 1970 and 1980 (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). The U. S. Bureau of the Census attributes the tremendous increase of Latinos to a birth rate higher than that of the rest of the population and to substantial and constant migration to the United States – both documented and undocumented – from Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America.

Figure 2. Projected Percentage of White Non-Hispanics and Ethnic Minorities in the U.S. Population: 2000-2050

Source: U. S. Census Bureau, 2004
Professor of sociology and scholar Julia E. Curry Rodríguez (1999) had this view on the role and impact of immigrants in the United States:

Immigrants, both as families and as individuals, carry along with them their social values, skills, aspirations, and cultures as they travel and settle in new communities. The United States has continuously benefited from the contributions of immigrants, whether in terms of the seemingly mundane food on our tables, the care of our children, or the intellectual discoveries and musical contributions borne of the hands of our newer residents. (p. 70)

Juan González, in his book, *Harvest of Empire* (2000), shares his perspective on the reasons for the flow of immigrants by observing that virtually every wave of Latino immigrants came north as a direct result of U.S. governmental policies, which forced their homelands to serve the economic and political interests of the United States. This in turn sent millions of Latinos, both documented and undocumented, north across the border in search of work, creating a *new* America. González goes on to state that whether we regard this human stream as curse or fortune does not matter, for it is the harvest of empire and it will not be curbed.

Census data further show that Latinos have historically concentrated in a small number of states, mostly in the South and West. In 1990, nearly nine of every ten Latinos lived in just ten states, while the largest populations were concentrated in five. More than 34 percent of all Latinos in the United States live in California, more than 19 percent live in Texas, almost 10 percent live in New York, and 7 percent live in Florida. However, this picture is rapidly changing as Latinos now are found in urban, suburban, and rural communities in virtually every region of the United States. Latinos can now be found in every state of the union, including newfound locations in
Midwest and Southern states such as Ohio, Wyoming, North Carolina, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Latinos can trace their roots to a variety of countries and geographic locations. Many find their roots in Mexico (61%), but Puerto Rico (12%), Central America (6%), South America (5%), the Dominican Republic (over 2%), and other areas are sources of Latino heritage (Rendon, 2003). Consequently, the Latino community is not only numerically large and expanding, it is also internally diverse and complex, representing a wide variety of subgroups.

David Hayes-Bautista (1999), professor of medicine and scholar, offers his widely regarded perspectives on the role and impact of assimilation and the Latino community that derived from the results of the California Identity Project.

The Latino presence is strengthening the basic institutions of society: the family, work, and education. There are some who, ignoring the statistics relative to the strengthening of society by Latinos, think that the only form of Latino participation is found in total assimilation. The truth is that Latinos are not assimilating in the same manner as the European immigrants of the nineteenth century. In contrast to the European immigrants, Latinos continue to base their identity on the family, culture, religion, and language.

Latinos continue to be Latinos even until the third generation. There are some stable factors of Latino identity measured over three generations. These factors are:

*The Family:* More than 96 percent of (Latinos) base their identity in the family. This factor does not change over three generations.

*Culture:* Culture is important to 84 percent of those surveyed. Included in this factor is the importance of being Mexican or Latino.

*The Catholic Religion:* Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the sample identify themselves as Catholic.
Being Spanish-speaking: This is the only factor that shows some variation. Sixty-seven percent (67%) still identify themselves as being Spanish-speaking.

Latinos do not have a double identity. Rather, they have a complete identity that is at the same time Latino/Latina and American. Being American implies being Latino, speaking Spanish, and conserving the family.

Latinos in the United States do not turn their backs on Mexico or Latin America. They do not suffer from total assimilation nor from cultural amnesia. The preservation of a strong Latino identity, however, should not give rise to Anglo fears that there exists a disloyal group within the population. Latinos see themselves clearly as citizens of the United States and make their contributions to this country by strengthening the family, work, religion, and education. (p. 40)

In the area of education, Latinos have a history of under-representation in American higher education (Castellanos & Jones, 2003). Some of this low participation rate can be explained through the high attrition of Latinos – they, especially Mexican Americans, are not completing their education, at both the elementary and high school levels. And while the population is growing, Latinos continue to be the least educated major racial group (Pérez, 2005). To illustrate the disparity in educational achievement, consider the following: The percentage of Latinos graduating from high school in 1992 was 57.3, whereas the percentage of whites was 83.3. Latinos earned 49,000 bachelor’s degrees awarded nationally in 1991, a number that represents only 4.5 percent of all bachelor degrees awarded that year (de los Santos & Rigual, 1994).

Latino students currently represent about 18 percent of the college-age population, but only 9.5 percent of all students enrolled at institutions of higher education in the United States – and only 6.6 percent of the enrollees at four-year
colleges and universities (Pérez, 2005). The federal government over the past decade has designated over 300 colleges and universities as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), whereby a minimum of 25 percent of student enrollees must be of Latino descent. According to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, almost half (49%) of Latino undergraduate students attend HSIs, yet only one-third of HSI institutions are led by Latino CEOs (Pérez, 2005).

Of all racial and ethnic minorities, Latinos are the least likely to complete a college degree (Hernandez, 2000). This is particularly notable since Latino students are expected to outnumber African American college students for the first time around the year 2006 (Carnavale, 1999). Their college-bound numbers will increase from 1.4 million in 1995 to 2.5 million in 2015, thereby constituting one in every six undergraduates by that time (Rendon, 2003).

Gains, nonetheless, have been made with respect to the number of degrees earned at the associate, master, and doctorate levels for students of color. The most recent American Council on Education Twenty-First Annual Status Report on Minorities in Higher Education, 2003-04 (2005) confirms that 70 percent of the new degree earners were students from ethnic minority backgrounds. The report continues further to share that between 1991-92 and 2001-02, Latinos more than doubled the number of degrees attained at the associate’s and master’s levels, earning 32,000 additional associate’s degree and 11,000 additional master’s degrees. Over the same 10-year period, Latino students nearly doubled their 1991-92 attainment of bachelor’s degrees (see Figure 3).
Education officials acknowledge that there have been solid gains in ethnic minority enrollment and achievement over the last 21 years, but work still remains in order to achieve educational parity between whites and ethnic minority groups.

David Ward, president of the American Council of Education, also reflects on this challenge and offers this opinion:

Diversifying the nation’s higher education institutions continues to be one of the most important challenges facing our society. The data illustrate how far we’ve come in our quest for educational excellence for all students, but they also caution us that equity in education for all Americans remains a goal that we must strive to reach. (Gilroy, 2005, p. 10)

William H. Harvey, co-author of the 2005 ACE report, shares this view:

These persistent gaps in college participation among whites and minorities tell us that we must be more creative and imaginative in developing strategies and finding additional resources so that more students of color are successful on our campuses. (Gilroy, 2005, p. 9)
In summary, this first section of the literature review provides a brief demographic profile of Latinos in the United States, and highlights the major, current educational issues in the Latino community. Some of the key findings include Latinos as the fastest growing ethnic group in the United States, today comprising approximately 13 percent of the population and the largest underrepresented group in the country. The Latino community is not only numerically large – it is projected that the Latino population will reach approximately 38 million by 2005 – and geographically dispersed, it is also internally diverse and complex, representing a wide variety of subgroups from various countries and regions. Latinos also have a history of under-representation in higher education, especially at the faculty and senior administrator level.

ACHIEVING ADMINISTRATIVE DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Although there have been successful efforts to attract and enroll Latinos at the community colleges, the group remains inadequately represented amongst faculty and in the administrative ranks of higher education. Two questions help to stage this section of the literature review:

- How do institutions attract and encourage university and college administrators to join their ranks and reflect the ethnic diversity of American society?
- Has the door of community colleges opened as wide for ethnic minorities and women who aspire to be community college presidents as it has for its community college students?
As the United States becomes more diverse, community colleges have the obligation to teach about and to serve as a model of diversity (Bowen & Muller, 1996). According to Bowen and Muller, ethnic minority leadership in the community college can facilitate achievement of these objectives. As community colleges start the new millennium, they confront major challenges in expanding administrative opportunities for persons from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. Preparing for and obtaining senior posts is extremely competitive and complex. Obtaining a community college presidency is a complicated process, especially when one attempts to understand not only the position, but also how society has affected those who aspire to the office and become presidents (Vaughan, 1989).

This second major section of the literature review explores the challenges of expanding administrative opportunities for ethnic minorities in higher education, and specifically at community colleges. According to Amey and VanDerLinden (2002), the representation of administrators from ethnic minority backgrounds has not increased substantially since the mid-1980s, when Moore, Martorana and Twombley (1985) found that 90 percent of their survey respondents were white. In 2000, about 84 percent of those administrators who responded were white as well. Moreover, and contrary to popular belief, the majority of community colleges are located in predominantly white suburban and rural areas.

Why is there a lag in ethnic minority representation in the administrative ranks? Phelps and Taber (1996) outline several institutional reasons:
• Weak or indifferent recruitment practices
• Lack of commitment to diversity
• Lack of professional development and training programs
• Benign neglect
• Institutional racism

The playing field for leadership positions at community colleges is extremely competitive, and consequently, it could be important for institutions to offer leadership development workshops, encourage participation in doctoral programs for working professionals, identify networking opportunities and mentoring programs, and other proactive initiatives and strategies designed to increase the leadership pool for underrepresented groups.

A strong commitment to the goals of affirmative action can enhance meaningful diversity by alerting and preparing candidates for senior administrative positions (Bowen & Muller, 1996). Now that affirmative action programs have been legally challenged at the highest levels for their constitutionality and admissions criteria have changed, it is critical to promote the values of access and equity at institutions of higher education and keep opportunities available to promising graduate and professional students who hail from underrepresented groups.

Recently, race-conscious affirmative action in higher education withstood legal scrutiny in the *Grutter v. Bollinger* case when in 2003 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that race was a valid academic admission criterion (Roach, 2005). Now, two years later, a number of “pipeline” programs have modified their eligibility requirements
that were geared to assist underrepresented ethnic minorities gain access to and complete graduate school. These programs have opened participation to all students in an effort to avoid legal challenges (Roach). Influential graduate pipeline programs administered by the Ford Foundation, the Mellon Foundation, and the Association of American Medical Colleges have undergone significant modifications since 2003. As a result, several program name changes have occurred to reflect the new standards and to avoid any legal challenges. To many, such changes have raised the concern that these programs now face a dilution of their original aims and goals – which is to boost the number of underrepresented minorities in specific academic and professional areas (Roach).

In addition, significant leadership positions, even in the era of dwindling resources for public higher education, could be created for ethnic minority candidates, especially now that a significant portion of sitting presidents are nearing retirement age. Gaining access, however, to this embedded culture of leadership and tradition can be difficult for newcomers to penetrate. Institutions that capitalize on internal leadership development initiatives for leaders, as well as external resources – such as national leadership development programs – will be more capable of identifying, nurturing, and expanding opportunities for ethnic minorities by providing them the structure and the confidence needed to enter the leadership pool (Bowen & Muller, 1996).

The work of Santiago (1996) explores strategies for developing the Latino leadership pipeline by achieving the broader institutional goals of multiculturalism and
pluralism. Santiago asserts that by failing to successfully incorporate all groups into the ranks of their students, faculty, and leadership, institutions put at risk not only their ability to successfully serve all groups, but also the future of our pluralistic democracy. Santiago states that this goal will require that institutions commit to achieving multiculturalism in their pedagogy and curriculum, and pluralism in their governance and administrative structures.

Santiago also suggests that in the process of achieving these broader institutional goals, Latinos and other minorities will be more successfully incorporated into their organizational structures because their participation will be based on the knowledge, skills, and experiences they bring to their positions, and the legitimate contributions they make in effectively serving Latinos and all students, by creating and maintaining a multicultural and pluralistic college community.

In another research study, now viewed as pioneering work, Vaughan (1989) explores and articulates the experiences of female, African American, and Latino presidents. The study demonstrates that, while not represented in large numbers, ethnic minority and women presidents do constitute an increasingly important and critical segment of the leadership of the nation's community colleges. Vaughan contends that the importance of minority presidents, especially African American and Latino, will increase as the number of minority students grows. Additionally, Vaughan discovers that ethnic minority presidents, while facing the same challenges and dilemmas confronted by other presidents, face additional dilemmas and challenges because of their race, ethnic background, and gender. He goes on to state that women,
African American, and other ethnic minority presidents are important to the community colleges not only for what they bring to the presidency as individuals, but also as living, breathing symbols for others with similar backgrounds who aspire to the presidency. Vaughan concludes by asserting, “Minority presidents must realize that the community college’s mission to serve all segments of society cannot be achieved without the leadership of minorities” (p. 87).

And according to Vaughan (1989), the disadvantages of being a minority president appear minor; therefore, in those states with large Hispanic populations, being Latino and bicultural, with an ability to speak Spanish, should be a major advantage to those seeking the presidency.

While Vaughan’s findings are provocative, at least one shortcoming should be pointed out; one should also be careful in generalizing his findings. It appears that only men were surveyed or that only men responded to the study. Not surprisingly, men were the majority of presidents at the time of the survey in 1986. The voices of the few Latino CEOs are present and the voices of Latinas are essentially absent. Nonetheless, his research is relevant, valuable, and insightful.

Latinos remain underrepresented in the faculty and administrative ranks in higher education. While there has been growing interest and research studies have been launched, our American higher education system has yet to adequately address the long-standing educational issues of access, retention, persistence, campus climate, faculty and staff diversity, and, as it relates to the focus of this study, administrative diversity at the executive level.
Another study by Vaughan, Mellander, and Blois (1994) found that few minorities are on the traditional pathway to the presidency. They found that 57 percent of all community college presidents had been chief academic officers before becoming president, while only 7 percent of all chief academic officers were ethnic minorities. Vaughan et al. also discovered that there were few ethnic minorities in the teaching ranks, usually a necessary prerequisite for administrative advancement, and that in 1990 only 10 percent of all full-time community college faculty were ethnic minorities.

In 1999, Latino faculty constituted less than 3 percent of all full-time professors and roughly 3 percent of all full-time administrators in higher education (Harvey, 2002). Today, that number for full-time faculty is 5.1 percent (see Table 4). Given what we know about this burgeoning population, what can be done to bolster the educational pipeline and nurture the next generation of educational leaders? What barriers continue to persist and how can they be overcome?

A recent survey (2004) illustrated by Table 4 reveals that the percentage of ethnic minority faculty has slowly climbed to 16.1 percent, as compared to white faculty who hold 80.5 percent of the faculty posts at the nation's community colleges. The slowly changing and increasing percentages must be viewed in context, however. Ethnic minority faculty holds tenure at our nation's colleges and universities at 13.3 percent (ACE, 2005). The number is even lower at Ivy League colleges, where African Americans and Latinos make up 6 percent of tenured faculty members (Gilroy, 2005). A report released in March 2005, *The (Un)Changing Face of the Ivy*
League, also confirms that ethnic minority Ph.D. recipients are four times more likely to end up in non-tenure track positions (Gilroy, p. 11).

Harvey (Gilroy, 2005) acknowledges that the progress in minority hiring has been "excruciatingly" low and adds these comments to the current dilemma:

All of our institutions should be reflective of society, but the problem is that the process in selecting new faculty is in the hands of current faculty who essentially are looking to clone themselves. Even if candidates of color are invited for a campus interview, they are passed over for selection. (p. 11)

While there is no single pathway to administration, the lack of ethnic minorities at the faculty level, hence a potential administrative pipeline, is disturbing and does not bode well for the future presence of these communities in administration, let alone college presidencies.

### Table 4

Community College Faculty by Race/Ethnicity, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Resident Alien</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2004b
Finally, the issue of access to leadership development programs remains a major gatekeeper for Latinos and other underrepresented groups. While several programs are intent on "leveling the playing field," opportunities for access can remain elusive. According to the 2002 ACE report, *The American College President*, most presidents report few opportunities that are specifically aimed at cultivating ethnic minority leadership. Only 42 percent of college presidents surveyed report that their institutions offered training and professional development targeted to ethnic minority faculty and staff.

In summary, community colleges, which enroll a significant percentage of ethnic minority students nationally, should be keenly aware of the need to develop strategies, policies, and programs that make their administrators as diverse and representative as their student populations. Indeed, the growing importance of community colleges for the educational and social future of the United States is intimately tied to their ability to make a strong and effective commitment to minority leadership (Bowen & Muller, 1996). Santiago (1996) suggests exploring strategies for developing the Latino leadership pipeline by achieving the broader institutional goals of multiculturalism and pluralism, and maintains that it will require institutions to commit to achieving multiculturalism in their pedagogy and curriculum, and pluralism in their governance and administrative structures.

Phelps and Taber (1996) outline several institutional reasons for the lag in ethnic minority representation in the administrative ranks, including (a) weak or indifferent recruitment practices, (b) lack of commitment to diversity, (c) lack of
professional development and training programs, (d) benign neglect, and (e) institutional racism.

In an early study, Vaughan (1989) forecasts the value of ethnic minority presidents, especially African American and Latino, and that their importance will increase as the minority student population at community colleges grows. He also shares that the leadership of ethnic minority presidents is necessary in order to realize the mission of community colleges to serve all segments of society.

Vaughan (1989) points out that ethnic minority presidents have the same challenges and dilemmas confronted by other presidents, but also face additional dilemmas and challenges because of their race, ethnic background, and gender. He concludes by stating that women, African American, and other ethnic minority presidents are living symbols and role models for others with similar backgrounds who aspire to the presidency.

Lastly, current statistics illustrate the lack of ethnic minorities at the faculty level and that few colleges have professional development programs and training geared to foster ethnic minority leadership. Hence, the potential administrative pipeline for chief academic officers and CEOs is strained, particularly with the new legal challenges to affirmative action programs. These low numbers are disconcerting and do not speak well for the future of ethnic minorities in administration, let alone at the CEO level.
LATINO LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Is it reasonable to expect that the number of Latino leaders in key administrative positions will grow as the number of Latino student enrollments increases? The research suggests that although progress has been made, much more remains to be done to expand the pool of appropriately credentialed and experientially prepared Latinos for leadership positions in community colleges (Gutierrez, Castaneda, & Katsinas, 2002).

Vaughan (1989) further asserts that if the American community college is to achieve its potential as an institution devoted to serving all Americans, Hispanics (Latinos) must be encouraged to seek the presidency, for without Hispanic leadership, many of the community college’s future students will be without role models and the community college movement as a whole will suffer for lack of an important perspective at the top leadership level. However, “Hispanic community college presidents have not been the focus of national attention, as have women and black presidents” (Vaughan, p. 102).

Vaughan also states that there did not seem to be a new breed of leaders waiting in the hallways beyond the community college’s open door to assume the presidency and take the community colleges in drastically different directions. If one accepts the fact that many of the next generation of presidents will come from the current group of deans and vice presidents of instruction, then indeed the community college presidency will change little over the next decade – and this point should be a cause of concern and interest.
This third major section of the literature review focuses specifically on Latino leadership in higher education, with an emphasis on community colleges.

According to the ACE (2005), in all segments of higher education, Latinos represent 3.7 percent of all university and college presidents in the United States. This percentage also includes colleges found on the island of Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory. The vast majority of these presidencies are held at public, two-year colleges (47.6%) and comprehensive institutions (34.9%). Today, there are approximately 145 Latino presidents – 82 at public institutions and 63 at private colleges. When considering the 52 CEO posts are held by Latinos in Puerto Rico, that leaves 93 Latino presidents on the mainland. A previous section pointed out that almost half (49%) of Latino undergraduate students attend HSIs, yet only one-third of HSI institutions are led by Latino CEOs (HACU, 2005). The data also show that the higher the degree offered at the institution, the less representation there is from Latino leaders.

The ACE report (2005) illustrates a few other current characteristics for Latino CEOs at the nation’s colleges and universities:

- Average age: 56.7 years
- Average tenure in position: 4.8 years
- Percentage that held a prior full-time faculty post: 51.2%
- 30 percent managed average size colleges: 5,000 – 10,000 students
- 23.4 percent managed large colleges of 10,000 or more
- 70 percent do not speak more than one language (Spanish or English)
- 16.7 percent are bilingual (Spanish and English)
A Look at the Historical Presence of Latinos in Higher Education

Dr. Ricardo Fernández, president of Lehman College of the City University of New York offers this historical view:

When I obtained my Ph.D. from the University of Milwaukee in 1970, the number of Hispanics that shared my triumph was relatively few. In order to gain the presidential posts, Hispanics needed to climb the academic ladder and build a career that was going to provide exposure to academic leadership. Although trends are changing, we have few Hispanic presidents because few are qualified; once again, this trend is slowly changing. (Perez, 2005, p. 31)

Perhaps there is some good news embedded within the latest profile. The current data suggest that the traditional academic pathway is not the only pathway to the presidency, with 48.8 percent of current Latino CEOs having arrived to the presidency through a vehicle other than through the full-time faculty ranks. Latino administrators with backgrounds in student affairs and business services are also finding their way and are being considered for the top post.

Looking historically at the presence of Latino CEOs in California, in 1979, Dr. Tomás Rivera became the first Latino to serve as CEO at the University of California (UC), widely held as the world’s premiere research public institution. Dr. Rivera – a published poet, author, and professor of Spanish – would serve as chancellor at the Riverside campus until his untimely death five years later. He, too, hailed from working class, immigrant roots and followed the migrant, farm worker trail as a child, ultimately residing in Texas. Several Latino CEOs credit Chancellor Rivera for “breaking the color barrier” and making the seemingly impossible journey to serve as head of a UC campus possible.
It would take until 2002 for another Latina, Dr. France Cordova, to be appointed chancellor at the same UC campus. Dr. Cordova grew up in California, the oldest of twelve children in a Mexican-American family. She would go on to Stanford University, major in English, and became fascinated with space science. After earning her doctorate in physics at the prestigious California Institute of Technology, she would become a scientist at the Los Alamos National Labs and would later become a professor and chief scientist at NASA.

Interestingly, in the UC system’s 137-year history, a system that prides itself with the virtues of access and opportunity, there have been only two Latinos selected to serve as CEO – and both at the same campus.

Latinos and Higher Education

Why are there so few Latino presidents in higher education? Certainly the lack of the educational qualification of a doctorate and access to professional development leadership training is plausible. But there are other reasons, as pointed out by President Fernández, why the small number Latinos who enter the education profession are pulled in so many different directions that this pressure in itself makes it difficult to focus on just one goal (Pérez, 2005). Fernandez shares what it is like “when you are one of the few:”

When I was climbing the academic ladder, I was usually the only Hispanic (Latino) in my department and one of the few in my community (in Wisconsin). I recall the time when the local school board absolutely insisted that I serve as a representative, when I knew I had to focus my energies elsewhere. It’s an interesting dichotomy: when you are one of the few, you have to be careful not to become a failure of your own success. (Pérez, p. 32)
Achieving the top post at our nation’s colleges and universities is not an easy task or journey for anyone, but especially for Latinos. Studies by Haro (1995, 2001) report that Latinos are held to higher standards in the selection process than are members of other groups. This research helps to explain why Latinos are not found in high numbers at the most selective institutions and found that there are processes in place that work to maintain and reproduce “white privilege.” His research results also yielded “a disturbing pattern of hesitation and even resistance to the selection of Latinos and some women for presidencies and academic vice presidencies” (Haro, 1995, p. 202).

Furthermore, Haro (1995) confirms,

...an underlying suspicion about the credentials and accomplishments of Latino finalists was apparent from the remarks of numerous respondents who were interviewed. Comments were made that categorized Latinos as emotional, unpredictable, and unstable – hardly personal characteristics consistent or desirable for college presidents. (p. 202)

These data present a disturbing picture for Latino candidates seeking executive-level positions of leadership.

Leonard Valverde, executive director of the Hispanic Border Leadership Institute and author of Leaders of Color in Higher Education (2003), agrees:

Much of the distorted views held today by white Americans about ethnic and racial minorities is the source of adversity that people of color face on a daily basis in society. In higher education the mindset of inferiority is especially acute and intense because of distorted history. (pp. 89-101)

There also exists a small but growing body of empirical research on the experiences of Latino leaders at community colleges, as illustrated by Santiago’s (1996) comments:
What emerges from the literature is a clear sense that Latinos aspiring to and holding faculty and administrative positions continue to feel that there is considerable negative bias toward them in hiring and promotion policies and procedures. (p. 28)

In addition, Santiago (1996) points out that some Latinos feel isolated and marginalized while others experience direct acts of exclusion and racism. López and Schultz (1980) offer a quote from an interview conducted on Latino educators, which suggests that scrutiny of Latino faculty and administrators has been around for some time:

No educator has his performance watched more closely, sees his presence draw more comment, has his competency under such scrutiny, and has to prove himself more consistently than does the minority faculty member or administrator.

To further substantiate these points, a study by Antonio Esquibel (1992) reports that key decision makers in the selection process for presidents and provosts expected higher standards of qualifications and experience for Latino men and women than for members of other ethnic and racial groups. Esquibel’s findings result from a four-year study on the selection and appointments of presidents and vice provosts at twenty-five multi-campus colleges at two- and four-year institutions. These results suggest that a glass ceiling does indeed exist for Latino candidates in higher education and that the advancement of Latinas, in particular, is seriously hindered by negative perceptions and stereotypes (Haro, 1995).

A Closer Look at Community Colleges

Although there is little empirical research on the career paths of Latino leaders at community colleges, a small and growing body of literature does now exist
regarding the personal experiences of Latinos in higher education (Gutierrez et al., 2002). A review of the literature pertaining to the Latino leadership is presented through the results of qualitative studies of Latino chief executive officers regarding the career paths of Latino community college presidents.

In 2001, a survey was distributed to participants at the 7th Annual Summer Symposium of the National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC). The questions that respondents were asked related to their career pathway and what experiences were important in preparing for their ascendancy to higher administrative positions, including the presidency.

The results from the responses highlight three principal areas that assisted the respondents in achieving the presidency:

- Quality mentoring experiences
- Participation in leadership development programs and activities, both formal and informal, and
- Exposure to a variety of college experiences at varying levels of responsibility.

These findings relate directly to the focus and research questions of this study and were explored with study participants.

If a shortcoming were to be identified in the NCCHC study, it is whether or not these findings can be generalized with a response rate of 16 participants. Also, though solid geographical diversity and administrative breadth are evident in the study, it is not clear whether a gender balance was present amongst the respondents.
Through another study focused on community college leadership, Gutierrez et al. (2002) contend that there is a crisis in Latino leadership at community colleges. Their research findings indicate that although 56 percent of Latino students are beginning their higher education at community colleges, there is low representation of corresponding Latino CEOs at community colleges (currently at 6.5% nationally). Furthermore, their research shows that the attainment of the doctorate degree, considered by most to be an essential credential and educational passport to the presidency, for Latinos falls below 4 percent of all doctoral degrees granted in 2000. In 2004, the percentage of Latino doctoral recipients was at 3.4 percent of all degrees conferred (Borden, Brown, & Garver, 2005). The research suggests that while progress has been made, much more needs to be done to expand the pool of prepared Latinos for leadership positions at community colleges.

Significant gains have been made in the number of doctoral degrees granted to ethnic minorities and women during the 1990s. White women, in particular, experienced the largest numerical increase in doctoral degrees with an additional 1,700 degrees earned during this time period (ACE, 2005). Latinos have made solid strides, too, in the attainment of doctoral degrees earned across all disciplines over the same 10-year period, rising from 792 in 1991-92 to 1,300 in 2001-02, nearly a 70 percent gain (ACE). In 2004, Latinos attained a total of 1,557 doctoral degrees, with the social and behavioral sciences and education and human services leading the way with 402 and 326 doctorates earned respectively (see Table 5).
Table 5

10-Year Changes in Doctoral Degrees, by Disciplines, by Latinos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doctoral Degrees Awarded</th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social and Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Human Services</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities and Fine Arts</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Professions</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>452%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>238%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science, Tech, Engineering, Math</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Sciences</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Professions</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>874</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,557</strong></td>
<td><strong>78%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2005

The field of education is viewed as an appropriate doctoral discipline for higher education administration at community colleges, especially for CEOs. It is typically granted in the form of a Doctorate in Education, an Ed.D. For Latinos, however, the number of doctorates earned in education has been historically low. Looking back to 1977, only 164 Latinos received doctorates across all fields of education in the United States. In 1987, 204 Latinos received doctorates in education fields, and in 1996, only 222 received doctorates across all areas of education (Gutierrez et al., 2002).
Table 5 highlights that in 2004, the number of doctorates in education by Latinos has increased to 326, essentially doubling its output from 1977 (Borden et al., 2005) and increased by 118 or 57% since 1994.

The largest number of master’s degrees earned for Latinos occur in the fields of social and behavioral sciences, followed by business, science, technology and math, and the health professions (see Table 6). A master’s in education, while almost doubling its output in a 10-year period (91%), is farther down the list.

These statistics that highlight the attainment and percentage growth of doctoral and master’s degrees should be viewed cautiously, however, and in context with the total population of doctorate and master’s degrees earners. In the case of Latino doctoral degrees grantees, in 2004, they represented just 3.2 percent of all doctoral degree earners and 4.7 percent of all master’s degrees earners. Even with the improved numbers, more work needs to be done to ensure better representation.

It is also important to note that while most CEO vacancy announcements indicate a minimum academic qualification of a master’s degree, usually with a notation that a doctorate or terminal degree is preferred, the unwritten rule is that an earned doctorate is essential to being considered a viable candidate. A master’s degree in today’s competitive market for CEO posts is simply not enough. These areas of interest were examined through the research, explored during the interviews and data collection phases, and analyzed in this research study.

In summary, with the nation’s demographics changing rapidly – and with community colleges enrolling significant percentages of students from Latino, African
Table 6

10-Year Changes in Master’s Degrees, by Disciplines, by Latinos

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Master’s Degrees Awarded</th>
<th>1994</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social and Behavioral Sciences</td>
<td>4,454</td>
<td>12,123</td>
<td>172%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Human Services</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>1,733</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities and Fine Arts</td>
<td>978</td>
<td>1,634</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Professions</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>2,044</td>
<td>196%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>2,390</td>
<td>5,450</td>
<td>128%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science, Tech, Engineering, Math</td>
<td>1,117</td>
<td>2,114</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Sciences</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>-41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Professions</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>1,268</td>
<td>116%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,303</strong></td>
<td><strong>26,474</strong></td>
<td><strong>134%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, 2005

American, and Asian American backgrounds – it is a practical and ethical imperative for two-year institutions to have administrations that reflect the diversity of the United States (Bowen & Muller, 1996). For those few Latinos who do move forward and achieve a presidency, the Gutierrez et al. (2002) study points to three major areas that are important in preparation for ascendancy to higher administrative positions, including: (a) quality mentoring experiences; (b) participation in leadership development programs and activities, both formal and informal; and (c) exposure to a variety of college experiences at varying levels of responsibility.
For Latinos achieving the top post at colleges and universities is difficult. As was illustrated through Haros’s (1995, 2001), Santiago’s (1996) and Esquibel’s (1992) work, Latinos are held to different and higher standards than their counterparts when applying for executive leadership positions. These results are disturbing and suggest that negative racial and gender attitudes are present during consideration for executive leadership positions in education.

**SUMMARY OF REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This chapter provides a summary of literature that supports the need for a study that explores the experiences, events, and circumstances that provided Latino educators the opportunity for ascendancy to the community college presidency. The literature review is divided into three major sections, each contributing towards the focus and design of the study: (a) Latinos in the United States: A Selected Profile; (b) Achieving Administrative Diversity in Higher Education; and (c) Latino Leadership in Higher Education.

The first section provides a current demographic profile of the Latinos in the United States and is designed to provide an overview of the Latino community, including a discussion on the rapidly changing racial landscape and the diversity within the Latino community. The 2000 census reports that 12.5 percent of the total population in the United States is of Latino descent, making it the fastest growing ethnic group in the country. This trend is expected to continue given the high birth rate of Latinos and the constant influx of immigrants, both legal and undocumented, from Spanish-speaking countries. A review of the educational attainment of Latinos is
also discussed, which helps to explain why Latinos remain underrepresented in the faculty and administrative ranks in higher education, as attainment of higher education is viewed as key for higher and executive level administrative leadership positions.

The second major section of the literature review highlights studies on the efforts to achieve administrative diversity in higher education. These studies are useful in better understanding the institutional, personal, and cultural obstacles confronted by ethnic minority administrators. Phelps & Taber (1996) point out that weak or indifferent recruitment practices, lack of commitment to diversity and cultural pluralism, and institutional racism have led to miniscule gains in representation at the higher levels by these groups. With the nation's demographics changing rapidly — and with community colleges enrolling significant percentages of students from Latino, African American, and Asian American backgrounds — it is critical for two-year institutions to have administrations that mirror the diversity of the communities served by community colleges.

For a number of reasons, many of which are explored in this study, community colleges have not achieved the same degree of diversity among their leaders as they have among their students. This paradox must be reconciled, according to Vaughan (1996), if colleges are to reflect the same diversity in their leaders as in their students. Furthermore, for Latinos, feelings of marginalization and exclusion continue to persist at our institutions, making for a chilly organizational climate (Santiago, 1996).

The third major section of this literature review focuses specifically on Latino leadership in higher education. Although minor progress has been made, more efforts
need to take place to make a substantive difference in the presence of Latinos at the faculty, administrator, and CEO levels. The tremendous increase in the Latino population over the last two decades has converted to a numerical increase of Latino doctoral degrees awarded, particularly in education, but not in the overall percentage of doctoral degrees conferred to Latinos. This should be a cause of concern, as the doctoral degree is typically viewed as an essential educational credential for executive-level positions in education.

The Gutierrez et al. (2002) study points to three major areas as important to ascend to higher administrative positions, including quality mentoring experiences, participation in leadership development programs and activities, and exposure to a variety of college experiences. For Latinos, achieving the CEO post at colleges and universities is difficult. Finally, as demonstrated through various studies, Latino candidates are held to different and higher standards when applying for positions, and negative racial and gender bias in hiring and promotion continues to prevail (Haro, 1995, 2001; Esquibel, 1992; Santiago, 1996).

Each of these literature review sections provides compelling evidence of the need for and significance of this research study and the narrative research design was the framework for the study. A narrative inquiry model is viewed as an excellent vehicle to capture the experiences and voices of research participants – in this case, Latino community college presidents from working class, immigrant families. A narrative research design model, where the researcher is the key data collection
instrument, was used to confirm, challenge, and inform the findings and assertions outlined in the literature review sections.

Through personal and group interviews of current Latino community college presidents in California, I had direct contact with the research participants, built rapport, and got close to the central phenomenon of ascending to a community college presidency. We discussed the key circumstances that promoted their success, what went well, what did not, what was unexpected and how did they cope? The experiences of each individual participant were rich in detail, in style, and substance. Direct quotations are used throughout the dissertation to capture their personal perspectives, reflections, and experiences, which contextualized the setting and the circumstances studied.

The narrative research design, discussed in Chapter 3, was chosen for this inquiry because of its suitable framework for exploring and understanding the lived experience of Latinos as they ascended to the community college presidency. The following section further explains and provides rationale as to the design and methodology that was used for this study.
CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF STUDY

*If you want some really important to be done you must not merely satisfy the reason, you must satisfy the heart also.*

— Mahatma Gandhi

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, events, and circumstances that provided Latino educators the opportunity for ascendancy to the presidency of a community college. Specifically, the research questions answered through this study are:

- What are the significant experiences, events, and/or circumstances in the lives of Latino presidents that resulted in their being selected to be president of a community college?
- What cultural and/or institutional advantages or opportunities did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? What was their impact?
- What cultural and/or institutional obstacles did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? What was their impact? How were they overcome?

This chapter provides a description of the components that comprise the design of this study, including: (a) the methodology of study and rationale; (b) key concepts of narrative research, its underlying assumptions, and its major authors; (c)
information related to data sources and study participants; (d) data collection procedures, including strategies to ensure soundness of data and data analysis; (e) strategies to ensure protection of human subjects; and (f) the time schedule for the study.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY AND RATIONALE

A qualitative research design was selected and is appropriate for this study, as my goal was not to explain relationships between variables or test hypotheses, but rather to describe experiences in rich detail. Gall, Gall, & Borg (2003) refer to this as the “discovery” role of qualitative research versus the “confirmatory” or “verificative” nature of quantitative research.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) ascribe five features to qualitative research:

- The natural setting is the data source and the researcher is the key data-collection instrument
- Such a study attempts primarily to describe and secondarily to analyze
- Researchers concern themselves with process, with events that transpire, as much as with product or outcome
- Data analysis emphasizes inductive methods comparable to putting together parts of a puzzle, and
- The researcher focuses essentially on what things mean, that is, why events occur as well as what happens.
Wilson (1977) concurs by asserting that this type of research methodology is based in two fundamental beliefs: (a) events must be studied in natural settings, that is, understanding requires field-based research; and (b) a researcher cannot understand events without understanding how they are perceived and interpreted by the people who participate in them.

Narrative research, as a form of interpretive research, has several assumptions embedded within this qualitative tradition. Similar to post-positivistic, naturalistic, hermeneutic, and phenomenological studies, social reality is constructed by individuals and is constantly changing – there are multiple social realities. The researcher acknowledges and embraces reflexivity, that is, the researcher is conscious of his or her biases, values, and experiences that are brought to the study (Creswell, 1998). The researcher in this tradition embraces subjectivity and the search for truth is inductively sought after. Additionally, the researcher fully understands that the research process itself impacts the research findings. Van Manen (1990) asserts that qualitative research results should be “oriented, strong, rich, and deep” (p. 151).

I conducted a qualitative study utilizing a narrative research design. The term “narrative” comes from the verb “to narrate,” or “to tell (as a story) in detail” (Erlich, Flexner, Carruth, & Hawkins, 1980, p. 442). For researchers looking for a research design that reports the personal stories of educators, narrative research may be ideal (Creswell, 2002). Narrative research designs are qualitative procedures in which researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about these
individuals' lives, and write narratives about their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

In this design, participants being studied tell their personal, firsthand accounts to researchers. As a distinct form of narrative research, a narrative typically focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through a collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual (Creswell, 2002). Retelling or "restorying" the participant's story is a unique qualitative analytic procedure only used in narrative research (Creswell, 2002, p. 521).

In qualitative research the researcher "does not know what he or she does not know" and the "answers" to research questions derive from the research participants themselves (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (1990) identifies ten themes of qualitative research, shown in Table 7, which guided the research methodology of this study.

This qualitative research design of narrative research was chosen as the approach for this inquiry because of its suitable framework for exploring and understanding the central phenomenon of the experience of Latinos as they advanced to the community college presidency. Further, the narrative inquiry design provides the theoretical base and processes to give voice, integrity, and authenticity to this journey of Latino administrators. Through active listening, I gained specific and practical insights of their experiences.

Several social science scholars have contributed to the growth and development of narrative research, including McEwan & Egan (1995), Narrative in
### Table 7

**Themes of Qualitative Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Naturalistic</strong></td>
<td>Studying real-world situations as they unfold naturally; non-manipulative, unobtrusive, and non-controlling; openness to whatever emerges-lack of predetermined constraints on outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Inductive</strong></td>
<td>Immersion without the details and specifics of data to discover analyses important categories, dimensions, and interrelationships; begin by genuinely exploring open questions rather than testing theoretically derived (deductive) hypotheses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Holistic</strong></td>
<td>The whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex perspective system that is more than the sum of the parts; focus on complex interdependencies not meaningfully reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause-effect relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Qualitative</strong></td>
<td>Detailed, thick description; inquiry in depth; direct quotations data capturing people’s perspectives and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Personal</strong></td>
<td>The researcher has direct contact with and gets close to the contact and insight people, situation, and phenomenon under study; researcher’s personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Dynamic systems</td>
<td>Attention to process; assumes change is constant and ongoing whether the focus is on an individual or an entire culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Unique case</td>
<td>Assumes each case is special and unique. The first level of inquiry is being true to, respecting, and capturing the details of the individual cases being studied; cross-case analysis follows from and depends on the quality of individual case studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Context sensitivity</td>
<td>Places findings in a social, historical, and temporal context, dubious of the possibility or meaningfulness of generalizations across time and space.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Empathetic neutrality</td>
<td>Complete objectivity is impossible. Pure subjectivity undermines credibility; the researcher’s passion is understanding the world in all its complexity-not proving something, not advocating, not advancing personal agendas, but understanding; the researcher includes personal experience and empathetic insight as part of the relevant data, while taking a neutral nonjudgmental stance toward whatever content may emerge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7 (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Design</td>
<td>Open to adapting inquiry as understanding deepens and/or flexibility situations change; avoids getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness; pursues new paths of discovery as they emerge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Patton, 1990


**KEY CONCEPTS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF NARRATIVE RESEARCH**

Generally speaking, there are seven major characteristics often found in narrative research designs (Creswell, 2002): (a) focusing on individual experiences, (b) reporting a chronology of the experiences, (c) collecting individual life stories told to the researcher through field texts, (d) “restorying” the individual stories, (e) coding the field texts for themes or categories, (f) incorporating the context or setting into the story or themes, and (g) collaborating throughout the process of research with the individuals whose stories are being reported.
These factors distinguish the narrative approach from other forms of qualitative inquiry. As stated earlier, the specific procedure of restorying the participant’s story is a unique qualitative analytic procedure used only in narrative research (Creswell, 2002).

This design involves portraits of individuals and documenting their voices and their visions within a social and cultural context (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). As Creswell (2002) points out, with a focus on an individual and personal and social experiences, narrative is typically more micro-analytic than the broader system and group perspective found in ethnographic research. With the objective of learning about one individual, the intent is not on developing a theory that applies to many people, such as found in grounded theory.

Additional and useful concepts of narrative research include: (a) its focus on experiences and qualities of life (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), (b) presenting story as a metaphor for studying human action, (c) story as an important component of understanding one’s conceptions of one’s personal and professional life (Connelly & Clandinin), (d) story as a tool or mode of knowing (Carter, 1993), (e) its fluidity (narratives are open to reinterpretation and change; Jalongo, 1995), and (f) its symbolic presentation of a sequence of events connected by subject matter and related by time (Scholes, 1982).

Generally, the researcher takes on a humble position, understands that assumptions are emerging throughout the process, and is open to new discoveries. Meaning is created through the experience and, after prolonged engagement and
persistent observation of the study participants, a deep meaning of the human experience emerges. In this case, what is it like to ascend to the community college presidency as a Latino from a working class, immigrant family?

**STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF METHODOLOGY**

Guba and Lincoln (1981) point out some methodological concerns associated with a qualitative approach, including the need to set boundaries and the importance of finding a focus to ensure a credible, appropriate, consistent, confirmable, and neutral process. Also, because qualitative research findings must be considered in reference to their contexts, caution in generalizing these findings to other contexts must be exercised.

In narrative research, the emphasis on the importance of collaboration can be a strength as well as a weakness of this form of inquiry (Creswell, 2002). In this design, the researcher assists in providing voice and identity to participants, who through their stories can receive powerful validation that their experiences and their stories are important and that they are being heard. Telling a story helps individuals understand topics that they may need to process and understand (McEwan & Egan, 1995). Also, the joy and power of the telling of stories is a fundamental part of human life, and for ethnic communities that have become accustomed to these forms of oral traditions – such as Latinos – narrative research can be a natural and authentic form of inquiry and discovery.

However, researchers should exercise caution to assess whether the story being told by the participant is authentic. Qualitative researchers refer to this as reactivity, or
concern that informants in a site may be responding in a dishonest or untruthful way to the researcher (Creswell, 1998). The distorting of data can occur in any research study, but it is something to be extremely mindful of in narrative research where heavy emphasis is placed on self-reported information from study participants. The collection of multiple field texts, the triangulation of data, and member-checking are techniques that can be deployed to ensure that good data are collected (Creswell, 2002). I used member-checking as a technique to ensure that I captured accurate information through individual interviews, follow-up conversations, and group interview. Although distortion, fear of reprisal, and inability to tell may plague storytellers, narrative researchers remind us that stories are “truths of our experiences” (Reismann, 1993, p. 22) and that any story has an element of truth in it (Creswell, 2002).

Within the tradition of narrative inquiry the researcher is engaged with the participants, constructs meaning, and verifies the reconstructed life stories (van Manen, 1990). Due to the nature of interpretation, the telling, and the retelling, narrative methodology can be full of ambiguity and carries its share of cautions.

Another matter which may arise in the telling of the story by the participant is the issue of who “owns” the story. Although permission was obtained by the researcher through the Participant Consent Form (see Appendix C) to recount and tell the story with the full consent of the participant, the issue of who ultimately owns the story can still be contested.
Lastly, the question as to whether the participant’s voice is lost in the final narrative and interpretation is important and a sensitive consideration for both the researcher and the participant. In this study, participants reviewed all of the narrative text to ensure fidelity with their story.

CRITERIA FOR TRUTH

The interpretive model, such as in narrative, incorporates assumptions about the theory-practice relationship in its view of what constitutes valid theoretical accounts of human action and social life (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Carr and Kemmis contend that interpretive methods of validating knowledge entail the fact that theory affects practice by exposing the theoretical context that defines practice to self-reflection. To be valid, they claim, an interpretive account must be coherent, insightful, and make sense of the situation; it must comprehend and coordinate insights and evidence within a consistent framework. For most interpretive researchers, this is enough. Other researchers seek participant confirmation as their test for trustworthiness and truthfulness. They argue that an interpretive account must be recognized as a possibly true account of what is going on by those whose activities it describes. It is only when the theorists and those whose actions the researcher observes come to agree that the theoretical interpretation of those actions is “correct” that the theory can have any validity (Carr & Kemmis).

Because this kind of agreement between the observer and the observed is a necessary prerequisite for an account to be true, it follows that the “validity of a theory is partially defined by its ability to remain intrinsically related to and compatible with
the actor's (participant's) own understanding" (Carr & Kemmis, p. 92). Interpretive theory, the authors assert, does not interpret the actions and experiences of individuals for its own purposes and in terms of its own conceptual frameworks, but rather provides a deeper, more extensive and systematized knowledge and understanding of the participants' own interpretations of what they are doing.

Some researchers conclude that "traditional notions of validity and reliability do not apply to case study data and interpretations (such as the narrative form)" (Gall et al., p. 462). Interpretive researchers, as in my case, instead apply such criteria as plausibility, authenticity, credibility, and relevance. And in my current situation as a colleague president, I may be able to observe and interpret the experiences shared without being judgmental.

The goal of this research study was to gain the deepest possible level of meaning – to gain intersubjectivity, which is the deepest level of understanding possible. Once a researcher reaches intersubjectivity, a full command of understanding is present and one can absorb the full nuances of meaning and communicate them.

Despite substantial interest in narrative research, its methods or procedures in qualitative inquiry are still being developed and are infrequently discussed in the literature (Errante, 2000). Narrative research has its roots in various and diverse disciplines of the human sciences and as such writers in anthropology, education, ethnic studies, history, literature, sociology, and sociolinguistics all lay claim to the narrative tradition and each has developed discipline-specific procedures. A comprehensive overview of this design in education occurred in 1990 when educators
D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly introduced narrative research for the field of education (Creswell, 2002). Their classic article, “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry,” published in the *Educational Researcher* (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), cites several social science applications of narrative. More recently, these two authors expanded their ideas into a book titled, *Narrative Inquiry* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which leads readers to an understanding of the narrative inquiry approach to research—“what it is and how it works” (p. xiii).

**DATA NEEDED**

The data needed for completion of this study was gained through in-depth, conversational interviews with the study participants that explored the experiences of Latino community college presidents from working class, immigrant backgrounds as they ascended to the presidency. To learn more about this principal phenomenon, I began initially by asking the participants broad, general questions (see Appendix D) followed by follow-up questions that cause participants to tell their stories, rather than answering simple questions. I guided the discussion, but let the study participant take me to places and subjects that were important in capturing their story with authenticity and emotion. As part of the data collection, individual follow-up interviews and a group interview were conducted as well.

I collected and detailed the views and perspectives of the participants in the form of words and images, and analyzed the information for description and themes. From these data, I interpreted the meaning of the information, drawing on personal reflections and the literature, and produced a final report (Creswell, 2002).
In general, the questions focused on receiving responses that informed the research focus and specifically addressed the research questions. General areas to be explored during the interview include questions on the college president’s early years and family background, college years and educational background, pathways to the presidency, overcoming obstacles and addressing adversity, and reflections on the past and future considerations for aspiring presidents.

Sample interview questions included the following:

- When did you know you wanted to become a community college president?
- What are some of the key experiences or opportunities that resulted in your being selected to be president of a community college?
- What are some of the challenges you experienced along the way? What was their impact?
- What role did your cultural background play?
- What is the impact of race, culture, and gender on the presidency?
- Is the journey to the presidency for a Latino the same or different from others pursuing the same goal?

These questions and others provided an opportunity for the researcher and the participants to bond and establish rapport – important conditions for capturing the essence and depth of meaning of their experiences and in the retelling of their stories. My intent was to facilitate the flow of discussion by probing and asking for
information, expansion, and illustrative examples (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1987).

The study participants were engaged as co-facilitators in the individual and group conversations and, ultimately, as co-authors of the narrative description of their experiences, as per the narrative design model.

STUDY PARTICIPANTS

The sample for this study was selected utilizing a purposive sampling method (Merriam, 1988). Purposive or purposeful sampling can be used when “one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (p. 48). Specifically, participants for this study were selected from Latinos with working class, immigrant backgrounds who currently serve as presidents at California community colleges. Thoughtfulness and sensitivity was given to age, gender, years of service, geographic location of college, and family generations in the United States. The intent was to identify a breadth of presidential experiences for the study. The ultimate selection of participants for the study was given to community college presidents who are first-generation residents in this country and who were the first in their families to pursue higher education.

The reasons for identifying these criteria have to do with the connection of the presidents to their lives as working class, first-generation Latino immigrants in this country, as indicated by the title of the research study, “Immigrant Lives and Presidential Dreams: Exploring the Experiences of Latino Community College
Presidents.” Their stories are not often told in the context of a community college presidency.

The other reason has to do with my deep interest in and intellectual curiosity surrounding the personal and psychological transformation that occurs in the transition from working class roots of these presidents to their current white-collar positions. Alfred Lubrano, in his book, *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams* (2004), refers to these types of people as “straddlers,” people who straddle two social zones, two worlds, often ill-equipped to understand the social, political, and cultural norms, rules, and nuances of a privileged, white-collar world – completely different from the world in which these straddlers were raised.

For example, my own children will not experience first-hand the process of growing up in a blue-collar family in the Mission District of San Francisco as I did, nor the experience of coming over to this country as *alambrados* (undocumented workers) as my parents did. Their experiences in life and their opportunities are profoundly different than my own and that of their grandparents.

Finding research participants was not difficult. Access to these presidents was not expected to be an obstacle – and it was not – because I am a peer colleague and, in my relatively short tenure; I have already established collegial relationships with a number of community college presidents, from the Chicano/Latino community and otherwise. As previously mentioned, there are currently twenty-sev en CEOs from this specific ethnic community in California to select from. A sample size of four participants, including both men and women, was selected. This sample size allowed
for deep and meaningful exploration of their individual and group experiences as community college presidents from the Latino/a community with working class, immigrant roots. Because generalization of their experiences is not sought, only a better and deeper understanding of their particular experiences, four participants sufficed in providing the data necessary.

The fact that I am from the same ethnic community as my research participants gives me a distinct advantage and opportunity to build rapport and trust, to build confianza (their confidence), and perhaps to broach sensitive subjects regarding their experiences. I also possess cultural and linguistic sensitivities and competencies.

In addition, I have joined the national advocacy organization for Latino community college administrators, known as the National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC) and will be involved with the newly-formed American Association for Hispanics in Higher Education, an affiliate group of the American Association of Higher Education. Since becoming president, I have been asked to serve on several statewide leadership panels and advisory committees with fellow community college leaders and with presidents from the University of California and California State University systems.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The data collection procedures involved face-to-face, in-depth interviews with participants using personal reconstructed life stories (van Manen, 1990). Personal reconstructed life stories are the result of an iterative and collaborative process between the researcher and the participant that begins with a story. Typically, the
stories are chronological with a beginning, middle, and an end. The stories are fluid and are open to reinterpretation and change (Jalongo, 1995). As Scholes (1982) points out, the stories are a symbolic presentation of a sequence of events connected by subject matter and related by time.

The sites for the individual and group interviews were at locations of convenience for the participants – usually at their campuses or at statewide conferences – and strong encouragement for conducting the group interviews away from any campus was given. A relaxed, informal environment is more conducive to storytelling. An emphasis on creating a conducive and comfortable atmosphere for the interaction to occur was addressed.

Study participants were individually interviewed with each interview tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. I began by asking two to three broad, open-ended questions that provoked and inspired “good storytelling.” I prepared for follow-up questions depending on which direction the interviewees took me. I asked for stories and anecdotes as we engaged in deep, meaningful sharing. In addition, other materials, such as campus websites, press releases, and the like were used to contextualize each individual president. The questions used were open-ended, which allowed and encouraged participants to reflect upon their experiences and to engage in deep, purposeful conversation.

The first interview was scheduled for two hours at the place selected by the research participant, with a scheduled follow-up phone interview. Two individual interviews took place with each participant for the purpose of gathering information,
reviewing their account of what was shared, and checking the accuracy of their
statements – and as importantly, to review my interpretations of their statements. A
final group interview was scheduled where the initial findings were shared, new
questions were asked, and reactions were solicited.

Following the initial, individual interview, a transcript was sent to each
participant for review and editing. A follow-up phone interview was scheduled with
each participant to tease out and elaborate on the emergent themes. The formal
interviewing culminated with a group interview where initial findings were shared and
reflected upon for clarity, meaning, and purposefulness. Again, a transcript was sent to
each study participant for review and collaboration.

From these sources of information, individual narratives were written,
reviewed, and rewritten in a collaborative fashion with the participants over a three-
month period in the fall of 2005. Topical areas and initial interview and follow-up
questions are identified in Appendix D. I talked little, listened intently, and began
recording what I heard. The participants saw and provided feedback on what I wrote
and what emerged was a thick description of their accounts.

Patton (1990) recommends having predetermined topics to facilitate the
interview, allowing for exact sentence sequence and wording as the interview unfolds.
This iterative process allows for reflection and meaningfulness to emerge, and,
therefore, a deeper understanding of the lived experience. The narrative text was then
analyzed for themes and is presented in the “Findings” section of Chapter 4 of this
study.
As was noted earlier, the collection of multiple field texts was deployed in this study to ensure that good data were collected. As a result of the individual and group interviews, a leadership profile of each study participant was constructed as an introduction to each narrative in Chapter 4 where the findings are presented. The profile includes: (a) college location, (b) year assigned to the post, (c) educational degrees, (d) previous positions in education, (e) areas of expertise, (f) educational and policy leadership, (g) community involvement, and (h) parents’ educational levels and occupations. Consent forms were created and forwarded to the University’s Institutional Review Board for approval (see Appendix C). Each participant reviewed, approved, and signed individual consent forms. None of the participants requested anonymity when offered – even with the potential sensitivity of their responses – and all precautions were exercised to respect their wishes.

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

Analysis of the interview transcripts and narratives utilized the method of data reduction (Bell, 1991). In this procedure, patterns are recorded that emerge from the transcripts and narratives. Data are then analyzed for common themes. Coding qualitative data involves segmenting and labeling text in the initial process, summarizing, and then interpreting its meaning for understanding. The work of van Manen (1990, p. 170) also guided the analysis of data that emerged from these “in-depth conversational interviews.” This information was then transformed into a story of the individual president’s journey towards the presidency, with specific reference to the significant challenges and opportunities along the way.
After purposefully selecting individuals to learn about the phenomenon of what it is like to ascend to the community college presidency as a Latino from a working class, immigrant background, stories were collected from the individuals, per the techniques previously described. What followed next was the restorying or retelling of each participant's story consistent with the narrative tradition. It includes examining the raw data, identifying the elements of the story in it, sequencing and organizing the story elements, and then presenting a retold story in the researcher's words that conveys the individual's experiences (Creswell, 2002). Their stories were then written and rewritten in collaboration with each participant. Finally, the account was validated for accuracy and consistency.

It was important not to consciously or unintentionally impose my own personal views or experiences into the data analysis. Because of my own experience and intimacy with the subject matter of ascending to a presidency, strict data analysis procedures were followed to allow the salient themes of the participants to emerge on their own. In the Prologue section, I stated my interests with full cognizance of my reflexivity; that is, the process of reflecting on my "self" as researcher and the full recognition of my biases, experiences, and value system that I brought to this research study.

In the data analysis section, I was guided by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) constant comparison process that involves: (a) bracketing personal bias, experiences, and beliefs; (b) reviewing transcripts to find clusters of meaning; (c) laying out and categorizing the clusters by meaning; (d) bracketing the themes and comparing and
contrasting across the themes that allow for the discovery of relationships; (e) extracting the true meaning of the experience; and finally, (f) checking with participants for accuracy. I followed this process for each question, triangulated the data, and produced responses to the central research questions.

The triangulation of data and member-checking were strategies used to add rigor, breadth, and depth to the study. Data were collected from several sources: face-to-face, personal interviews; follow-up phone interviews; e-mail conversations; and an in-person group gathering. Having multiple data sets on each individual participant for comparison resulted in a consistency of the evidence and provided the necessary data triangulation.

To further ensure that the collection of data truly reflected the experiences of ascendancy to the presidency by these four presidents, I called on all four participants for a group gathering where I shared my initial findings of their individual stories. I expected this component of the study – the group gathering – to be amongst the most powerful and inspirational components of the study, and it was. This exchange not only provided veracity of the data, but it also was a powerful exchange of stories that not only describes, but also validates the findings shared in Chapter 4. It also affirmed and recognized the participants’ presidential ascendancies with honor and integrity. With each president’s story, I sought “verisimilitude,” which Richardson (1994) describes as a condition where the “writing seems ‘real’ and ‘alive,’ transporting the researcher directly into the world of the study” (p. 516).
STRATEGIES TO ENSURE SOUNDNESS OF DATA, DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

In quantitative studies, criteria for soundness of research include the concepts of reliability, validity, and objectivity. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam (1998) argue, however, that these criteria are not as meaningful in qualitative research. Rather, the criteria for soundness in qualitative or interpretive inquiry include authenticity, credibility, plausibility, and relevance (Gall et al., 2003).

A variety of steps was taken to ensure the integrity of the research data, including:

- Being sensitivity to the individual; allotting sufficient time for in-depth conversational interviews and paying careful attention paid to the setting
- Recording each interview; duplicate copies of original materials were made, and procedures for the safety and storage of data were addressed
- Providing access to the written dissertation drafts sections by the study participants pertaining to their participation, ensuring accuracy and consistency, and an appropriate interpretation of their intentions, and
- Keeping a journal with recorded notes of the procedures used, as well as reflections on the research process.

According to Patton (1990), the credibility issue for qualitative inquiry depends on three distinct but related inquiry elements:
• Rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data that is carefully analyzed, with attention to issues of validity, reliability, and triangulation

• The credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self, and

• Philosophical belief in the phenomenological paradigm, that is, a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, and holistic thinking.

With this in mind, the techniques and methods used ensured the integrity and accuracy of the findings.

Lastly, I brought forth my own experience, qualifications, and perspective into the interpretive process as a value-added component. I reflected on my own experiences, both the advantages and obstacles, in ascending to the presidency of a community college. I did so, however, in a manner that did not disrupt, compare, or judge the conversations or my interpretations of the individual stories of the research participants. I respected and treated each story as an authentic representation of a journey to the presidency.

STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

Oregon State University’s Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved this dissertation research proposal in February 2005. Formal approval was granted by IRB before any contact was made with prospective subjects or any research was
conducted. Given the potential sensitivity of the study, confidentiality and respect for the identity of participants and the subject matter raised were strictly adhered to per the guidelines and policies established by the *Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Research Handbook* (IRB, 2002). Furthermore, to provide myself with broad exposure to the responsibilities of working with human subjects, during the summer of 2003, I completed the Human Participant Protections Education for Research Teams course sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Transcribed data will be destroyed one year after completion of the dissertation, unless the participants through a consent form grant specific permission for use in other educational publications, scholarly work, or professional presentations that I may give where results of this study may be used and shared.

Finally, the data used in the final research document did not use fictitious names or references to the specific location of colleges, per the consent of each of the research participants.

**SUMMARY OF THE DESIGN OF STUDY**

This section of the proposal provides a description of the various components that comprise Chapter 3, the design for the research study. I conducted a qualitative study utilizing a narrative research design. Narrative research designs are qualitative or interpretive procedures in which researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about these individuals' lives, and write narratives about their experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The narrative inquiry design provides the
theoretical base and processes to give voice, integrity, and authenticity to these Latino educators.

This research design was chosen for this inquiry because of its suitable framework for exploring and understanding the central phenomenon of the experience of Latinos from working class, immigrant backgrounds as they ascended to the community college presidency. Research participants told me the stories of their journeys. The specific procedure of retelling or “restorying” the participant’s story is a unique qualitative analytic procedure only used in narrative research (Creswell, 2002, p. 521).

Participants for the study were selected from Latinos from working class, immigrant backgrounds who currently serve as presidents at community colleges in California. The data needed for completion of this study utilized in-depth, conversational interviews, phone interviews, and a group gathering for corroboration of each story and collaboration on the final product. Patterns were recorded that emerged from the transcripts and narratives. These data elements were analyzed for common themes and then transformed into a story of the individual president’s journey towards the presidency, with specific reference to the research questions of this study. The participant’s confidentiality, respect for the identity, and the subject matter shared were strictly adhered to, per the guidelines and policies established by the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The research findings are presented in the next chapter.
TIME SCHEDULE FOR THE STUDY

The following was presented as a timetable for approval of the dissertation proposal, collection, transcription, and interpretation of data, and completion of the dissertation.

Table 8

Time Schedule for Research Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation Proposal Approved by Committee</td>
<td>November 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Review Board Approval</td>
<td>February 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Data Collection</td>
<td>May 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of Data Analysis</td>
<td>August 2005</td>
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<td>Completion of Dissertation</td>
<td>November 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral Defense of Dissertation</td>
<td>December 2005</td>
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CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

_The end of all education should surely be service to others. We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about the progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others for their sake and for our own._

—Cesar Chavez

INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the research study presents findings derived from interviewing four research participants, all of whom are community college presidents in California and all of whom are first-generation, college-going Latinos from working class, immigrant families.

The chapter begins with definitions of terms that are used throughout the narratives. These terms help to provide both meaning and context. Especially important is the use of terms in Spanish, the first and native language for three of the four presidents interviewed. The use of Spanish words and phrases throughout the text is intended to provide both accuracy of the sentiment intended by the participant and authenticity to their voice and to their story. For native Spanish-speakers, the English language at times falls short in precisely capturing the _sentimiento_ (feeling) of spoken words in tone, substance, meaning, and power. An individual president’s leadership profile, called a “Portrait in Leadership,” precedes each narrative (Tables 9-12) and presents a snapshot of the experience and talents of each educational leader.
What follows is the narrative story of each individual participant. Each story is presented in chronological fashion, starting with the early years and moving to the attainment of the individual’s community college presidency. For each narrative, the story begins with brief background information on each president and his or her college, details about the interview and the interview setting, followed by a more detailed narrative of the person’s journey in which the individual’s voice prevails. Each story is intended to be informational and descriptive of the participant’s respective pathway – not an all-inclusive account of his or her personal and professional life. The order in which the narratives are presented has no particular significance, as each story stands on its own. They are shared in the order in which the interviews took place. To conclude each narrative, I offer some thoughts and reflections on the initial interview.

Consistent with the narrative tradition, the voice of participants is invited and incorporated; therefore, these narratives are presented with the full participation of the presidents as co-authors. It is the goal of these stories to be authentic, illustrative, and substantive in chronicling a journey not often taken by persons of Latino heritage in the United States. These stories attempt to capture the tremendous legacy of leadership that these remarkable people are embarked upon – and the good news is that their work is not yet completed. Hopefully, too, this work will be useful and insightful to the noted presidents as well, from the standpoint of personal and professional reflection and renewal, and affirmation of the lessons learned along the way.
After conducting the initial interviews, I wrote a narrative, shared it, and received feedback on the first draft from the participants. I then followed up with a phone interview (see Appendix D) to probe further on themes that resonated loudly from our initial conversations, but still needed to be teased out a bit – namely, the impact of race, culture, and gender on the presidency.

Following our phone conversations, I organized an opportunity for the entire group to come together as part of the data collection process and to triangulate the data. Appendix D contains questions posed at that meeting. It was fortuitous that we were all attending a fall statewide meeting for CEOs, so I took advantage of this opportunity to visit with them. The purpose of this group gathering was manifold: (a) to share the themes that emerged from the study and to elicit their reactions to them, (b) to do some member-checking on my findings and reflections, (c) to validate my initial findings, and, of course, (d) to provide us a social opportunity para charlar un poco (to talk) and learn more about each other. One research participant, Ben, had not met Norma or Rosa before, so our coming together was useful in that regard, too. This gathering also dispelled the notion that all presidents of color know each other or possess the same opinions on subjects.

This group session was indeed a memorable experience and resulted in a powerful conversation that affirmed many of the findings presented in this chapter. What was originally scheduled as a 75-minute breakfast and conversation turned into close to 3 hours of collegiality, camaraderie, and respect for each other’s roles and vision to serve our communities – and of course, storytelling.
Two outcomes and action items emerged from this gathering, as well. Each participant has agreed to serve on a leadership panel at an upcoming professional conference, with me as the facilitator, where their experiences that are documented in this study can be shared with other aspiring leaders. They enjoyed learning from and were empowered by the commonalities, as well as the unique characteristics of their journeys towards the presidency. We also agreed that it was time to formally organize ourselves as Latino CEOs and to take some action steps to promote more Latino CEOs in our system. They asked if I would take the lead on the follow-up items, and I agreed.

Following the presentation of narratives, an analysis is presented of the seven themes that emerged from the conversations and interviews. While it is not the intent of this study to make comparisons or reach conclusions about their respective stories, significant and relevant themes do emerge and are presented. Each theme is expounded upon for context and meaning, and provides a greater and deeper understanding of the exploration of experiences of these particular Latino community college presidents. Particular emphasis is placed on the last theme – the impact of race, culture, and gender on the presidency – because it rang so clearly as a central theme and common experience throughout the individual and group interviews.

None of the participants had concerns about maintaining the confidentiality of their identities and individually agreed to the use of their names and the names of their institutions openly throughout the following chapters. The few topical areas that were
identified as "off the record" by the participants were omitted from this narrative or were addressed thematically.

It should be noted that each profiled president is pleased to be a part of this study and is honored to have his or individual story told and life history shared. They understand the paucity of literature available on this subject and desire to make a contribution. Collectively, each hopes that his or her journey towards the community college presidency can inspire and assist others, especially first-generation, immigrant students from working-class backgrounds, towards the same goal.

GLOSSARY/WORKING DEFINITIONS

**College President** – CEO of a college campus, typically in a multi-college community college district.

**Carnalismo** – literally translates to "brotherhood" in Spanish and in local vernacular, but in this case it is non-gender specific. It refers to a connection, a bond, and deep trust and respect that can exist between and among people.

**CEO** – chief executive officer. Term commonly used in community colleges to refer to the college president, superintendent/president of a single-college district, or chancellor of a multi-college district.

**Chancellor** – CEO of a multi-college community college district.

**Chicano Movement** – community political activism and student advocacy born in the 1960s that focused on contemporary issues impacting the Chicano/Mexican community, such as K-12 and higher education, Chicano/a Studies, farm worker rights, poverty, and the Vietnam War. While some contend that the so-
called movement has dissipated, many *Raza* educators continue to work and live by its principles of social justice and equal opportunity.

**Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)** – a federal designation from the Department of Education that identifies colleges and universities that enroll Latino students at a rate of 25% or more. This designation entitles colleges to apply for large federal grants, such as Title V.

**La Educación** – translates in English to “education” and in this case refers to both formal and non-formal avenues of obtaining knowledge and wisdom.

**La Familia** – translates in English to “family,” perhaps the most important institution in Latino culture.

**El Liderazgo** – translates in English to “leadership.”

**Multi-College District** – refers to a community college district with more than one stand-alone, fully-accredited college in the district.

**Raza** – derivative of *La Raza*, understood as “our people, our (Chicano/Latino) community.”

**Siempre Adelante** – the phrase loosely translates to “Always Forward” but that does not do justice to the power of its meaning. The phrase initially was coined by the United Farm Workers as part of their efforts to advocate for the needs of farm workers. It is used today as a rallying cry for the Latino community, especially Chicanos, to progress forward – against all obstacles – and be mindful to the needs of our community.
*Si Se Puede!* – translates literally to “Yes, It Can Be Done!” but once again in the English language, the translation loses its context, power, and influence. Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers coined this phrase and others as a chant of affirmation and hope during their early struggle to advocate for farm workers rights, including fair wages, union contracts, access to clean water and sanitary conditions, and health care. To capture the attention of the public, labor strikes and boycotts of agricultural products occurred, most notably grapes and lettuce. Today it is perhaps the most recognizable phrase of Latino community organizers and educators and it serves as a proud mantra for perseverance and struggle.

**Superintendent/President** – title given to the CEO of a single-college district. The Superintendent/President reports to a locally elected Board of Trustees. A single college district typically has one larger, comprehensive campus and one or more multiple off-sites, depending on the size of the service area. By contrast, a multi-college district has more than one comprehensive college, as well as off-campus educational sites. In California, the CEO of the entire multi-college district is typically referred to as Chancellor, and the campus-based CEO is referred to as College President.
SECTION I: OUR VOICES THROUGH FOUR NARRATIVES

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

— Margaret Mead

Section I presents the histories of the four participants, in the order the interviews were conducted. Each story is preceded by a brief *curriculum vitae* (Tables 9-12) to provide a snapshot of each individual’s experience and talents. We will begin with Raúl Rodríguez (Table 9, next page).
Table 9

Portrait in Leadership: Dr. Raúl Rodríguez

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<td>Harvard University; Cambridge, MA</td>
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<td>Other Posts in Education</td>
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<td>Interim President, San José City College</td>
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<td>San José, CA (1995-1996)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Vice-President of Instruction, San José City College</td>
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<td></td>
<td>San José, CA (1994-1995)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dean of Instruction, Director of Student Development, Director of Institutional Research</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cabrillo College, Aptos, CA (1989-1994)</td>
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<td>Institutional Effectiveness</td>
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</table>

**Educational & Policy**

- Commission on Academic, Student, and Community Leadership Development (AACC)
- National Community College Hispanic Council
- Technology and Telecommunications Committee
- California Community College Research Group
- Advisory Committee on Legislation
- Community College League of California
- Higher Education Consortium of Central California
- California Community College CEO Board
- Pittsburg Chamber of Commerce Education Board
- ACCJC/WASC Accreditation Teams

**Community Leadership**

- Goodwill Industries of the San Joaquin Valley
- St. Joseph’s Medical Center Advisory Board
- Mayor’s Task Force on Racial Harmony
- KVIE Public Broadcasting Advisory Board
- Chicano/Latino Academies Reaching Out (CLARO)
- Junior Achievement of the Bay Area
- East County Business Education Alliance Board
- Dow Chemical Company Advisory Panel
- Latino Leadership Council for Contra Costa County
- Rotary Club International; Pittsburg, CA

**Honors & Awards**

- Educational Service Award, Sacramento Hispanic Chamber
- Hispanic Leadership Recognition, KGO Channel 7
- Community Service Award, Future Leaders of America
- Outstanding Volunteer, Junior Achievement of Contra Costa
- NIMH Clinical Services Research Postdoctoral Fellowship
- Fulbright Predoctoral Research Fellowship

**Hometown/Place of Birth**

- Stockton, CA/Enid, Oklahoma

**Grandparents’ Education & Occupations:**

- Grandfather: 6 months, Laborer; Railroad Worker
- Grandmother: 6th grade, Homemaker

Source: Rodriguez, R., personal communication, March 6, 2005
Narrative 1: Raúl Rodríguez

About President Rodríguez

After a nationwide search, Dr. Raúl Rodríguez was selected in June 2002 to serve as the eighth Superintendent/President of San Joaquin Delta College. Including a one-year assignment as interim president at San José City College and his most recent post as president of Los Medanos College in Pittsburg, CA where he served for six years, his current presidency marks the third time that Raúl has headed up a California community college campus. His selection as president was an historic occasion. In the college’s 42 years of service, Raúl is the first-ever Latino president hired to lead Delta College, as the college is commonly referred to.

About Delta College

Delta College is a physically beautiful, park-like, sprawling campus located in the northern section of the agriculturally rich San Joaquin Valley in Stockton, California. Today, over 19,000 students are enrolled at Delta College. The District covers all or parts of five surrounding counties, including San Joaquin, Calaveras, Amador, Solano, Sacramento, and a small portion of Alameda County. The demographics of the region are racially and socio-economically mixed. Through the passing of a local bond recently, the District is planning to extend its reach into the northern and southern parts of its service area through the construction of educational centers. Ultimately, it is projected that well over 30,000 students will be served by
Delta College in the next 10-15 years. A seven member, locally elected Board of Trustees governs the District.

About the Interview

Our initial interview took place at the Ahwanhee Hotel in Yosemite National Park. Raúl and I were there for our annual gathering of northern California community college presidents, known as the NorCal CEO meeting, that was to begin that same afternoon. Raúl, Rosa - Raúl's wife - and I had agreed to meet for brunch that morning at the hotel's restaurant. It was an opportunity to enjoy each other's company and chat informally before getting into the formal interview. Although Raúl and I had met and conversed on several other occasions, all related to our roles as presidents and community leaders, this informal opportunity to meet his wife and share time with him allowed us to establish additional rapport and increase our comfort levels. It assisted in getting us right into the interview when we were done with brunch.

The Interview Setting

We asked a staff person for a quiet place to conduct our interview and she let us use an office adjacent to the restaurant. It was small, crowded and noisy, but we made it work (i.e., you could hear fax signals in the background). As we got into the conversation the external distractions dissipated. The interview lasted approximately an hour and twenty minutes, and seemed to be enough time to cover important topical areas. The tone of the conversation was conducive to exploring his roots and to extracting some deep thinking about his ascendency to the community college
presidency. It should be noted that Raúl is very comfortable with his story and is appreciative of it being told. He is also thankful of the research being done through this project to, as he puts it, “to get the stories out.” At the conclusion of the interview, I interjected my deep appreciation for his time and I shared my admiration for him and his growing leadership legacy. Raúl is a role model for me and for so many new and incumbent community college presidents.

*His Story: The Journey of President Raúl Rodríguez*

Raúl was born and raised in Enid, Oklahoma, a town of 45,000 residents halfway between Oklahoma City and Wichita, Kansas. The community rests in the north central part of Oklahoma. As Raúl describes it, “kind of out in the middle of nowhere.” Ranching and oil were the big industries of the day in the communities surrounding Enid. Raúl describes the town where he spent his early years:

Enid was an interesting town. At one time it was called the “Wheat Capital of the World” because of the wheat farming in the area and it had these heavy, gigantic grain elevators, some of the biggest ones I’ve ever seen. I’ve been all over the Midwest. They’re no longer the wheat capital, I think it’s in Canada...or something like that...but they still produce a lot of wheat...everything is related to oil or agriculture there. And the town, when I was growing up, probably had forty, forty-five thousand residents, not a little town. Today, ‘til this day, it still has that many residents. It really hasn’t grown; it really hasn’t shrunk too much. They have an Air Force Base, that’s one of the things that keeps people employed...and some other large manufacturing things. It was an interesting place to grow up.

His family originally emigrated from Mexico to the United States, with parts of his family residing in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and California. They came to work as farm laborers. Raúl’s great-grandfather a generation before owned
and operated a restaurant in southern Oklahoma where he would often feed workers some of his mouth-watering tamales:

There were a lot of mines down there...mine workers, that was their clientele, but, even then it was a very, you know, segregated, so a Mexican restaurant, run by Mexicans, had to serve blacks at the counter in the back.

His maternal grandmother was born right outside of Austin, Texas. Raúl’s maternal grandfather first came to United States, like so many other immigrants from the south, by crossing the Rio Grande. Raúl recounts his grandfather’s first experience in the U.S.:

My grandfather came from Mexico, and he told me the story when he crossed the Rio Grande, that a man was waiting there and said, “You want to work?” and he said, “Yes!” So the man took him to Tennessee. The work was taking big rocks and making little rocks - they were making gravel by hand!

This was literally back breaking work and work that his grandfather did not enjoy, but it was an opportunity to work in el norte (the north, referring to the United States).

He did that a while... he said it was terrible. His brother was in Oklahoma working on the railroads...and said, “Why don’t you come?” So he went to Oklahoma and got a job working on the railroads with his older brother. So they ended up staying there in Oklahoma...until I came along. I lived in the northern part, and so, that’s where I grew up.

Raúl commented that during the 1950s several communities were slow to adopt the new laws of the land after Brown v. Board of Education. Schools and public places remained as they always had – separate and unequal:

I was born in 1952...and grew up in the fifties there. In Oklahoma, for example, I would go to the city park - part of the park was for whites and part of the park was for blacks. They still had separate swimming pools and drinking fountains, and all that stuff, in the city park. So, it was legal. Even though Brown v. Board of Education came out in ’54, I think it took a while for segregation to melt away...
At this early age, Raúl was exposed to the vestiges of racism and segregation, images that would stay with him throughout his early adult life. He understood and experienced the difference in how one was treated based on one's skin color, whether it was swimming at public pools or eating at downtown restaurants.

As a lighter-skinned, first-generation Mexican-American, Raúl could “pass” and was not treated as harshly as other darker skinned Mexicans or African Americans. Interestingly, back then Raúl was known as Rusty or Russell, his birth name given to him by his mother. The name he prefers today, Raúl, would not emerge until his early college years. Other members of his family weren’t so fortunate, as Raúl remembers:

I'm kind of light skinned, so I didn’t have any trouble being accepted by the whites. But, I had other relatives who were darker skinned who weren’t accepted. In fact, there’s a whole branch of my family... a cousin who’s from that branch of the family who is in Sacramento and... they changed their name from Rodríguez to Rogers because they were darker skinned and they couldn’t... couldn’t make it. They were under so much prejudice that they changed their name to Rogers to be accepted more by their community because segregation was so profound that they went so far as to change the family name.

Raúl was born to a very young mother and, as such, his grandparents essentially raised him until age 10. Raúl was comfortable in his working class home and attributes much of the shaping of his current values to his blue-collar upbringing in Oklahoma. His family was one of a handful of Mexican families in Enid and together they formed what Raúl called a “Mexican community” where he was nurtured and supported.
While Raúl’s grandparents were bilingual and Raúl spoke some of the language, he does not consider himself fluent in Spanish and was initially turned off by the reaction of Spanish-speakers:

I remember going out with my grandparents when I was very little to the store. They’d be speaking Spanish...and I looked at the way other people would look at them, and I remember that people would just give them the worst dirty look, you know. I think that turned me off. I didn’t want to be different, I wanted to fit in...I didn’t want to be speaking some other language, I wanted to be American, you know...

Raúl’s family did not have a history of participation in education, let alone higher education, but nonetheless fundamentally understood the importance of it. While his grandparents never told Raúl explicitly, “You’re going to college,” they nonetheless had high expectations for him. His grandparents sent Raúl to Catholic school during his formative years. Even now, Raúl still recognizes the sacrifices that his grandparents made to afford him this opportunity for a better education. He knew that his grandparents did not earn that much income, but they made this decision to send him to the best school available. Raúl recalls an especially significant moment from his youth:

When I was in elementary school, my grandparents bought me a set of World Book encyclopedias. I had new encyclopedias and I would spend hours reading them. The TV would be on, but I wouldn’t be paying attention to the TV – I’d be reading the encyclopedias. And all of the neighborhood kids would come over ...my friends’ older brothers and sisters would come over, too, to borrow encyclopedias because they had to do a report for school – so we were like the library of the neighborhood. Just something like that, they were investing in my education and my knowledge base...they were helping me to learn, showing me that they wanted me to learn. They wanted me to have knowledge.

This single act was to open up a whole new world, a love of learning and intellectual curiosity that would last Raúl a lifetime. He became a voracious reader. It
was during this time that Raúl discovered his passion for exploring new things and ideas, and his natural intellect. At school, Raúl excelled in his early years and was usually at the top of his class.

At age 10, Raúl, with the encouragement of his grandparents, moved to New York to live with his biological mother, who was now living in New York with her new husband. It was a separation that still hurts Raúl to this day, but he and his grandparents understood the importance of re-establishing a relationship with his mother.

I grew up without really having a relationship with my mother. So, my grandparents sent me off to New York at ten years old. It was a very wrenching thing to leave my grandparents, but I was excited at the same time about going to New York and being with my mom.

During his high school years, Raúl used the smarts he had accumulated through parochial school in Enid to allow him to “get by” without much difficulty or much studying. He wasn’t particularly challenged in high school and his natural intelligence was enough to allow him to pass the state’s Regent’s Exams with honors, which qualified him for a high school degree with special merit.

Thoughts of pursuing higher education and enrolling in college as a first-time college student were not well planned until Raúl was recruited to play sports at an out-of-state university. As he explains:

I knew I was going to college, but I just stumbled into it. I didn’t know...nobody I knew had gone to college. I had one cousin who was two-three years older than me who went to college, but I didn’t have any contact and he didn’t share any formation, so I was really the first one in my family who went. I was ignorant about the process. I just lucked into it. I played lacrosse my senior year in high school. The coach came out from Bowling Green State University in Ohio. I met him and he said, “Why don’t you come to Bowling
Green?” I said. “Great!” And that’s where I went...I mean, I only applied to one college.

Not having any other college options, Raúl gladly accepted an athletic scholarship that would help to defray the costs of attendance. Raúl was also ready to leave New York. He knew that the environment and his social crowd would probably lead him to no good. He followed his instincts, although it meant moving once again.

As a first-generation college-bound student, the university was a foreign and unfamiliar place. Even understanding what such words as “orientation” meant was a challenge for a smart, athletic kid with no history of college in his family. The acclimation period was equally rough for Raúl, to the point of getting on academic probation, but he was determined to persist. As further evidence of his naïveté and unfamiliarity with college, he was unaware that applying for financial aid was a yearly process for students; he assumed the aid would be there during his second year – it wasn’t because he hadn’t applied:

I just thought it was automatically renewed. I didn’t have anybody to get information from...I didn’t know anything about the whole process. I had to leave college...I had no money. I didn’t know I had to do the whole thing again the next year. I mean, stuff like that other people take for granted...I was just ignorant. If you don’t know how the system works, it can be the most daunting thing.

As a consequence, Raúl had to “stop-out” of school for a semester and return home to work until he could earn enough money to re-enroll in college. These interruptions in college would happen throughout his undergraduate career with breaks for earning income. Notwithstanding this disjointed pattern, Raúl gave up lacrosse and was astute enough to negotiate studying abroad for a semester in France. In all, with
breaks in between college courses to work at places from plastic factories back home
to working the railroad yards – like his grandfather – it took Raúl seven years to
graduate with a bachelor’s degree in liberal studies from Bowling Green State
University. His persistence indeed paid off.

In remembering his undergraduate years, Raúl spoke vividly of an incident that
once again made him painfully aware of his race and ethnicity:

A thing happened to me that was very difficult. When I was a freshman in
college, I lived in the dorms. This was my welcome to Bowling Green: I’d get
these calls in my dorm room every night and there would be somebody, a male
voice, telling me, “We don’t need your kind, you dirty spic, you need to
leave,” profanities like that. Every night in my dorm, I would get this same call
around 9, 9:30.

Naturally, this angered Raúl and he sought to find out who was responsible. These
incidents became known around the dorm and several of Raúl’s dorm mates came to
his side and joined him to seek out and confront the culprit:

It almost started a race riot at Bowling Green because I found out who it was. I
told all my buddies and then it was like a firestorm, it just started going from
room to room... you know. I had a lot of friends. People liked me. Before you
know it, we had about 100 or more guys who were ready to go to this other
dorm where this guy lived, and just start beating the crap out of him.

It took very skilled and influential resident hall advisors to placate what might have
turned into ugly, racially motivated fisticuffs:

We talked it out... and after that, it stopped. The guy was a white, blonde
haired, blue-eyed guy on the wrestling team... and he was in a fraternity. For
some reason, he had it in for me; he didn’t like Latinos or something... you
know.
Looking back at his first college years, Raúl had the initial trials of learning the culture and expectations of college, an encounter with racial bias, and of stopping out along the way, yet he was resilient and persisted towards completion.

At this juncture, Raúl had developed an interest in filmmaking and screen writing:

I wanted to be a filmmaker. I wanted to make movies. I'd made some small student films when I was in Bowling Green. I took some graduate courses actually on filming. I had to explore different filmmaking schools...my idea was California, eventually, to go to filmmaking school or wherever I found a good one. I went to Chicago and looked at one there and...the ones out in California. There's one in New York University. So I wasn't sure which one, but that's what I was planning to do next, to go get a Master's degree in filmmaking.

After graduation, Raúl spent another year working with the railroad – he had advanced to a prestigious office position by then – and thereafter went to work in Connecticut as a technical writer for a technology company, ITT, in the research and development unit. He would eventually meet another technical writer and get married for the first time. Raúl saw this writing job as an opportunity to continue his interests in screenwriting.

In writing scripts, Raúl discovered that he was missing something, something that would lead him to another pivotal juncture. As he explains,

I was trying to write these screenplays and I found out that I didn't really understand human motivation very well – what made people do the things they do. So I started reading psychology books and I found out that I loved psychology. So I started...I went back to Fairfield University, which is in Connecticut, and got a Master's degree in psychology.
He stumbled upon the very discipline that would change his life direction and goals. He developed a strong interest in the field of psychology and discovered that he had a knack for this discipline.

Pathway to the Presidency

Because Raúl excelled as a graduate student, he was offered a full-ride scholarship to the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) to pursue a doctorate in psychology. Shortly after arriving in California, Raúl got divorced from his first wife. In timely fashion, however, Raúl completed his doctoral degree, obtained post-doctorate research opportunities, and had his mind set on an academic life as a university professor and researcher. Raúl recalls:

I started on psychology thinking more of going towards clinical practice. Then I thought I could make more of a bigger impact doing research. So, I switched over to research. I never gave a thought to community colleges, but the field of education I did because the research I focused on during my doctoral studies were half mental health and half education.

Colleagues were impressed with Raúl's analytical skills and his research work with a variety of hard-to-serve populations during graduate school was being recognized broadly. Raúl was conducting large-scale research projects on public health, mental health, and education. It was all but certain that Raúl would join the professorate, but circumstances and interests would change:

I thought I would be teaching at the university or doing research at a major research institution. That's what I intended...that's why I did the post-doc because that's part of the pathway. When I left the post-doc, it was for a couple of years. I left there after the first year because I could see this is not what I want to do for the rest of my life. I tried mental health first and I didn't like it, and I said, "Well, I'm going back to education."
It was also during this time that Raúl discovered that his fascination in applied research was waning and that he was interested in exploring other career options, especially those related to education. In research, Raúl was turned off by the constant chasing of grant dollars by researchers and could not see a life committed to this enterprise – he just couldn’t see himself doing that. Raúl reflected, “Actually, before I left I was thinking...I was going to try other things.”

When Raúl shared his intentions of leaving research with others, the dean of the Graduate School at the University of California, San Francisco medical campus pleaded with Raúl and had this to say:

You shouldn’t leave. We need people like you in the UC (University of California) system. You can have your pick of any college in the United States. What are you doing? You’re throwing your career down the toilet!

I just said, “Yeah.” Well, I didn’t throw my career away...I’m stubborn, so if I make up my mind about something, that’s it....

First College Jobs

After applying, coming close, but not being selected for a position at UCSC, Raúl maintained his interest in pursuing a post in higher education. Raúl first became engaged professionally with the community colleges when he obtained the position of director of institutional research at Cabrillo College in Aptos, California, a town bordering Santa Cruz. Raúl explains how he first became introduced to community colleges as a potential place of employment:

My ex-wife said to me, “Why don’t you think about community colleges?” She had gone to a community college, and I said, “Really?” I found out that they had research jobs at community colleges.
Raúl excelled in his new role and shortly thereafter, senior campus administration identified his leadership potential, cultivated it, and put it to use to benefit the college and students. As a result of being tapped by central campus leadership, Raúl took on a number of additional college-wide assignments during his tenure at Cabrillo College, including interim appointments as the director of student development, the dean of institutional development and, ultimately, in academic administration as the interim dean of instruction.

It was during this time that Raúl shared with President John Hurd his interest in pursuing a community college presidency. Raúl was thriving and was stimulated with the additional responsibilities, had performed well and built a strong reputation, and thought he had the temperament for the ambiguities of the CEO position. President Hurd agreed; he not only encouraged Raúl, but mentored him as well and created additional opportunities for leadership development for him:

John was very encouraging, very supportive. He was a mentor to me. I mean, I just think the world of John and owe him a lot because he helped me in my career.

The Vice President of Instruction was helpful to Raúl’s expanded learning as well and was not threatened by his added responsibilities and rising profile. Raúl had a network of individuals at the executive level that supported his journey towards the community college presidency. It was at this point that Raúl outlined his plans to obtain a community college presidency complete with goals and timelines. It was a plan Raúl would adhere to for professional guidance. The plan included searching for
a vice-presidency outside of Cabrillo College, since the incumbent vice-president was not planning to leave anytime soon. Raúl retells this part of the story:

I needed to get instructional background in order to have a chance at becoming a president. I had to become a dean of instruction, so that’s why I did the interim thing, so I could build a reputation within the college and I could make it to the dean position. Once I became the dean, then I knew the vice-president was the next place, but I knew it wasn’t going to happen at Cabrillo.

After five years at Cabrillo College in positions of increasing responsibility and complexity, Raúl applied for and obtained the Vice-President of Instruction post at nearby San José City College. Raúl was pleased and felt lucky that he received the first VP job he had ever applied to. Raúl’s plan was to learn the full scope of responsibilities and then seek a presidency.

To gain added insight towards the presidency and build administrative expertise and confidence, Raúl participated in three instrumental leadership development programs. The first was a mentor project coordinated through the Association of California Community College Administrators.

Through a mentorship with Bernadette Fong, president at Foothill College of the Foothill-DeAnza Community College District, Raúl conducted a leadership project and shadowed Dr. Fong to various meetings to get a better understanding of the issues and leadership portfolio of the president’s role.

The second leadership development program in which Raúl participated was the National Community College Hispanic Council (NCCHC) Fellows Program in 1992-93. Raúl describes this yearlong national program for prospective community college presidents as an outstanding leadership development activity.
The fellowship demystified the presidency, exposed him to the roles and expectations of the top post, and provided everything he needed to solidify his interest in pursuing the presidency and increase his capacity to compete. Lastly, Raúl participated in the summertime Institute for Educational Management sponsored by Harvard University. Each of these leadership development experiences would provide the tools Raúl needed to land a president’s job.

The opportunity for a presidency would present itself at San José City College. After two and a half years as vice-president, the president left and Raúl was asked to serve as interim president. Without hesitation, Raúl knew he was ready to assume his first assignment as president, albeit on an interim basis, and to do well in the position. In fact, once in the position, Raúl preferred the president’s role to the vice-president’s role:

"It’s kind of interesting because once I was interim president and started doing things and establishing myself, most of my staff said, “We think you’re a better president than you were as a vice-president.” And I tell you the truth, I couldn’t stand the vice-presidency job, it was…it was terrible. I was doing the day to day running of the campus, you know…it was tough; it was a lot of work.

At this point, Raúl was actively looking for community college presidential vacancies. He utilized his established networks through the NCCHC for positions nationwide. On the recommendation of a colleague, he looked into a position in Chicago, but ultimately decided not to pursue it formally. After about a year as interim president at San José City College, Raúl learned of an opening for president at Los Medanos College of the Contra Costa Community College District, about an hour and
a half distance from San José. Raúl wanted to stay in California, preferably northern California, and Los Medanos College seemed to fit the bill.

Raúl applied for and obtained the Los Medanos College position, a post in which he would flourish as president for six years. In this role and in a multi-college district such as Contra Costa, Raúl reported to the chancellor, who reported to the Board of Trustees. During his tenure, the college established both short- and long-range strategic plans, bolstered student enrollment, and increased its visibility and credibility in the community. Raúl also strengthened the lines of communication and relationships with faculty – critically important roles for the president to facilitate. Furthermore, Raúl’s reputation in California for being an outstanding community college president was increasing. His star was rising at a meteoric pace.

When the Superintendent/President’s position became available at Delta College, Raúl felt once again ready to apply for a position as the head of a growing community college district with a diverse student population. Administratively, this would also mean that Raúl would report directly to a locally elected board, something that he had yet to do. In June 2002, Raúl obtained his third presidency in seven years.

At Delta College, Raúl sees another opportunity to grow professionally and another chance to impact the lives of students. He reflects on one of the aspects he enjoys most about his current position:

One of the things that attracted me to Delta, and that I’m really proud of, is the diversity – that the campus is incredibly diverse. We’re an HSI, but yet we have African American students, and we have lots of Asian students and students from the Middle East – from all over. It really is wonderful when you walk you across the campus and you see so many different people from different backgrounds – and they blend; there’s a lot of harmony. That’s the
other nice thing: there’s no strife between groups, you know, not outright segregation – it’s a very pleasing environment from a diversity point of view. And of course, it’s a beautiful campus… a very good school with lots of great programs.

Reflections on the Interview

Raúl was kind and generous with his time and his disclosure of information. This can be attributed to a high level of trust that had been established and to Raúl’s interest in sharing his story. By way of interpersonal characteristics – and besides being incredibly talented – Raúl is articulate, intelligent, and remains curious. He possesses tremendous drive and passion, and is focused on his profession and career; he is a planner and a “doer.” He is intuitive and insightful.

Throughout the interview, Raúl looked me straight in the eye and was never uncomfortable with my questions or in responding. The tone of his language was direct, clear, and articulate. He displayed humility and integrity with regard to his position and his chosen profession. Raúl’s body language communicated both confidence and competence; his posture was strong and assured. He consistently came across with a sense of poise, dignity, and skill.

Raúl became president at the young age, for a college president, of 43. He is now 53 years of age and has been the head of a college for ten years. It should be noted that the presidency is something that he planned to do once he decided it was a worthy goal; it did not happen by accident. Raúl enjoys the responsibility as the CEO and is not intimidated by it. He is clearly comfortable with the role and responsibilities he currently has as Superintendent/President of Delta College.
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About President Pérez

In July 1999, Rosa Pérez was selected as the twelfth president of Cañada College in Redwood City, California, a suburban city just 40 minutes south of San Francisco. This presidency marks the first time that Rosa has headed up a California community college campus. Her selection as president was an historic occasion. In the college’s 36 years of service, Rosa is the first-ever Latina president hired to lead Cañada, as it is commonly referred to, and the first person of Latino descent hired to lead any of the three colleges of the San Mateo Community College District. Rosa is currently in her sixth year as president of Cañada College, the longest tenure of any president at the college to date in her district.

About Cañada College

Established in 1969, Cañada College is one of three colleges of the San Mateo Community College District. The college is in the wealthy part of San Mateo County and rests on some of the most expensive real estate in the San Francisco Bay Area. Verdant rolling hills and mature trees, azure lakes, and multi-million dollar residences
surround Cañada College. The college's service area extends in all directions and the campus is able to draw a diverse student body, in terms of racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic diversity, with highly-diverse cities such as Redwood City in its immediate service area.

The college enrolls about 6,400 students, with 44% of them self-identified as Latino. The vast majority of the Latino students are first-generation college students. Accordingly, Cañada College is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) and is the northernmost HSI in California.

About the Interview

On April 11, 2005, Rosa and I were in Boston, Massachusetts for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) annual meeting that had commenced over the weekend. The national conference drew over 1,800 participants from all around the country, yet we were able to find a quiet spot in the midst of countless workshops and leadership panels.

The initial interview lasted about an hour and forty minutes. The time was sufficient to cover the subject areas. Near the end of the interview, Rosa shared that she was to visit with someone else that she identified as her mentee, so I was mindful and appreciative of the time that she spent with me. The session did not seem at all rushed. Rosa seemed relaxed and ready to share her story.
The Interview Setting

For our interview, I identified an empty conference room at the hotel adjacent to the Boston Convention Center. The room was large, but empty, and provided the intimacy and privacy necessary for our conversation. I simply found a corner of a table and placed the recorder in between us and began the interview, which in many ways was more like a conversation between colleagues.

The tone of the conversation was conducive to exploring her roots and to extracting some deep thinking about her ascendancy to the community college presidency. It should be noted that Rosa is very comfortable with her story and is appreciative of it being told. Rosa does not mind using her name or her college’s name in the dissertation. She seemed very relaxed and at ease with the details of her journey. She is also thankful of the research being done through this project.

At the conclusion of the interview, I interjected my deep appreciation for her time and wisdom. Like Raúl, Rosa is a role model for me and for so many new and incumbent community college presidents. We concluded our session with an abrazo (a warm embrace) and well wishes.

Her Story: The Journey of President Rosa Pérez

Rosa Guadalupe Pérez was born in San Francisco, California to parents who, unmarried at the time, emigrated separately from El Salvador to San Francisco. Rosa shares how her parents met: “They met each other dancing!” Rosa’s parents, like so many other immigrants, came to this country in search of economic prosperity and well-being, and for better lives for their children. Although she was born in the city,
she spent the majority of her early years in the village of Almena, El Salvador, with her grandmother. Rosa vividly remembers that the earthy smell of the pueblo combined with the strength and stability of her grandmother grounded her and brought a sense of comfort and security to her:

My parents were the first ones in their family that had emigrated. We didn’t have much of a network there in San Francisco, a familia. There were no abuelos (grandparents); I mean, everybody was back home. So, I spent a lot of my early years going back and forth to my mother’s pueblito in the mountains. At age seven...I came back to go to school in the United States, and of course, even though I was born here, I was really Spanish speaking.

Rosa grew up in a flat in the city’s heavily-Latino Mission District and enrolled in the local public schools. Her dad was a carpenter and musician, and her mother worked in one of the numerous factories the city supported at that time. The factories and jobs that provided employment to countless immigrants are now long gone. As the eldest daughter, special responsibilities and obligations were placed on Rosa, especially after her younger brothers were born. From early on, she carried duties for the family that made her mature beyond her years.

Initially the local, public elementary school was not a good match for Rosa. She explains:

Probably the most dramatic thing for me, the thing I had the most difficulty was adaptation in school. Learning...the language learning experience was very hard for me. I was stuck in a classroom my first year with a monolingual English speaking teacher who had very little patience and she actually kept me in the back room in a corner, separated, I was completely segregated. This was a public school and I’m so traumatized by it, that I can’t even tell you the name of the teacher. By the second year, my mother put me in a Catholic school.

But her behavior did not improve with the change in schools. Consequently, Rosa started developing bad habits and socially irresponsible behaviors:
You know... that didn't work out well either because the nuns who were there were not always... were not the nicest in terms of language learning. I got punished a lot for my language. At that time, if you didn't get things right, pronounce things right, you had to stay after school, you had to stay after lunch... I felt like I was... for me it was like, the experience was very difficult and I started to develop some bad patterns, like in the third grade, I was eight when I was with the nuns. I started to do things, to escape what I was feeling, and I started to steal...

Rosa recalls her initial struggle with language acquisition as being a painful and "horrible" one. The treatment of immigrant students by schools because of their lack of English language skills was poor. There were no bilingual education programs to participate in — it was a "sink or swim" mentality:

I started to get into problems because I think those are the choices that happen for kids, you don't know what to do. You want to get the hell out of there, you try to feel okay, and you know, being the Catholic girl was one thing that I wanted to be, at the same time I needed to survive in my environment. I think I always thought, always had that tension between being the eldest daughter in a Catholic household with good values about humility, and also needing to survive where I was. I had different times in my life where I made choices with each of those identities. I was twelve and because I was the oldest and the English speaking one with the greatest amount of education, I became the translator in the family.

By age 12, Rosa's parents had separated. Her father had become physically abusive toward her mother, wandered outside of the marriage, and the relationship eventually evaporated. For Rosa, the expectations and duties as eldest daughter now grew exponentially. She took on various roles and responsibilities to help her mother, who was now a single head of household with four kids. She also assisted her mother and family by working odd jobs and by taking care of her younger siblings. In the absence of her mother at home, she became, in essence, the head of the family. Her
mother gradually became emotionally unstable, developed depression and then addiction to prescription medicine.

Again, common to other first-generation, immigrant families, there was no history of participation in education past the primary grades, let alone higher education. Her blue-collar upbringing was not something that Rosa was ashamed of; she accepted it in the midst of being surrounded by other working class families in the Mission. Education and literacy were important values to the family, but they had yet to access it and reap the benefits from education. Rosa vividly recalls, “We didn’t have a book at home…no newspaper…we were a non-reading family! My parents had a third grade education…we just didn’t know.”

In the midst of this instability and turmoil, Rosa’s describes her only escape as education: “It motivated me to find a way out…the only thing I could see was education.” She would remain in parochial schools until she entered high school. Interestingly, Rosa was classified and placed, in her words, in “special ed” classes because of her English-language learning status. It was not until junior high school that she was re-categorized into “regular classes.”

By the time Rosa entered high school, she excelled at her studies, often staying up until the early hours of the morning to complete assignments. Caring teachers often supplemented her thirst for learning with additional materials and assignments, and Rosa relished with her newfound love of learning, and the respect and attention she was receiving from it.
Rosa thrived academically and socially while at Balboa High School. Even with this newfound academic success, Rosa still considered leaving high school in order to help support her family:

I almost dropped out of high school, just to go work full-time. And...my high school counselor pulled me out and said, “No, you’re not dropping out – you’re staying.” And she scared me, because as a Latina you didn’t question an authority figure.

In high school, Rosa found supportive instructors, a stable peer group, a growing sense of independence and self-reliance, and a strong interest in attending college. But, Rosa’s also states with a high degree of certainty:

Had my father stayed with us, there was no way I was going to college...I assure you. My father was a very traditional man and he did not see education as a viable option for women.

In the midst of the growing, constant chaos at home, Rosa viewed education as a passport to a better life, as she explains:

It really motivated me to find a way out. My mother was not a role model for me; my dad was gone. I had lots of tios (uncles) and stuff. I wasn’t going to end up working in factories; I was not going to. I told myself, “You know what? I gotta do something,” And the only thing I could see, could imagine, was education.

In high school, Rosa’s counselor encouraged her to apply to UC Berkeley, just across the bay from San Francisco. Her outstanding credentials in high school allowed her to be admitted and she received a scholarship to attend Berkeley upon completing high school. No one in her family had ever graduated from high school and now she was on the cusp of breaking that educational barrier at one of the world’s premiere universities. Rosa’s world was changing. This was an accomplishment that Rosa understandably was very proud of. The plan was perfect: she could attend a first-rate
college on scholarship and also stay close to home. Rosa’s self-esteem and sense of independence were also growing, as she shares:

I got very independent. I saw that I could do anything I wanted. I made all of my own decisions about what was going to happen in my future, and nobody was going to stop me. I had a sense of responsibility to my mother and I had a lot of guilt about going to college because I felt...I mean, I had been contributing to the rent since the time I was fifteen. I was working a lot, you know, and I got my work permit as many hours as I was allowed, plus babysitting and everything else and bringing it all home to mom, my mother. But I knew I had to go to college. So it was a difficult decision but I made it, I mean, there was no one involved in that factor but me.

The plan, however, would never materialize as Rosa’s growing guilt of leaving her mother by herself with younger brother weighed too heavily on her...way, way too heavily:

I couldn’t just leave...again this is the Latina, the eldest daughter with experience in an immigrant household where you are the translator, where you are the stabilizer for your mother, where...you know, for God sakes, you’re not going to abandon her! Berkeley just seemed too far away...I had no transportation and I could not think of living in the East Bay. I could not get comfortable with leaving the roles that I had in the family...I could not abandon my mother and brothers...so I turned down the scholarship to Berkeley and went to City College. I could take the bus there. For me, there was no choice...it was a simple decision.

A Political Activist is Born

In the fall of 1967, Rosa enrolled at City College of San Francisco – and “things” were happening: student anti-war protests, the civil rights movement, and the increasing awareness of the United Farm Worker farm worker struggles were beginning to emerge:

I went into the urban community college scene, inocente. And it’s interesting, my first day of registration, which was in-person walk-in...there was a group of guys, you know, that were Latino, and they were starting to look for
students to recruit and form organizations and they grabbed me...and I was fascinated!

Through community groups and student organizations, Rosa was exposed to political and educational issues, and a sharp political awakening and consciousness was born – a consciousness that she retains to this day. Political engagement and community advocacy were the issues of the day and Rosa immediately fell in with student and community groups, and became a political activist. It was Rosa’s first real opportunity to learn, as she states, the “principles of politics” and engage in deep conversations about her gender roles and her racial identity, about “what it meant to be a Latina.”

It was at this time, Rosa shares, that she began “to rethink my educational experiences” and in particular her experiences as a young immigrant from El Salvador:

I started to rethink about how I felt when I learned English. The language loss, the shame of my culture…I never thought that I had shame. But I realized I had learned that our people were less than…I learned that I had been influenced by stereotypes.

She became angry when she realized that she had been impacted by the negative portrayal of immigrants and the stereotypes that accompanied English-language learners. Her political awakening began to provide her with some answers that expanded her political consciousness. She developed both a conviction and an unquenchable desire to learn more and to be an active participant in community empowerment activities, both on and off-campus. Rosa developed a strong political understanding of justice and it fueled the types of activities in which she became
engaged, and influenced the courses she was taking. She became a vociferous and powerful advocate for English-language learners and contributed to the agenda for political change in our communities:

I started...to see...that a huge retention and engagement activity for me was the conscientiousness that was fueling my hunger to understand all of this...forget everything else! I was like, “Wow! Look what they did! Look what they did to me! Look what they’re doing to us!”

Then I would notice things...like I was noticing how second language learners were being treated. I mean for me, the immigrant thing... I thought, “What makes me any better than, you know, fulanito (any another person)? I don’t have an accent, uh! You’re treating him like he’s menso (dumb)... You’re asking him and hassling him for a green card! And I just filled out your pinche (frickin) application for enrollment!”

Rosa’s goal was to build on the work that she was now doing in the community, especially as it related to advocacy for English-language learners, empowering youth, and steering them in a positive direction. While attending City College, she worked with several community-based organizations in the Mission District. She states her goal at that time “was to be a community organizer or a high school counselor.” She thought that perhaps her career direction would take her to the high schools where scores of brown, black, and poor students were under-performing, dropping out, or getting drafted for an unjust war. Rosa also supported “coalition work” amongst ethnic groups, like the Black Student Union, and together they had formed a large and multi-racial network of community activists whose collective aim was to “change the system.”

But to change the system, Rosa was astute enough to know that community activism would not be enough; she needed more education. “I needed to get an
education. I was going to take over 'the system' – I was very clear about that. I believed we could do it...and I wasn’t gonna stop.”

*Stanford-bound*

When Rosa’s time as a student at City College was nearing its end, it was a concerned counselor who encouraged Rosa to consider transferring to Stanford University. After all, Rosa was an outstanding student. She was also very focused and determined, but had made no definitive plans to continue her education until her counselor, a white woman, approached Rosa about applying to Stanford. Rosa told her counselor, “You’re crazy, they don’t accept people like me...besides, I can’t afford it.”

To Rosa’s surprise and delight, she got in and was offered a full scholarship to attend the following fall semester. “My counselor coached me and I’d be damned if I didn’t get in!” Rosa recalls proudly. This time she was ready and capable of leaving home.

As a first-generation college student, Rosa possessed a brilliant, inquisitive mind and a mature political consciousness, but absolutely no familiarity with the rules and regulations of a four-year university system. She did not know or understand the language or the institutional norms. “I had the street smarts, but felt I didn’t belong here,” she recalls. Rosa lived in the country club-setting dorms of Stanford as a junior transfer, away from home for the first time. It was a far cry from the apartment she and her family were now sharing in the blue collar Excelsior district. To further this sense of alienation, her roommate at Stanford came from a private girls school in an
exclusive area of California and hailed from a wealthy family. She vividly points out the contrasts in their upbringing and their lifestyle:

My roommate’s entire class had thirty students. I can remember that every weekend I hitchhiked home from Stanford to San Francisco, so that I could be with my mom. My roommate owned two cars; all I had was a six-speed bike!

Rosa recalls her Stanford experience and her initial period of transition with great clarity:

Assuming I was underprepared, not knowing what the experience was going to be like, they had me in events and these things, and everybody knows the language. But of course, you didn’t know what orientation was. “What’s that? What does that word mean?” And when you’re a transfer student, you’re way behind all that adaptation. Even so, I never had any academic problems at Stanford – I got high honors. I never, ever suffered in grades – that was not the issue...it wasn’t academic preparation. It was the social environment – a fish out of water, being away from my family. “How was I going to deal with my mother? I don’t belong here”...all this stuff.

Even though Rosa had passing thoughts of leaving, “I can’t do this, I can’t do this, I can’t!” she was determined to stick it out and had enough awareness to seek on-campus psychological services soon after enrolling to address her rough adjustment to life at “the Farm.” She was placed as a student employee on campus that helped her acclimate to university life and build supportive networks:

The job gave me a little bit of money, a connection to the institution...just kind of got me through until I calmed down. The only reason I didn’t drop out is I thought of everyone who had worked to get me there...I felt a sense of duty.

Rosa also connected with other Raza students and joined Chicano student organizations, like MEChA, the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan), that made her feel more comfortable on campus. In the
latter part of her undergraduate years, Rosa found her stride and began to work with the Latino community off-campus in nearby communities.

Rosa overcame the obstacles of being a first-generation, immigrant college student from a working class family on a predominantly white campus and graduated with a degree in Latin American Literature with honors from Stanford University.

_Return to San Francisco_

Upon graduating, once again, Rosa was unfamiliar with the ways of the university and did not realize that she had to apply for graduate school.

No one ever advised me; I did not know I was supposed to apply! No one ever sat me down and said, “Here’s a graduate school application.” I just assumed I’d just keep going to school. I was so connected to the work I was doing in the town of Alviso with our community.

Rosa returned home with degree in hand and looked for permanent work in San Francisco, but still had the notion of attending graduate school on her radar. Fortunately, through some standing connections in the educational community that she had explored, Rosa was offered an opportunity to enroll in a master’s program in counseling at the University of San Francisco (USF). USF was in the initial stages of forming an ethnic studies program and Rosa’s reputation was growing in this area. The university was so interested in her candidacy that the offered her counseling hours and the opportunity to teach classes in ethnic studies. She says that it was an “incredible combination” of duties. It was, in fact, the perfect arrangement: the ability to obtain her master’s degree and work with students – an opportunity that she would not pass up.
A Mentor Emerges

While completing her Master’s degree, Rosa received a call from President Kenny Washington at City College. He encouraged her to look at a new EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs and Services) counseling position that had just opened up at her alma mater. Rosa was thrilled about the prospect of returning to City College in this capacity. She proudly recites, “City has always anchored me.”

Rosa was successful in attaining the position and was in the role for a year and a half until an Assistant Dean of Students became available at the college. Again, President Washington, one of her strongest allies and an emerging mentor, offered the now 25-year old Rosa her first full-time opportunity in community college administration, a position that shaped her future career direction. In fact, unbeknownst to Rosa at the time, it began a trail directly to the community college presidency some twenty-two years later. Rosa remembers President Washington with great fondness and admiration:

I became a dean very young, during the…early affirmative action years, and came back to City College when I was twenty-five as a dean, hired by the first president of color in the history of that institution – an African American man named Kenny Washington, who was really committed to multiculturalism and building alliances.

One thing I remember about Kenny is that his very first interview question, when we met when I was a finalist, the first time I ever met the man, the very first question was, “So what do you think that we black and brown people can do together to model that we are allies rather than enemies fighting over a bone?” That was…a question! It wasn’t like, “Give me your background…” It was like…he went right to it! I say that because that was a significant time for me when I worked with Kenny.
He showed me a lot about the skills of administration, but how you sustain your principles as a person of color, your identity as a person of color in administration. He laid, as a mentor, the foundation for me that brought those two things together and then that moved me as I moved on in his organization.

President Washington was very encouraging and supportive, and Rosa flourished in her roles under his constant supervision and administrative tutelage. He said, "I am going to challenge you by moving you around to different positions outside your job description." For the next six years, Rosa expanded her breadth of student services knowledge and gained valuable experience, including accepting interim roles as dean of admissions and records and an acting post as dean of student activities.

Pathway to the Presidency

The president was very clear about his intentions. He had shared with Rosa his strong interest in grooming her to become a community college president. Rosa, however, was grounded in the importance of her work with students and did not take the matter too seriously at the time, but nonetheless she was very appreciative of his confidence. She was not ready to make this commitment and was still unsure whether she would enjoy the CEO role. She, too, had witnessed President Washington get "beat up" by nearly every constituency on campus and had personally witnessed the emotional turmoil that this descent person and president had to stomach and endure.

When the Vice President of Student Services position opened at CCSF in 1981, Rosa was clearly prepared for this senior executive position and chief student services office. President Washington, once again, was very encouraging. When Rosa was selected as vice president, history was made. At 31 years of age, Rosa had the
distinction of being the first Latina vice president in any system of higher education in California. Sadly, the person who was Rosa’s greatest ally, President Washington, left within a year after Rosa obtained her new post. She recalls this trying time for her mentor in the following way:

The year I became VP, President Washington basically was running out of support at the college – and the faculty ran him out.

He got very...he started to get sick...and he was in a lot of pain. He was really under attack by the old guard. I’d go into his office and he’d be crying. He was a very gentle man. In private, I mean, we were so close. He was like my father...he really was.

The Vice President’s position was one in which Rosa would flourish for five years, until she privately got disillusioned with the scope of responsibilities and found that she missed the direct contact with students. She had thoughts of returning as a counselor until she was convinced by her new Chancellor (formerly the title of president at CCSF), the first Asian educator to lead CCSF, to assume a district wide position as Vice Chancellor of Educational Services.

However, it was during these two years as Vice Chancellor that Rosa readily admits, “I was getting burned out. I was working too much. I didn’t have the balance. I was also missing family and everything.”

To the surprise of many, Rosa resigned her Vice Chancellor post and asked to return to, as she puts it, “the front line.” She left administration and returned to the faculty ranks as an EOPS Counselor. In a span of thirteen years, Rosa had gone full circle for a student services professional at City College, from counselor to vice president and back to counselor.
After two years, Rosa felt the need to explore options outside of CCSF. She shares her thoughts on what was for a difficult time of transition: “I did some healing and got some needed distance from City. I also became a parent...and adopted my daughter and son during that period.”

Rosa spent the next eight years in two to three-year stints in counseling and student services administration at neighboring community college districts, including the San Mateo Community District – the district that later would be home to her first presidency. Rosa describes her transition back into administration:

I went back into administration, and once I did that, I was having fun again. I said, “Yeah, screw it...I was going up, I’m moving up.” And so, that’s when I was recruited...I’ve been recruited a lot.

The Vice-Chancellor at Rancho Santiago Community College District saw me at a Latina leadership conference and said, “Hey, I’m opening up a new campus and I’m going to need someone to put together the student services programs. There’s a large Latino community – you’re perfect, come on.”

So, in all, I did three years at Skyline College, went to Rancho, opened up Santiago Canyon College and designed the student services program.

Orange County, however, where Santiago Canyon College was located, is known for having pervasive conservative attitudes and anti-immigrant sentiments – attitudes that did not coincide with Rosa’s value system, particularly now that she was raising two small children. After three years at this post, Rosa was again recruited to another vice president’s role, this time at Chabot College back in the Bay Area. She viewed this as an opportunity to return to familiar grounds where she had established networks in an administrative role that she was now enjoying again.
What Rosa did not know was that returning to the Bay Area would afford Rosa her first opportunity for a community college presidency. After a year at Chabot College, Skyline College President Linda Salter, a colleague and friend who had convinced her to re-engage in college administration some four years earlier, urged her to apply as interim president at Cañada College in Redwood City. President Salter was very convincing: “Rosa, you’re going to be an interim President. You got nothing to do to be a candidate. Take a leave from this stupid job at Chabot and try it for a year.” As Rosa explains: “I didn’t have time to say, “No.” Literally, it was over a weekend. Monday I met the San Mateo Chancellor Joe Johnson and he offered me the job.”

The interim post was slated for a year and if it did not agree with Rosa, she could return to Chabot College in the vice president’s role that she had left. In her view, she had nothing to lose and everything to gain. Unknowingly, this unforeseen opportunity would cast Rosa into a CEO’s role and she would vacate the last vice president’s job she would have.

At Cañada College, in short order, Rosa affirms that she “fell in love with the students and the campus.” She also answered her internal question as to whether she would enjoy the president’s role with a resounding, ¡Si!

As president, Rosa would quickly establish herself as an educational force in the community and, as a result, the college has flourished in multiple ways under her leadership.

Somewhere, right at this moment, President Kenny Washington is smiling.
Reflections on the Interview

Rosa has told this story before, perhaps not in this fashion, but I got the sense that she has shared this story and the essential parts of it to others who might be inspired and motivated by her journey. She is not ashamed of the struggles that she has encountered, of the obstacles she has overcome, and of the language and cultural barriers she has surmounted. There is a sense of pride in this struggle and she is more than pleased to share it with audiences, especially other mujeres (women), young Latinas, and aspiring administrators.

Rosa fully understands her role and responsibility as a role model in our community and the risks involved in being outspoken on important educational issues, such as undocumented students and racism, sexism, and other -isms. She is comfortable in the spotlight, speaks with command and authority, and does not shy away from challenges, if it will assist underserved students. Rosa’s courage and will are commendable and uncommon characteristics, and her tireless efforts on behalf of students and her infectious attitude should be applauded – not bad for a “homegirl” from La Mision (the Mission District of San Francisco).

The Interviewee

Rosa gave a focused and energetic initial interview. One quickly observes that she is poised, confident and direct. Trust was present throughout our conversation. Rosa was also very kind, generous with her time, and displayed a deep sense of passion throughout the interview. It is powerfully evident that she is very focused and committed to the work she is doing and to serving students. She has an extreme
commitment for this educational enterprise, her practice, and what she calls “her
duty.” *Esta mujer tiene valor!* (This woman has courage!)
### Table 11

**Portrait in Leadership: Dr. Benjamín T. Durán**

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Areas of Expertise
- Strategic Planning
- Enrollment Management
- Facilities Master Plans
- Bond Oversight and Coordination
- Community Involvement and Partnerships
- Technology in Higher Education

Educational & Policy Leadership
- Association of Community College Administrators
- Association of California School Administrators
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Phi Delta Kappa
- Community College League of California, CEO Board
- California Community Colleges Economic Development
- CSU Stanislaus, President of the Advisory Board
- CSU Stanislaus Foundation Board
- CSU Stanislaus Regional Council of Advisors
- CSU Stanislaus Council for the School of Arts & Letters
- CSU Stanislaus Center for Public Policy Studies
- CSU Stanislaus National Hispanic Scholarship Foundation
- University Committee of Merced
- University of California, Merced Foundation Board
- Higher Education Consortium of Central California
- California Action Team for Vocational Education
- California Association for Compensatory Education
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- California Hispanic Superintendents Caucus

Community Leadership
- Merced Rotary Club
- Merced County Regional Arts Council
- Central Valley Arts Center
- California Dollars for Scholars
- Castle Challenger Learning Center Foundation
- Merced County Economic Development
- Merced County Workforce Investment Board
- Mercy Medical Center (CHW) Merced Board
- Merced School Employees Federal Credit Union
- Merced County Task Force on Self-Esteem
- Merced County Hispanic Network
- African American Educators Association
- Merced County At-Risk Youth Task Force
- Drug & Alcohol Regional Forum Committee
- Merced County Conflict Management Skills Training
Merced County Child Advocates  
Le Grand Lions Club  
Merced Chamber of Commerce Board

Hometown/Place of Birth  
Merced, CA/El Paso, TX

Parents’ Education & Occupations  
Father: Elementary School, Some College; Farm Worker  
Mother: Community College, Child Development Educator

Source: Durán, B., personal communication, May 16, 2005

Narrative 3: Benjamín T. Durán

About President Durán

In 1997, Dr. Ben Tamayo Durán was selected to serve as the fifth Superintendent/President of Merced College. It was Ben’s first community college presidency after having served as Vice President of Administrative Services and Vice President of Human Resources at the college for the previous eight years. Before joining Merced College, Ben had dedicated his life as a teacher and administrator at the K-12 level in nearby school districts. The K-12 was a system where he thought he would stay for the remainder of his educational career until an opportunity presented itself at the local community college.

Ben was raised principally in the rural area where the college is located and graduated in the late sixties from the very college that he leads today. His story is certainly one of where “a local boy makes good.” Like the other presidents profiled here, the selection of Ben as president was an historic occasion as he is the first Latino to run the college in its 43-year history.
About Merced College

Merced College began offering classes in 1962 at the county fairgrounds and moved to its current location in east Merced in 1963. Merced is located about two hours south of Sacramento and an hour north of Fresno, California. It is in the heart of San Joaquin’s central valley, an area steeped in rich agricultural history and tradition. The college serves over 13,000 students from the many agrarian communities that dot Highway 99.

Merced College is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) with close to 30 percent of its students self-identified as Latino, from principally Mexican and Mexican-American families. Forty-five percent of the county is Latino, mainly families of Mexican heritage. Like the town of Merced, the college has a significant Southeast Asian population consisting of Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese students.

Merced County, with just under 260,000 residents, has an economic base consisting of agricultural production in the areas of dairy, cotton, and almonds, yet it remains one of the poorest counties with an annual unemployment rate of 17-18 percent, due to the seasonal nature of its agricultural crops. The recent closure of Castle Air Force Base also has had an impact on the local economy and the signs of recovery have been modest. There is good news, however, on the educational front: in the fall of 2005, the University of California opened its tenth and newest campus at Merced with an initial enrollment of 1000 students, an event widely celebrated regionally and a testament to the desperate need for access to higher education in California’s rural central valley.
About the Interview

When I arrived to Merced College and approached Ben’s office, he was standing outside smoking a cigar, *pero bien calmado* (very calmly). It was if I had encountered him in on one of his daily rituals and delights. He clearly had done this before and had his favorite spot on campus, just outside his office. It was in plain view of the front of the entrance to the central administration building; his enjoyment of smoking isn’t something he is trying to hide. Ben made me feel immediately at home on his campus upon my arrival, with his big smile and firm handshake.

Ben is very friendly and approachable, and is known around the state as such. I had met Ben only once or twice informally at statewide CEO meetings, but he made me feel comfortable right away. Although I was in a suit, as I usually am, Ben was wearing more comfortable clothes – a collarless dress shirt and pleated pants. It seemed as though Ben wears what he wants and is not concerned with the “uniform” of college presidents, at least on this day. I have seen Ben in dark suits before and he looks very distinguished, and some might say, imposing. He is a tall, well-built person and with a gregarious personality that can instantly light up a room.

Ben is completely at ease on his campus and he is clearly in his element – this was his turf. I witnessed this when we took a brief campus tour prior to our interview. Everyone we came upon was jovial and familial. It felt like a small community where everyone knew each other by first name. Ben is proud of the recent passage of a large capital facilities bond. We toured some of the newly completed facilities and he pointed out others that were being constructed with dollars from the bond. The brief
tour of the campus gave me a sense of place at Merced College and made a favorable
impression on me for my first visit.

The Interview Setting

After a few e-mails to coordinate our initial interview, we agreed to met on
Monday, May 16, 2005, on an afternoon near the end of the spring semester. The
interview lasted about 75 minutes and seemed enough time to cover the subject areas.

The initial interview took place in Ben’s office at Merced College. Ben’s office
is a shrine to personal mementos, awards and plaques, interspersed with cultural
artifacts. Over the years, Ben has accumulated and proudly displays various gifts and
recognitions from both on and off-campus entities. It was clearly evident that Ben is
proud of his culture, too. Ben’s office is not contemporary, by any means, with
traditional, dark wood paneling, but it is large, well designed, and has a spacious and
comfortable seating area. We placed ourselves in cushy chairs where I am certain
many conversations occur and where important decisions about the college are made.
He closed the door to his office and we were uninterrupted for the entire interview. He
secured my feeling that I had his full and undivided attention.

His Story: The Journey of President Ben Durán

Benjamín T. Durán was born in El Paso, Texas in 1947 to parents who
immigrated to the United States from the states of Chihuahua and Guanajuato, Mexico
in the 1920s. Ben’s parents were farm workers and followed the crops all throughout
the southwestern states, picking a variety of fruits and vegetables as migrant laborers:
My parents met in Texas and in 1949 my family came to California like a lot of migrants here in Merced County. We ultimately ended up buying a small house in Planada... We went to local schools.

My wife is an Assistant Superintendent with the school district and so we’re both in education. This is the place we chose to make our home, so we’ve been here and just stayed here. For me, this is home.

Ben is the third eldest of eight brothers and sisters and comes from a family that from a very early age instilled the importance of familia, of being generous, and the importance of giving back to the community. Ben explains:

My parents understood how important it was to help other folks and... they instilled in us really early on, really early on, to look out for other folks. So, if my dad killed an animal – which he did a lot – he’d butcher an animal, cut the meat up and go take it to poor people. He’d go take it to people in the camp and, you know, there would always be families who had it tough. We learned early on to share...

Through their own examples, both parents demonstrated the honor in working hard and in taking pride in one’s work. Ben learned and incorporated the values of respect, generosity, and a work ethic that he still maintains today as president.

Ben readily admits he has wonderful role models in both his parents. His father was a self-made man, who learned to read and write on his own, and served in the navy as a crew boss during World War II. Ben’s mother, after years of raising children and maintaining a traditional Mexican home environment, returned to school, eventually earning an Associate’s degree. She currently has a prosperous career and influential policy role in local child development centers through the national Head Start program:

My mother and my father actually attended Merced College. My father didn’t finish much, but my mother was forty-five years old when she finished her A.A. (Associate in Arts degree) in Child Development.
Ben recounts how powerful an example and how influential it was to see both his parents involved in higher education:

I think watching my mother and my father struggle at the kitchen table with their homework, you know, ...had a major impact on me. In fact, I often use that example in talks that I do for young people about the impact of how important it is to see...parents engaged in education, even as adults.

Today, although Ben’s father is deceased, his mother is still very much engaged with local community affairs as an activist and opinion leader. Ben’s mother, for example, is involved with local election campaigns and is president of a mutual benefit society for Mexican families, known as *La Edad de Oro* (The Golden Age). It is a communal organization with historical roots in Mexico where, amongst other things, ensures proper protocols around funeral services and burials, and lends support for surviving family members.

*Early Years – Growing Up*

Ben’s early educational years were positive. Ben again remembers the influence of his parents, but he also fondly recalls having the enduring care and support of teachers as being instrumental during his formative years. Ben instantly recalls:

The other influence that I had, frankly, was teachers. I never had a Latino teacher, but I was blessed with having teachers who were sympathetic to us, who took a real interest and, frankly, I don’t know that I would have gone on and applied for scholarships and things like that had it not been for one particular teacher...not only me, but a couple of my friends, too.

So, I was very fortunate in that I went to school during a period of time where Anglo teachers who were in rural schools with a lot of Latino kids really took a lot of interest in all of their kids, and so I benefited from that...So for me, it
was a natural thing to be involved in education...I can’t really see myself doing anything else.

As Ben tells the story, he was a student-athlete and was involved in student government during his high school years:

I wasn’t particularly spectacular as a student, but I was a pretty good student. When I was in high school, I was a decent athlete and I was president of the student body. I was also president of the junior class, and things like that...
I was a pretty good student - I probably had a 3.5 (grade point average) when I graduated from high school. I was a pretty good student in college, too. I wasn’t a scholar, by any means, but I was fortunate that I had good teachers.
Again, I benefited from having very, very good teachers.

Ben shares that he never had any real doubts about attending college; attending was something he wanted and was expected to do. Following his senior year, Ben enrolled at local Merced College for two years.

Off to College

While at Merced College, Ben continued to work seasonally in the surrounding agricultural fields picking crops, something he had done since he was a youngster, and he also worked as a salesman selling shoes. Ben has always been mature beyond his years and got married during his second year at college to his current spouse, Virginia. After completing his Associate’s degree, he transferred to the nearby state college in Turlock, Stanislaus State (CSUS), to pursue his interest in education.

Ben’s occupational goal was to become a schoolteacher – a goal that he was very comfortable with. Ben affirms, “I never had any desires to do anything other than to teach.” While in college, Ben maintained his high level of student involvement advocacy by participating in student government and the Inter-Club Council. He also
maintained his cultural identity and linguistic connections to the *Raza* community through his participation with the Spanish Club on campus.

Ben can only once remember giving thought to pursuing another profession—law. While at Stanislaus State, he recalls being recruited to pursue law school at Boalt Hall, UC Berkeley—one of the top ranked law schools in the country. He recalls that during that era there was a heavy push for Latinos to become lawyers and work within the Spanish-speaking community. Ben was initially attracted to this possibility, but after discussions with his wife, he retained his original plan to become a teacher:

When I was just graduating, a bunch of folks came down from...Cal (Berkeley) and they were looking for Latinos to go into law. So they interviewed a bunch of us and they had a great deal. I don't remember the specifics, but essentially if you were married, they planned a job for your spouse. They...basically had a support system to get you through law school. I talked with my wife, but really didn't have any interest. I couldn't see myself doing law and so I stayed in education. A couple of my friends took them up on it.

When asked if Ben had any regrets about not pursuing law, Ben responded by firmly stating:

Not at all...I never had any regrets whatsoever. I never really had any desires to do anything else but to teach. It has a lot to do with the role models I had...I had fine, fine teachers.

After graduating with a degree in Spanish literature, Ben enrolled in the teacher credential program at CSUS and returned as a teaching intern to his former high school. As a high school teacher, Ben taught special education and business classes. He was learning his craft as a teacher, enjoying the work and his students, and was trying to follow the good example of teachers that he had had. Ben's reputation was building and he excelled at being a teacher for several years and remained
challenged and stimulated by the work. He was very comfortable and effective in his role as a teacher.

First Steps into School Administration

Changing circumstances, however, at the high school gave Ben his first serious look at school administration:

Actually I got into administration by mistake…by happenstance. I had no desires of going into administration. In turns out that the vice principal of the school where I was teaching decided to retire, so my superintendent came to me and asked if I would do that. I thought I would do it for a year or so and then go back to teaching…I’ve been in administration ever since.

Someone who would have a profound personal and professional impact assisted Ben’s newfound career direction in school administration. His name was Richard Geary, superintendent of a local K-12 school district:

I had a great mentor. The fellow who had been Superintendent when I was in high school and was Superintendent there while I was a vice-principal had mentored me. He was an old fighter pilot from WWII – just a tough old bird, a good guy…and one of these guys, who in the sixties and seventies stood up to bigotry.

Richard had very well defined moral compass and had a compassion for the underserved, which made him an exceptional educational leader and advocate. Ben recalls:

That guy taught me the value of consistency, the value of integrity in terms of what you stood for, and your willingness to believe in something…where if you had that strong philosophy, it didn’t matter where the challenges came from because you could always stand up to them. He took a liking to me…he kind of brought me along and nurtured me, and took me under his wing.

Ben had found a mentor that he could trust and who would share insights into the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the superintendent’s role. In Richard,
Ben discovered that although they hailed different racial backgrounds, both shared similar values and experiences. Ben shares some insight and background regarding his mentor’s upbringing:

His mother was a Superintendent, teacher, bus driver and everything else for a small Indian college up in the mountains. So, he had been raised around...Indian kids. He and his brother were the only white kids in that school, and his mother was a teacher at the school. So, he had been raised and he had seen what it was like to come up that way. He had a real compassion there.

Ben would look to and receive encouragement and support from Richard as he shaped his emerging and successful career in school administration. When Richard retired, Ben desired to follow in his mentor’s footsteps and applied for his vacated post, but he was not selected. Ben thought he was ready, but instinctively knew he needed more experience. “I came close, but I didn’t get it...I was too young, too inexperienced.”

Knowing he had to expand the breadth and strength of his administrative portfolio for future K-12 superintendent positions, Ben took a position as the Assistant Director for Migrant Education, Region III at the Merced County Office of Education. By this time, Ben had already completed his master’s degree through Chapman University, a degree that he completed while he was working full-time, and obtained his doctorate degree in education through the University of Southern California (USC). The doctoral degree was particularly satisfying for Ben because it was an educational experience that he and his wife, Virginia, would pursue and complete together. Virginia currently works as an Associate Superintendent of a local K-12 district.
After gaining more education, experience and perspective, Ben eventually reached his goal of obtaining a superintendent’s position. In 1983, he became superintendent at Le Grand Union High School District.

*Pathway to the Presidency*

Ben simply never considered leaving the K-12 system, a system to which up until that point he had committed his professional life:

I never considered leaving the K-12 district. I could never consider leaving K-12 education. I was the Superintendent and we were in a great position; our district was doing very well. We had a good relationship with our schools…and the educational reforms through K-12 education were very, very strong then…great Board, good pay…no reason to leave.

However, when the position of Vice President of Human Resources at Merced College opened up in 1991, two former colleagues who were working at Merced contacted Ben. They asked whether he might be interested in applying. At first Ben respectfully declined, but did ask, perhaps more out of curiosity, “What the hell does a Vice President of Human Resources do?” I still said, “Thanks, but no thanks.”

After another follow-up contact and the encouragement of his former colleagues who had called, Ben reconsidered the proposal, discussed the possibility with his wife, and ultimately submitted his candidacy papers. Ben was intrigued by the notion of switching allegiances to the community college and well understood the value and importance of community colleges – after all, that is where he got his start and where most poor and immigrant students get their start.

After boning up on the pertinent issues surrounding community colleges, such as collective bargaining, AB 1725 and shared governance, and faculty evaluation, he
interviewed and obtained the position as Vice President of Human Resources at Merced College. Ben recalls the day vividly, “I interviewed and literally on the same day, I got hired … a real strange thing.”

While Ben was pleased with his selection, he knew that if he didn’t like community college administration, he could always work to reintegrate himself back to the K-12 system. Ben recalls his first impressions of community college administration:

When I first got here I was surprised at how slow things moved. You know in K-12, when I parked my car, there was a custodian waiting for me, a parent, and then by the time I got half way to my office, there was a pissed-off teacher, and then there was a pissed-off Board member. By the time I got to my office, the secretary had about ten things that I had to deal with…I had already four, five, ten incidents.

The pace of the operation took me aback and how things were done versus the way they were done in K-12 because they had to go like that (snapping fingers).

After a short period of time as vice president and adjusting to the pace of decision-making at community colleges, Ben assumed additional responsibilities and was appointed by the college president to take over the business services functions for the college. He became the chief business officer or the Vice President of Administrative Services.

During this time period – the early to mid-1990s – California was in a state of deep economic recession, spurred in part by the rapid and unanticipated decline of the “dot-com” industry and the federal closure of several stateside military bases. Ben remembers the state budget climate during the initial time in his new role: “During
that period of time, almost immediately, things started going to hell, you know. We went four years, three years without a budget increase.”

To complicate matters, the new position was a post that Ben admits he was not immediately prepared for, especially in light of the unstable and unpredictable state financial picture:

When I took over business services, I didn’t know a damn thing about it…but I said, “Fine.” I knew high school finance… I knew everything about my budgets. I knew exactly where I was and how much money I had at any given time, but I didn’t understand; I didn’t know community college finance. To this day, I’m not sure that I particularly fully understand the community college funding model…it took me a while to understand. I have good folks working for me…thank God!

It was baptism by fire for Ben, but he showed his leadership mettle and demonstrated his resolve by steering Merced College through these murky budgetary waters. His reputation on campus was growing and his president and the Board of Trustees recognized it. The Superintendent/President of Merced College, on the other hand, did not withstand the scrutiny of her leadership as well during these ambiguous and trying budgetary times, and her leadership as CEO of the college suffered as a result:

The faculty started getting antsy and the President started kind of hiding…she started getting really bad press…internally. The faculty were checking to see where she was going all the time. They put her on milk cartons, you know, “Have you seen the President?” – that sort of thing. It got really ugly for her…

Eventually, the president would take a job elsewhere, leaving the CEO post at Merced vacant. By that time, the other vice presidents, too, had moved on to other off-campus positions. Ben shares, “In no time, I was it…I was the senior VP.”
To address the current vacancy, Ben and the two other, newer vice presidents were able to convince the Board that they could handle the task of running the district without a president, at least for a year. The three VPs would divide the load and be administratively responsible for all areas of the district. The Board agreed to this highly unconventional approach to governing a community college district. As an incentive, the three were given nominal stipends to conduct the work and the district saved money during a time that the district needed it most:

We spent that year building fences and massaging people. I worked my ass off to be able to get the faculty a raise and at the end of that year we...had built a pretty good climate on the campus, a climate that had just been horrible before.

It was at this point that Ben had solidified his interest, knew he wanted to become and could handle the load of a community college president. Ben recalls the how he felt when he knew: “Ultimately, after I slugged it out for six, seven years here, I said, “Shit, I can do this...you know, I can do this...I can be the president.” And when the time came, he let the other two VPs know of his interest. The other two VPs were supportive, got behind him, and let Ben take the lead in running the college and interfacing with the Board and the community, both internally and externally – roles that would assist him in demonstrating his talents as a prospective president for the college.

Although Ben had demonstrated his leadership skills and ability to build consensus with various constituencies on campus, he still wasn’t convinced that the Board and faculty leadership would support him as the permanent CEO of the district. Ben looks back at his sense of the faculty sentiment during this time:
You know, they were probably going to be looking for new blood...the faculty would. It just was such a bad time when the former president left. Even though I had a good relationship with those people, I was still her vice-president.

Ben was concerned, too, how the Board viewed him, even though they had asked him and his fellow VPs to lead the district: “I don’t think the Board did this with me in mind because I don’t even know if they thought I could run the district.”

When the time came to apply for the top spot, however, Ben had built up his credentials on campus and in the community, and had proven that he could in fact “run the district.” The post, however, was not a “done deal” for Ben. “You know, I was not an in-guy,” recalls Ben. Although he had strengthened relationships with faculty and classified staff, had demonstrated that he was the right person to lead Merced College, and had built a strong relationship with the Board, Ben would have to compete with state and national candidates for the position:

Rumors were rampant...they were flying. This guy – a good Board member – and about four other people, a contingent, they went down to West Hills College to visit and encourage a prospective candidate.

Not only did the position draw a national pool, it was racially and ethnically diverse, as well:

We must have had four African Americans in the pool – they had really beat the bushes to diversify the pool. To make long story short, they interviewed eight people and...I was the only Latino in the pool.

Was the Board ready to offer this coveted CEO position to the only internal candidate, a former graduate of Merced College, or were they looking for “new blood” to take the college into the next millennium? Ben, not daunted by the competition, liked his chances:
I interviewed and...the fact that I was a local guy, that I had established myself in the community in terms of participation in civic organizations...I went through the first cut, went through the second cut, and ultimately they offered me the job.

It was January 1997 and Ben obtained the Superintendent/President position at Merced College, a position he holds to this day. The college has flourished under his leadership and Ben has made Merced College one of the flagship community colleges in the central valley.

Reflections on the Interview

Ben gave an informative, inspired, and energetic interview. He was kind, generous with his time, and displayed humor and a deep sense of humility throughout the interview. He used language that was comfortable for him – it didn’t bother me. To the contrary, I appreciated his candor and that he was a gusto (comfortable) enough with me to use both English and Spanish responses and colloquialisms.

Ben, like the other participating presidents interviewed here, is very focused and committed to the work he is doing, especially in serving the local communities of his youth. There is something powerful about being a “local boy” and contributing back to the community where you were brought up. He has an extreme commitment for this educational enterprise and to his practice.

Throughout the interview, Ben gave lots of praise and credit for his success to his caring teachers, and the influence of his activist parents is evident. Ben honors and respects his wife, Virginia – they are an influential educator team in the community.
Ben stated that he does not mind using his name or his college's name in the dissertation. He is very comfortable with his story and is appreciative of it being told. I should note that Ben was also very responsive to my e-mails. He was even willing to meet in Sacramento while he was in town. He gave me large windows of time for consideration.

One other example of how Ben made me feel immediately comfortable on the day of the interview: When we reached his office, just before the interview, we ran into the president of his Board and Ben introduced me as his "good friend" and fellow president at Cosumnes River College in Sacramento. I liked the way this made me feel. I felt that I had Ben's trust and respect and it really set the tone for our subsequent conversation. Given all of the above, I expected a good initial interview – and I got it.
Table 11

Portrait in Leadership: Norma L. Hernández

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<td>Bachelor of Arts, Spanish, Minor in Chicano Studies San Diego State University, San Diego, CA</td>
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Areas of Expertise

- Student Services
- Community Involvement and Partnerships
- Enrollment Management
- Faculty Development
- Curriculum Development
- Undocumented Student Advocacy
- Diversity and Equity Issues
- Women and Leadership Development
- Mentoring Programs
- At-Risk Youth Programs
- Bond Oversight and Coordination

Educational & Policy Leadership

- Task Force on Impact of Tidal Wave II, CCLC
- Advisory Committee on Legislation, CCLC
- South Bay Superintendents Articulation Council
- Advisory Committee to Congressman Bob Filner
- Project MEXUS Advisory Committee
- Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU)
- Advisory Committee on Legislation
- ACCJC/WASC Accreditation Teams

Community Leadership

- Chicano/Latino Consortium
- Latino Higher Education Coalition
- South Bay Forum
- City of San Diego Select Board on Binational Affairs
- SDICCCA/SDSU Coordination Task Group

Honors & Awards

- San Diego MANA Brindis Honoree
- UC San Diego Hispanic Scholarship Council, Award of Excellence in Education
- San Diego Business Journal
- Women Who Mean Business Award
- BonitaFest Humanitarian Award
- Barrio Station, Inc., Cesar E. Chavez Social Justice Award
- Latina Leadership Network Madrina Award
- Southwestern College Women of Distinction Award
- Chicano Federation of San Diego County
- Educators Service Award

Hometown/Place of Birth

San Diego, CA/Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico
Narrative 4: Norma L. Hernández

About President Hernández

In January 2005, the Southwestern Community College District Board of Trustees appointed Norma L. Hernández as the fifth Superintendent/President of Southwestern College (SWC). President Hernández had served for the previous year and a half as the interim president at SWC when the incumbent president stepped down. At the time of her appointment, Norma had been on campus as a faculty member and administrator for nearly thirty years. Her selection as president was an historic occasion; she would be the first Latina to lead Southwestern College in the campus 45-year history of the campus.

About Southwestern College

The sprawling, park-like campus of 154 acres is located in Chula Vista, California, one of the fastest growing regions in the state and a community just 10 miles from the United States-México international border. For a campus forty-plus years of age, it is in near pristine condition with manicured lawns, mature shade trees, and colorful flowers in the core areas of campus. The new additions to the campus have been carefully integrated for a seamless look and attention has been paid to preserving open, green space.
Established in 1961 with temporary classrooms at nearby Chula Vista High School, the comprehensive college now offers more than 285 Associate degree and certificate options. Its service area consists of some 400,000 residents in several communities of south San Diego County. In addition to the campus in Chula Vista, and to accommodate the rapid growth in the region, the district established the Education Center at San Ysidro in 1988 and the Higher Education Center at National City in 1998. The combined enrollment for all three sites is approximately 19,000 students.

The demographic profile of the student body mirrors that of south San Diego County. Fifty-eight percent of the students are Latino, primarily of Mexican descent, 15 percent white, 13 percent Filipino, and 5 percent African-American. As such, Southwestern College is a federally designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

About the Interview

After several e-mails to coordinate our visit, I had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know Norma. We had met personally only once before when she was a panelist at the Latina Leadership Network of Community Colleges conference in March 2005. The initial interview took place on May 23, 2005 and lasted approximately one hour and fifteen minutes; it seemed to be enough time to cover the subjects appropriately. I visited Norma near the very end of the spring semester, as it was the only time our calendars coordinated. Even though it was a very busy time of year, with commencement just around the corner, Norma was gracious with her time
and showed strong interest in the research project. She is very comfortable with her story and is appreciative of it being told.

The Interview Setting

The interview took place in Norma’s office at SWC. Her office is located in a strategic corner location of campus. It is not tucked away in a far edge of the college and is easily accessible to campus constituents and the community. It sends the right message. Norma has a contemporary office setting with earth tones and mauve colors soothing one’s senses. Photos of family, cultural artifacts, and books on a variety of topics from leadership to enrollment management adorn her office. Norma’s large desk is essentially a workstation with all the tools she needs to support her leadership of the college. The office did not have a seating area, so we sat at her desk. Norma sat where she normally sits, with me on the other side.

Her Story: The Journey of President Norma Hernández

(Please note: some of the information presented in this narrative was shared with a student audience during a panel presentation at the Latina Leadership Network Conference of Community Colleges conference on March 11, 2005 at Cañada College.)

Norma L. Hernández was born in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. Even though Norma’s family lived in Tijuana, the U.S.-México international border, for all intents and purposes, did not exist – there was a free flow of Mexican workers who crossed la frontera daily to work in higher wage jobs of the U.S. Students, too,
traveled unmolested and attended English-speaking public and private schools in neighboring border towns.

Norma’s father did not have an education that extended beyond the eighth grade in México, but that did not keep him from being very entrepreneurial as a small business owner. Her mother played a traditional role and took care of the family’s needs at home. Norma recalls, “There were good times and bad times with my father’s various business ventures, but we always seemed to manage.”

Growing up, Norma attended Catholic schools through the 8th grade in San Ysidro, California where, according to Norma, she “learned to speak English” and where she “could be with other girls her age.” Norma was forming a healthy and balanced dual identity living and going to school on both sides of the border. Through it all, she never lost sense of who she was. She can recall her father saying to her, “Always remember to take the best of all cultures wherever you are.” This type of environment was important to her family because Norma is an only child. Coming across the border was a positive experience for her, and yet, Norma shares, “my family never had any intentions of living in the United States.”

But at 15 years of age, Norma and her mother came across the border to live in San Diego. While it made attending an American high school more convenient, Norma vividly remembers:

I had a difficult time adjusting to living on this side of the border. As a result, I would travel to Tijuana every weekend to be with my extended family. As an immigrant, I lived in two totally different worlds.
A way that Norma found to ease her adjustment and discomfort was through reading. She discovered that it was an enjoyable way to pass the time and her love for learning grew.

Norma was a good student, understood the importance of education, and the value of being, as she puts it, bien educada (cultured and polite), yet she remembers:

I had no real intentions of pursuing higher education or studying for a profession. Around me, friends were getting married and it appeared that the necessity to go to college perhaps wasn’t there. It took the encouragement of nuns at my high school to interest and convince me to apply to San Diego State to continue my education.

Her response was not favorable, initially. Among other things, she was unfamiliar with the college system as a first-generation, immigrant student from a working-class family. How was she going to pay for college? What would she study? There were several reasons for Norma not to go, but the nuns had a powerful influence on her and she eventually enrolled at nearby San Diego State University (SDSU).

SDSU was foreign territory and Norma was without a compass to navigate the terrain. With no established networks, unfamiliarity with the expectations of college attendance, and a lack of understanding of the norms of the institution, Norma struggled tremendously for two years and eventually stopped out. Among other reasons for not integrating into the new environment, she remembers that, “There were no brown faces at San Diego State,” no one who looked like her who could assist her with translating the untried experience of a first-time college attendee. Norma left SDSU with a smattering of units completed and no real plans to return. Norma bluntly
states, "After two years, I struggled and left the university, and I left with a poor self-image."

During this time away from college, Norma got married, had two children, and stayed at home embracing the traditional duties and responsibilities of a housewife. A few years later, through divorce she found herself a single parent with two young sons to raise. Her options seemed limited - no college degree and no definitive plans for the future. While her circumstances were less than ideal, Norma has never been a quitter. She still had many aspects of her life that were stable and predictable: a caring family, a tireless work ethic, and positive examples of female role models in her family. As Norma proudly states, "I have a history of strong women in my family, although not necessarily on this side."

The women in Norma's family have a history of persistence and strength through tough times. These are the same women who have always served as sources of inspiration and as role models for Norma. She also turned to people in the community for assistance. With the support of her mother and grandmother, and the encouragement of neighbors, Norma resurrected her college career at the local community college - San Diego Mesa College - where she started by taking a class in psychology. "I had self-doubts at first," she recalls, but they soon evaporated as Norma rekindled her passion for learning and excelled in class. She went on to do well in other classes, even while holding down two part-time jobs, and, again, with the support of her mother and grandmother, positioned herself to re-enroll at San Diego
State. Her self-esteem and her outlook on life improved dramatically with her newfound success, in and outside of the classroom.

During this time period, Norma became involved with the Chicano movement occurring on campus and in the community. Her engagement with student activism and community advocacy complemented the work she was now doing in the neighborhoods with youth and public education. It nurtured the pride Norma had always possessed for her culture and language, and gave her a sense of direction in her career path – she wanted to be an instrument of change and to help the community. As Norma explains:

"From the very beginning...I came from a very active background. I was very active in the Chicano movement in the late sixties and early seventies. I worked in various K-12 settings while I was getting my own education, so I was very keenly aware that the students were out there – we were just not reaching them."

Norma was an older, wiser student now and had gained valuable perspective and maturity that would assist her in reintegrating at San Diego State. As she explains it, her motivation to complete her degree was fueled by her two sons and the children she observed who were in English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) programs. Norma also witnessed a growing apathy that was pervasive in local public schools: "I saw first hand the devastation in the elementary schools...I saw the injustice...and I wanted to do something about it."

After completing her bachelor’s degree, Norma continued her quest to make an impact on education by enrolling for a master’s degree in counseling at the University of New Mexico. It was a one-year, accelerated program that would remove her for the
first time from *la frontera*. It was not an easy decision: “It was my first time leaving the area. I knew that going meant that I would have to sever my ties and leave my children behind.” Given the intensity of the program, it was a sacrifice she knew she had to make – and she did.

Norma completed her degree as planned and returned to the San Diego area as a counselor at Southwestern College (SWC), which location, unbeknownst to her at the time, would provide her first presidency some thirty years later. Here she was, as she puts it, “home again.” San Diego was precisely where she wanted to be and community college counseling was absolutely the work she wanted to be doing:

I knew that community colleges were the key to higher education for our community, our *Raza*. And I wanted to be closer to home, near the border, closer to Tijuana where I was born and raised.

The year was 1975 and Norma remembers:

When I came...the faces of the faculty, the faces of the administration, and the faces of the students were quite different. I was the only Latina counselor on campus at the time.

There was a small handful of Latino faculty members in other departments on campus, but none in the faculty ranks in student services:

It really was a pleasant surprise that even though there weren’t too many of us, there were Latinos in the physical sciences, social behavioral sciences...we had a librarian who was a Latina. We formed an association at the time in the late seventies of Latino faculty because we were very aware that the population was growing in the surrounding communities, but they were not represented on campus.

Pretty soon, we started to get some research done on Latino/Chicano students that were here. We began to look at how they were doing, how many were here, and what communities they were coming from.
Norma excelled in her new role and maintained her activism and student advocacy on campus and in the community. Over the next five years, she built a strong reputation as an outstanding counselor and faculty member at SWC.

When the Dean of Counseling and Guidance vacancy became available, Norma recalls:

We counselors were really looking for someone who understood our charge, understood our function, and could get us to the point where on campus we would be able to bridge with other departments, especially academic affairs and student affairs.

They all agreed to apply, but when it came down to the application process, only two of them had actually submitted the necessary paperwork, including Norma.

Norma was ready to try her hand at administration, was successful in obtaining the position and in 1980 became a dean – her first community college administrative post. The job of dean was not without its initial pressures or challenges:

I came into administration as Dean of Counseling and that was a very, very challenging transition for me. One, because it got farther from the close interaction with students – and that was a transition that I found difficult at times. And secondly, because I came into administration on the same campus where I had been a faculty member, the other challenge that I now faced was supervising my colleagues – my former peers.

Not having experience in or history with this type of role, she reached out to those who could assist her; she found many allies as she had spent the previous five years building strategic alliances.

Norma proudly reflects on her early days in administration:

I had built my credibility through coalitions... white men, other women and Latinos, and former colleagues from the community all came to my aid as mentors. When you are one of the first, people are looking to see if you will live up to expectations.
The scrutiny challenged Norma to be successful, especially as a female and a woman of color. Her voice rang out clearly:

As a Latina, as a female, I knew I was one of the first...and there were a lot of eyes on me. I really felt that I was under scrutiny and that I really had to give it more than one hundred percent. I wanted to do things right...I really had to give more than 100%.

I felt I had to prove myself...but that wasn't difficult because I love what I do...even today I am a 24-7 administrator.

These pressures, however, come with the territory; it is a natural by-product of what happens when you are a pioneer, as Norma astutely points out:

We were breaking the mold and coming into positions that traditionally we had not had in the past. We could not afford not to succeed.

I had also seen...not necessarily in the college arena, but here locally where Latinos had been in public office, had gone through scrutiny and eventually had not succeeded...so to me it was very important to succeed.

Norma flourished in her role as Dean of Counseling and Guidance and then Dean of Student Services for a total of seven years. During this time, she was joined by a small but now growing number of other female deans on campus, many of whom aspired to be higher-level administrators:

The faces of administration were changing and I remember that we had very good camaraderie. We formed a nice support group because...traditionally the administrators had been male. There were a number of women who had the goal in mind to move up in administration. They knew what career steps to follow and they were extremely goal-oriented.

Together they formed an informal group for women who had similar goals to excel in their jobs and gain significant posts in college administration: “They were going to be presidents; they were going to be chancellor – that was their goal.” Norma admits,
however, “I wasn’t there – that was not at all where I was coming from. I was just very pleased and very fulfilled in what I was doing at the moment.”

Circumstances at the college, however, would change and so would Norma’s career pathway. The Vice-President of Student Affairs position became vacant and the Superintendent/President at the time did not see the need to refill it; the Vice-President of Administration would assume the VPSA duties. The VPA had no real interest or expertise in student services, so Norma as dean of this area received a wide berth and flexibility to run the student services operation:

He actually gave me a lot of freedom and leeway to make decisions or to come back to him with some recommendations on programs. I really was in many ways the Vice President because he gave me that responsibility, but in title, he was the Vice President.

She welcomed this challenge and opportunity. It also gave central campus leadership an opportunity to see Norma in action. She was brought in for consultation on college-wide matters and was seen as the lead advocate for student services. Norma’s leadership skills shone brightly.

Shortly thereafter, when new CEO Joe Conte arrived, he conducted a comprehensive managerial review that placed the VPSA back into the organizational chart, per a major recommendation from the review that identified the Vice President of Student Affairs as critical to the functions of the institution. President Conte immediately recognized Norma’s skill and worth, and with Board support and approval appointed her to the VPSA role in 1987. At this point, Norma was prepared for the executive level cabinet post. “I was ready,” she confidently states:
I had the experience. I had the dedication and commitment to my area and to what I was doing, and to the college. I think that I was very much ready. It was an honor to be recognized by our CEO. So, that’s how I got into executive level management.

Norma is quick to point out that even at this juncture she did not have any designs or interest in a community college presidency. Her steps were not clearly marked. She was thoroughly enjoying the portfolio of work and was working with a great team of professionals. Had she been interested in pursuing a CEO post, it would have meant having to leave SWC and the community in which she had vested significant time and energy – she was not ready or prepared to do that.

During her tenure as VPSA, Norma was courted for other CEO opportunities, but she never pursued them. She was pleased and content at SWC with her work and her role. Announcements for presidencies came, but she would respectfully decline. Why didn’t she pursue them?

I thought, “Do I really want to go somewhere else?” There were times when I thought about that...I was recruited a number of times. And, you know, I just could not leave Southwestern College. “Why? Why would I want to do that? Why would I want to leave? Is it because being president is the most important thing? Because of the challenge, the prestige?” I would go through this exercise of, “Why?”

During her tenure as Vice President, Norma engaged in two seminal professional and leadership development activities that increased her knowledge base and helped her grow into her executive role. Norma pursued doctoral level work in education through the joint program with San Diego State University and Claremont University. She enjoyed her cohort colleagues, the coursework, and the research she was conducting on the performance of Latino students at predominantly white
institutions. She finished a significant amount of the coursework, but did not see the dissertation through completion. And, at this juncture of her career, she has no immediate desires to return and complete the doctoral degree.

The other significant leadership development activity in which she participated was the Kellogg Fellows Program through the National Community College Hispanic Council, the same program in which Raúl Rodriguez participated. Norma describes this yearlong national program as "invaluable," as it exposed her to a myriad of educational management issues and leadership styles, and extended her networks. It also came at a time where she felt she needed to refocus and refresh; the impact of this experience was timely and substantial.

In 2003, circumstances once again changed at SWC and so did Norma's career trajectory. The Board announced they were putting the sitting president on administrative leave. The Board, who had seen Norma's adept leadership style and recognized her potential, asked her to step in on an interim basis as president. Being politically astute, Norma accepted the offer after a long, candid conversation with the Board where expectations were delineated and in which she received the necessary assurances that increased her comfort level: "I had full support of the Board, which...is extremely critical, especially when you are coming to a situation where there's a lot of turmoil on campus." Norma remained in the interim position for 18 months until the permanent position was released.

When the position of superintendent/president was posted, a deeply personal, vexing question presented itself to Norma, "Are you ready for this?" Even after
serving in this role for a year and a half in which she exercised her executive
leadership, Norma admits:

I wasn’t really sure whether I was going to apply or not apply. One of the
things we learn, even as competent leaders, is that we also have our doubts. We
doubt ourselves about whether we are really, really going to be able to do this
job.

After some soul-searching, consultation with other local educators, and some
needed encouragement from colleagues like Martha Kanter, Chancellor of the
Foothill-DeAnza Community College District, she agreed to submit her application.
She recalls Martha’s direct advice and affirmation, “Norma, we can do the job!”

Martha’s pithy declaration came at just the right time and was exactly the validation
she needed to move ahead. Others who offered Norma support and encouragement
were her long-time friends and colleagues, Rosa Pérez, President at Cañada College,
and Constance Carroll, then President at San Diego Mesa College, now Chancellor of
the San Diego Community College District.

In January 2005, the Board announced Norma Hernández as the permanent
Superintendent/President of the Southwestern Community College District. As Norma
candidly explains, her selection was not without controversy. Norma had been on
campus for thirty years and some of the campus community felt that it was time for, as
Norma shares, “New blood...fresh ideas for SWC.” It demonstrated to Norma that no
matter how well you do, there would always be nay sayers in the ranks – a valuable
leadership lesson indeed.
Reflections on the Interview

Norma is a new CEO and is learning the full scope of responsibilities and, I would imagine, doing very well in her role as Superintendent/President. Initially, it was my sense that after one hour, I was going to be cut off because of her demanding schedule. But to the contrary, we went a little long and Norma didn’t seem to mind. I inserted other germane questions to the interview, beyond the formal interview questions, but stayed on track for the most part.

Norma’s appearance initially is somewhat formal, but she is very warm and engaging once the conversation begins. She is very distinguished and mature, and carries a big smile. Our interview was substantive, energetic and conversational. It seemed to become more informal with time. The interview also got more personal as we went through it. As one example, she shared a story about the cafeteria workers and how they cheered and celebrated her selection as president with porras (cheers). It was a very special story that caused tears to well up in my eyes because of the emotion and sincere adulation bestowed upon Norma by staff that are sadly often unheralded at our colleges. It seemed to connect us because I could relate to and feel the power and respect of the workers; it was genuine and it felt good.

Norma was kind, generous with her time, and displayed deep sense of humility and purposefulness throughout the interview. I could tell that she was on a very busy schedule and that my request to interview her was accommodated between other very important things. I visited during finals week and graduation was at week’s end.
Norma has a strong commitment for this educational enterprise and her educational practice. She is very focused and committed to the work she is doing at SWC.

Norma also shared that she does not mind using her name or her college's name in the dissertation; she is not concerned with this. Norma is appreciative of the research project and of her story being told. Like her colleagues in this study, she recognizes the potential usefulness to prospective educational leaders.

SECTION II: DISCUSSION OF THE EMERGENT THEMES

"I think our parents gave us the confidence that we could do anything we set out to do..."

– Norma Hernández

From the interviews and conversations conducted with the participants of this study - four Latino community college presidents – the following seven themes emerge and are identified as follows:

- The Powerful Influence of Family
- A Sense of Struggle, Overcoming Obstacles, and Resilience
- Positive Connections to Schools and Learning
- Great Benefits from Quality Mentoring Experiences
- Growth from Participation in Leadership Development Programs
- An Unusual Commitment and Dedication to Public Service
- The Impact of Race, Culture, and Gender on the Presidency

As was pointed to earlier, while all of the themes are significant and stand-alone, added attention will be given to the last theme because it appeared consistently
throughout the individual and group interviews and because of its power, salience, and continued pervasive nature in the ascendancy to and success in the college presidency.

Each theme is introduced by a word or phrase in Spanish that attempts to capture the essence of the theme.

*La Familia: The Powerful Influence of Family*

Emerging from humble roots spanning from Oklahoma, Texas, and California to the United States-México border, each person interviewed here knows the meaning and importance of family and the profound influence it has had in shaping who they are as individuals and as educational leaders. For Latinos, the family is at the heart of our existence. Whether it was on a migrant trail that followed the crops throughout the Southwest or in the industrial factories of the inner city, our parents labored in this country as immigrants with one goal in mind – to make a better life for their children, children like those featured here who would later become presidents of California community colleges.

Through the example of our parents, the foundation of the family’s value system is born. The values that are etched, shaped, and practiced in our families include humility, generosity, respect, and an ethic of care – values that each president still carries to this day in his or her role as educational leaders. And they still practice these values at home.

Early on in life these emergent leaders were exposed to and bought into the notion that hard work pays off. Accordingly, each president possesses a well-honed, almost legendary, work ethic that has consistently characterized his or her professional
career. They also built a strong foundation for collaboration and community in which the cornerstones are language, culture, and religion. From this, a deep sense of pride and obligation emerges that helps to guide a growing self-awareness of the importance of building community, creating supportive networks, and providing opportunity for civic and educational participation.

Each president speaks of his or her parents as influential persons in their formative years, and for all, their parents continue to serve as role models and mentors. Their parents possess a wealth of knowledge and a breadth of experience that centers their existence and self-worth. It is of no consequence that many of their parents did not have a formal education beyond elementary school. Their parents are learned, mature and intelligent, and creative people. Their learning came from first-hand experience. Experience was their teacher where courage and resourcefulness were common traits – traits often associated with successful leaders of all disciplines.

*Siempre Adelante: A Sense of Struggle, Overcoming Obstacles, and Resilience*

Their families came, like countless others, to escape the cycle of poverty that had been written into historic chapters of their family’s history. The personal sacrifices of their parents were numerous and consistent. One need only look at the thickness of their hands, the permanent ache in and the arch of their backs, and their soft, tired eyes that tell the story of hope, optimism, and an unflappable faith in God as personal testimony. Their parents came to the United States during a time when the vestiges of segregation, bias, and racism were omnipresent and clung on to the aspirations of poor, working families of color throughout the country. They had to learn a new
language, adopt new customs, and gain an understanding of the societal norms that govern this nation. Many families returned to their homelands for fear of reprisal and personal safety; the families of these future presidents stayed.

As first-generation college students from working class families, each participant had to chart new paths and wade in unfamiliar waters. They also had to learn the new language of higher education in order to survive the academic world. All encountered difficulties – at some point or another – with academics, with the social and cultural adjustment to college, or both.

In the case of Rosa and Norma, both were the first members of their families to graduate from high school. Each demonstrated tremendous resilience and persisted. In their professional life, each of the presidents had to come to terms with being the “first.” Each was the first Latino/a president at his or her institution. What added burden does this impose on an already difficult position? Each is now a permanent chapter in the history of their institution and of their community.

Each president had to wrestle with the notion of high expectations both from their campus constituents and their community partners. All eyes were on them to perform and to perform at an exceptionally high level. There was and is no margin for error and the stakes are high.

As first-time women presidents, Norma and Rosa have felt the gender bias that can occur as they moved through the ranks to the executive level. They have experienced the hurt of being “silenced,” overlooked, or simply not been taken seriously by male counterparts because of their gender. While both admit that this is
not a pervasive practice at the executive level, it nonetheless still occurs for women in leadership positions that have been traditionally dominated by men.

As one might expect for any high level position, there are some personal costs to becoming president. In Raúl’s case, it had some impact on his relationships with two former spouses. While Raúl is happily in his third marriage now, it does illustrate how the demands of the position can have a bearing on relationships.

Having to move to another institution, and sometimes out-of-state, is also a typical consequence of pursuing the presidency. In Rosa and Raúl’s case, each had to move to different geographical locations for the presidential opportunity, albeit still in California. Norma and Ben, in contrast, moved from the vice president’s role to CEO at the same institution.

La Educación: Positive Connections to Schools and Learning

Going to school was and continues to be a positive experience for all of these leaders. After adjusting to the norms and expectations of the schools and teachers, academic success followed and a love of learning was launched, notwithstanding the language and cultural barriers that were once present, in the case of Rosa, Ben, and Norma.

Ben points out that his exposure to wonderful, caring teachers made all the difference in how he felt about himself, his ability to learn, and the world around him. Raul recalls not being able to put down the set of encyclopedias his grandparents bought him as a youngster; consequently, his home became the “lending library” of
the neighborhood. Norma shares that reading provided companionship and comfort to her during her time of getting acclimated to life on this side of the border.

All of the presidents have a positive connection to schools, an affinity for learning, and an unquenchable intellectual curiosity. Rosa vividly recalls that once she was re-designated from remedial to “regular” classes, her teachers supplemented her work because of her demonstrated zest for learning. She overcame the stigma of being placed into developmental, special education classes as a youngster. As a result, Rosa blossomed – eventually all the way to the hallowed halls of Stanford University. The presidents continue to possess this strong connection to schools and colleges, which helps to explain their unusually high level of civic engagement.

As first-generation college students, these now presidents never gave up hope in themselves or in their dreams of a better future. This is not to say that the educational journey was easy or without its challenges. As was pointed out earlier, each had to grasp and interpret the new language of higher education, and to learn the norms and expectations of being a new college student. At times, the experience seemed mysterious. For three of the four presidents, the community college played a key role in translating the experience for these first-time college students in providing a positive environment in which growth and discovery were both allowed and nurtured. The place became familiar, the expectations became clearer, and the language became understandable. As a direct result, positive connections were made and successful outcomes emerged.
Active engagement with student clubs and organizations on campus were also pivotal to the educational transformation that occurred during the college years of these presidents. Within these student groups, a sense of place and purpose were forged that increased their comfort levels and, ultimately, their successful transition as first-time college attendees.

With Rosa and Norma, a life-changing political awakening occurred with their involvement with Chicano/Latino student political action and advocacy organizations, like MEChA – the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan). It is here where they became leaders and outspoken and articulate proponents for access to higher education for historically marginalized communities. A political consciousness awoke that was so powerful and influential that it shaped their career direction, a direction that would place them firmly in public service and advocacy for underserved populations.

The community colleges would become the place where each president could manifest and intertwine his or her interests and values. Ultimately, each would excel in the college classroom and become a scholar-activist, but not before some early challenges of adjustment and acclimation for Raúl and Norma at four-year universities.

The language of higher education and expectations of college were still foreign concepts to them and access to student support services for “minority” students, if they even existed, was not initially pursued. For Rosa and Ben, beginning at the community college was an easier and more accessible point of transition before transferring to the
university. The classes were smaller and more personalized and they were in territory that was familiar to them; they were attending colleges essentially in their home communities. They could attend college and still live at home, which provided a certain amount of stability and predictability. Attending college locally also assisted Ben and Rosa with defraying the costs of college attendance – an important factor for working class families. It also gives them unique insight into the community college student experience that assists them in their current roles.

In Raúl’s case, he would travel from New York to Ohio for his undergraduate experience, initially to pursue a sports scholarship that never fully materialized. While Norma’s choice of college – San Diego State – was not geographically distant from her hometown of Tijuana, it was such a new experience, it might as well have been 3000 miles away – that’s how unknown and untried this new college experience would be for her. While Raul and Norma left the university after their first years, they eventually returned after stopping out and successfully completed their degrees from these institutions – a testament to their will and persistence.

*El Carnalismo: Great Benefits from Quality Mentoring Experiences*

Significant in the lives of these successful educational leaders was the role and influence of mentors. The best mentors provide sage counsel and suggest – and at times facilitate – rich, meaningful opportunities that expand the scope and depth of valuable and relevant leadership experience. The most gifted of mentors can see untapped potential, identify hidden or underutilized talent, and align them with opportunity.
Mentors use kindness and candor in equal doses. They not only build material competence in educational administration, they build confidence and self-reliance – useful traits for executive leadership. These mentors serve as sounding boards for ideas as well as aspirations and, on a practical level, serve as character references and material witnesses, so to speak, on behalf of their mentees. The bond can be so strong between the mentor and mentee that the relationship often lasts well beyond the attainment of a particular position. It extends into a personal relationship that can last a lifetime, and where the glue is trust, respect, and mutual admiration – and in many cases, a deep sense of loyalty.

The mentoring relationship can transcend age, race, and gender. Rosa easily speaks about the respect that she possesses for Kenny Washington, the president at City College, who hired her into her first administrative position as an Assistant Dean at the young age 25. He was an African American with a strong coalition-based educational philosophy that aligned itself perfectly with Rosa’s views of education. President Washington placed Rosa in a variety of interim assignments designed to strengthen her background in new areas and exposed her to new opportunities – experiences that would be very helpful to her in the future. The president made it very clear to Rosa – even at this early juncture – of his intentions to groom her for a community college presidency. Although it was beyond Rosa’s career radar or intentions at the time, years later she would fulfill his stated promise.

Raúl shares that Cabrillo College President John Hurd was a major influence on his decision to become a community college president. The two developed a
trusting, collegial relationship that was punctuated by noontime jogs together. It was
President Hurd who encouraged Raúl to pursue the presidency and gave him growth
opportunities through interim assignments to expand his level of responsibility and
augment his administrative portfolio. He told Raúl in no uncertain terms that he would
make a “fine president.” Raúl believed it as well, and acted on his advice and
encouragement.

Because Norma was a known entity on campus as she ascended in her
leadership profile at Southwestern College, she was able to seek out support and build
relationships with others who knew the campus history, where the “skeletons in the
closet” were located, and who possessed the technical skills she wished to acquire.
These advisors varied in gender and race, came from both on- and off-campus, and
proved to be very helpful to Norma.

During Norma’s interim stint as president, she also had the ear of local Latino
community college leaders in the San Diego region, such as Chancellor Augie Gallego
and Omero Suárez, who were available to her for consultation and emotional backing.
They understood the importance of her success at Southwestern College, both as a
colleague and as a Latina president.

Norma also had supportive networks with other women and Latina executives
throughout the state of California through the Latina Leadership Network (LLN).
Through this network, aspiring women translate the special challenges associated with
the leadership of running colleges, maintaining the balance of work and home, and
being women leaders:
The focus is to assist other Latinas. It’s about mentoring, developing the pipeline. There is genuine care and affection and what we can do to help. It includes classified staff, students, deans, and others.

There are other programs now, like the Asilomar Leadership conference that is fully supported by the Community College League of California – that is a vehicle for developing women leaders...but not necessarily for Latinas. We had to start to do our own thing, so we established this vehicle (LLN) back in 1988. It showed us that indeed some of us could become CEOS, VPs, and deans...

Norma had this to say about her Fellows experience with the NCCHC:

The program looked at issues from our Latino perspective...that was the value of the NCCHC program. It was candid about the pitfalls of executive leadership. It also gave us exposure to leaders and showed us how to get into the system...into the pipeline of leadership.

Raúl adds, “The NCCHC was a great experience...excellent training – it was the most impactful.”

The NCCHC Fellows Program has played a major role in identifying and developing Latino CEOs. The following is a partial list of current presidents in California who were once NCCHC Fellows:

- Cecilia Cervantes, President – College of Alameda
- Gloria Harrison, President – Crafton Hills College
- Edward Hernández, Chancellor – Rancho Santiago CCD
- Norma Hernández, Superintendent/President – Southwestern College
- Rose Marie Joyce, Superintendent/President – Río Hondo CCD
- Lydia Ledesma-Reese, President – Oxnard College
- Ted Martínez, Jr., President – Grossmont College
- Ernie Moreno, President – East Los Angeles College
Ben, too, developed a positive and beneficial mentoring relationship with a K-12 superintendent who grew to like him and would eventually take him, in his words, "under his wing." Superintendent Geary was much older than Ben and was a decorated military veteran – he also happened to be white. Ben attributes his current success as president due to the learning and example that Superintendent Geary unselfishly shared with him. Ben unequivocally trusted and respected the superintendent for the way he consistently acted on his beliefs and principles – a learning lesson that Ben, too, carries with him to this day as president.

**El Liderazgo: Growth from Participation in Leadership Development Programs**

In addition to the positive benefits of mentoring, another theme that emerges from the conversations relates to the personal and professional growth obtained by participating in formal leadership development programs. The presidential pathway was facilitated by the knowledge and skills acquired through various leadership experiences. In these programs issues such as: (a) strategic planning, (b) enrollment management, (c) budget development, (d) participatory governance, (e) collective bargaining, (f) technology, (g) Board-president relations, (h) facilities planning, (i) institutional advancement, and (j) community relations were addressed. Exposure to these central topics in part demystified the role of president at community colleges and fortified their commitment to pursue the presidency at some point in their careers.
Each president confirms that tremendous growth came as a result of participation in these various leadership development programs. Norma recalls that her experience with the year-long Kellogg Fellows Program through the NCCHC as "invaluable." She points out that the national program was exceptional at preparing her for the rigors of executive college leadership. In addition, she was afforded a wide and professional network of colleagues.

Raúl sings high praise for the same national Fellows Program. He describes it as "the best one...it taught me everything." Raúl also participated in a helpful mentor program sponsored by the Association of California Community College Administrators, the highlight of which was shadowing seasoned presidents.

Rosa comments that Harvard University’s Institute for Executive Management, an executive training program in which Raúl also participated, was the only leadership development program in which she engaged. It provided her with essential skills development, as well as useful insights and a national resource network. Her approach to leadership development, however, was a bit different from others, as she points out:

I have to tell you that the Harvard Program was the only one that I have attended. In all honesty, from the time I became an Assistant Dean in 1975, my mentor, Kenny Washington, insisted that I participate in giving trainings, not attending them.

I was thrown into keynote speaking at community college conferences and in leadership workshops in my 20’s, and as one of the only Latinas in administration, I was often selected for leadership panels. I recommend offering trainings as the most powerful way of learning.

While Ben was in the K-12 sector, he completed the three-year cycle of the California School Leadership Academy Administrative Training Program designed to
train practicing administrators in organizational and instructional leadership. He also participated in a summer institute on curriculum innovations sponsored by the University of Southern California.

For these presidents, formal leadership development also occurred through their individual engagement with scholarship, research, and doctoral study. Through these graduate programs, each developed expertise in a myriad of educational issues impacting the organizational performance of K-12 and higher education institutions, and its effect on the success of students.

The presidents also understood the importance of possession of a doctoral degree as a passport to the presidency. While the vast majority of job descriptions state the minimum qualifications for a community college presidency as a master's degree with a doctorate preferred, most educators understand the unwritten rule of a doctoral degree as the standard seal of approval. Interestingly, none of the presidents encountered specific coursework at the doctoral level that focused on community college leadership.

All four presidents started their doctoral journey, but only two completed their degrees. Ben received his Ed.D. in Policy Planning and Administration, with a minor in Curriculum Design through the USC in 1991, and Raúl received his Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 1987. Rosa and Norma both completed all or a significant portion of the coursework towards a doctorate degree, but for various reasons that could not be negotiated, they did not complete
their journey. It is interesting to note that three of the four presidents, with Raúl being the exception, all entered their programs while working full-time.

Rosa and Norma were vice presidents at community colleges and Ben was in the K-12 sector as superintendent. The programs were specifically designed for working professionals and allowed for access and participation of doctoral study for full-time educators. Raúl, by contrast, was on the academic track when he completed his doctorate degree.

Of late, several doctoral programs, organized by both public and private institutions, have been organized for working educators to address the anticipated gaps in leadership that have arisen from retirements and natural attrition in higher education. The leadership crisis in higher education, as some have described it, has provided fertile ground for collaboration among different segments of higher education in California. As one example, a new joint doctorate degree in education with emphasis on K-12 or community college leadership has been forged between the University of California, Davis and two California State Universities – Sacramento and Sonoma. The first cohort of 24 educators began the three-year program in Fall 2005.

And more recently, in the fall of 2005, the California State Legislature granted the California State University system the authority to grant doctoral degrees in education (Ed.D.) – a status heretofore relegated exclusively to the University of California and private universities. It is expected that four CSU campuses will begin offering doctoral degrees as soon as fall 2007.
¡Si Se Puede!: An Unusual Commitment and Dedication to Public Service

A central and consistent theme that emerges from the interviews is best described as an unusual commitment and dedication to public service. Each president proudly views him or herself as a public servant and willingly accepts the responsibilities that follow with being a custodian of public trust. The California community college – because of its embedded, core organizational values of egalitarianism, access, and affordability – provides an exceptional opportunity for service at all levels of the institution, especially at the CEO level. Each president is doing precisely the type of work with which he or she feel most comfortable and the kind of work that brings each the most joy, satisfaction, and sense of fulfillment.

Do not misunderstand this statement, however; it is not easy being president, nor is it a vocation that everyone can do. Community college presidencies are avocations – a calling, if you will, towards a greater common good. Given the vast, individual talents of the group, if monetary compensation was a goal, each could be earning twice to three times his or her salary in the private sector or as an educational consultant. Each president here has made a conscientious choice to remain in public higher education, specifically at community colleges. Each president feels rewarded in his or her role and views the executive charge with a deep sense of obligation to serve communities that have been historically disenfranchised or underserved. It is no accident that each president is in the public sector and working in an influential capacity at the community colleges.
The presidents are recognized as educational leaders and opinion leaders locally and throughout the state of California, and their opinions are highly sought after. A review of the leadership profiles at the beginning of the each president’s narrative provides a sense of the range of local, state, and national groups and organizations, and the plethora of educational issues that engage each president.

As leaders, they are involved with politically-charged policy issues surrounding student access and retention, registration fee increases, diversity in hiring and curriculum, categorical funding decreases, financial aid availability, workforce development accreditation, and accommodation of undocumented students. They also provide advice and leadership on topics germane to their field, including standards, curriculum design, student-learning outcomes, strategic planning, technology, facilities construction, and enrollment management. Consistent with the expectations of the position, each president maintains an internal and external focus in carrying out his or respective duties. Clearly, these presidents are well schooled and well trained to lead their institutions.

In addition, each president maintains an active speaking schedule with local community groups, statewide, and national organizations on the topics referenced above. As CEO, this role of maintaining high public visibility and speaking to important educational issues is expected and, frankly, welcomed. Their engagement with the community builds integrity and credibility, and demonstrates to the public that their investment in public higher education is well placed, makes a substantive difference in the lives of students, and is recognized and appreciated.
For these presidents, service to the community goes beyond a dutiful assignment; it is a matter of equity and social justice, and a profound sense of what it is to be a servant leader. From the narratives presented, one can ascertain that a deep sense of obligation and responsibility was forged early on in the lives of these educational leaders that can be characterized by fairness and equality for all, and where opportunity is the gateway to success. They are driven to make a difference in the lives of others through education, and possess abundant levels of determination and motivation to succeed and contribute. These presidents have chosen the community colleges as the vehicle for the democratization of our society – a powerful and influential role indeed.

*Soy Latino... ¿Y Que? – The Impact of Race, Gender, and Culture on the Presidency*

As was previously described, all of the aforementioned themes that emerged are significant, insightful, and stand-alone. Specific attention, however, will be paid to this last theme because of its power, salience, and continued pervasive presence in the college presidency.

Each of the college presidents reflects and affirms that race, cultural heritage, and gender continue to play major and influential roles – both positive and negative – in the attainment of a community college presidency; it is part of their lived experience. Not surprisingly, each reflects, too, that it continues to be ever-present once in the position as president. Raúl shares his thoughts and reflections on the impact of race and culture:
I believe my race and ethnic background have played positive roles. In my quest for obtaining a presidency, I have always focused on my qualifications. So I pursued a doctoral degree, because I knew that I would need that, through the GPOP (Graduate Professional Opportunities Program). The program was geared to identify and attract more ethnic minorities into Ph.D. programs, so my race was a plus factor in being selected – I received a full ride.

A person’s background can be positive depending on the district they’re applying to – a lot of it depends on what the Board is looking for. In my first presidency at San José City, the Board was looking for someone who understood the needs of the students and the community. Diversity was high on their list of qualifications – and it still is since they are considered an activist Board. They wanted someone who is reflective of the faces of the students in the district, so being a Latino was positive because the San José/Evergreen Community College district has a large minority enrollment. So in that case, I didn’t see any negative racial overtones to my being a Latino candidate.

Raúl, however, was clear to share some cautions and observations concerning the community college presidency:

I can think of other factors that came into play for me not getting positions. There were a few positions that were “tailor-made” for me, but I didn’t get them. The people who got the positions were “inside candidates” and were the Board’s choices, even before the hiring process began. I looked at who was ultimately selected and knew that I had stronger credentials, but the Board had their mind made up.

In one case, it involved another Latino/a candidate. When I interviewed with the Board as a finalist, I sensed that something was wrong, that something else was going on here, another agenda – you can just tell when something is not right. Later I got wind that the Board member on the committee had said, “Why hire anyone else, I know who I want.” This had all the appearances of an open process, but it wasn’t. So I formally withdrew my candidacy, even though the consultant had indicated that I came out as the top candidate at every level when trying to convince me to remain in the pool.

I didn’t want to get involved with the politics of this, it was a small district, and I wanted to preserve my integrity. Besides another Latino/a was on the inside track and got the position, so I didn’t want to make a big deal out of this. I was not devastated by their choice.
It is amazing just how influential a Board member on a hiring committee is – I don’t think people realize how powerful they can be to sway opinion on a candidate.”

Raúl shared a poignant example that he is aware of concerning a Chancellor who was not allowed to recommend the number one candidate – who was Latino – to the Board for hiring. A particular board member indicated that the suggested candidate “would not fit into the district,” which includes parts of an affluent and politically conservative coastal town. Raúl shares that the trustee was noted as saying, “No Mexican will be able to be accepted.”

As a result, the preferred candidate did not receive the nod for president. The Chancellor – who was also Latino – almost resigned as a result of this obstruction by a key and influential Board member. Raúl shares that shortly after this incident, which was not publicly known, the Chancellor was able to coexist with the Board to such an extent that he was able to influence the choice of his successor, who was also Latino.

Ben agrees that race, ethnicity, and gender can be factors in either obtaining a presidency or while in the presidency, but his perspective is a bit different from Raúl’s:

I am in a very conservative part of the state. At the time I applied for the presidency, the county was majority white. When I was selected, the pool had 3-4 African Americans in it, so the Board wasn’t necessarily looking for a Latino, but was interested in a diverse pool of candidates.

As I look at my pathway, I don’t think that race or ethnicity had much to do with my being selected. At this level, the question really is whether or not you’re good enough to be president and run a college or not. Ethnicity is not that big of a deal. I mean, what is there, 30, or so, Latino presidents in California? – that’s almost a third! As a percentage, we have the highest percentage. When I was a K-12 superintendent, there were 34-35 Latino superintendents, but there are a lot more districts, so we are doing OK.
Norma offers her views of the subject:

At this college, I am the second woman to lead the college and the first Latina. I think that there seems to be a more informal approach when working with me than with my predecessor (who was a male and Latino).

When I first got on board, there was some questioning of my background, of my ability to be a strong leader. Perhaps it was because I have been here so long or perhaps it was a lack of respect by some. It was a small minority of people who reacted this way, but it was still there...and I understand that.

And, yes, gender plays a role and it is generally positive. I view our roles as females in administration as value-added. We are becoming more “female-oriented” in our community colleges...just look at our faculty and staff and students; there are lots of females at all levels. So, role modeling and making a connection are important. Female employees still do have needs and it does play a role.

We were breaking barriers and we were coming into positions where there weren’t too many of us...we really felt we had to prove ourselves...it really gave me that challenge...I wanted to make sure that I did things right. We could not afford not to succeed.

And, yes, I have experienced different treatment...and it comes in many ways. I have faced situations where I have been uncomfortable. I don’t like it, but I understand that it does happen. There were a few of us who came through the ranks...especially when you’re breaking ground in administration you are always mindful of it...it is always there.

You have to try to understand the undercurrents...I am always conscious of the undercurrents – you have to be. There is subtle bias...I don’t dwell on it, but I know it is always there.

I think for me, it’s always been very critical, not only to have mentors – generally from all different backgrounds and ethnicities – but to have a support system within the Latino community because I think we understand what some of the nuances are, the differences that we experience as Latino leaders.

Rosa offers these comments on the consistent role that race and gender has played in her ascension to and attainment of a community college presidency:
Yes, race did ...and does play a role...it always has. You have to understand that when I got involved in administration I was a community activist. I wanted to be an agent of change...I carefully considered this decision to pursue this career in education. So, I have always understood race relations and power dynamics...I have always been conscious of who I was and how I would be perceived.

I have often thought, “If I make it as president, how does it look?” Race is always brought up as an issue. So, I have to weigh the effectiveness of responding back. “Am I better off enlisting people to support what I am trying to do, rather than throwing this issue back on the table?”

For me, personally, the issues of race and culture have followed me all the way through my career.

Another important question to answer relates to the lived experiences of Latino/a presidents: Is the pathway to the presidency for Latinos and Latinas different from the journey of someone from the majority culture? Rosa shares her powerful and insightful views on this subject:

There is a real difference in treatment if you are a Latino or Latina ...you don’t always see it, but it is always there. Our journey is different porque lo que tenemos que tragar! (because of what we have to swallow [endure]!). We have to deal with the impatience, the ignorance of the dominant culture around issues of race and culture. Because of this we have to invest time in staying healthy.

As Latinos, we see what’s going on with racial dynamics...we are tuned into these things. We are constantly asking ourselves, “How am I going to deal with this today?” and “Am I willing to stick my neck out on this and, if so, what are the consequences?” Every day we are dealing with these kinds of choices as Latino presidents – and it takes its toll on us.

We are constantly monitoring our actions...“Do I stay silent on this issue...Do I make the invisible, visible? If I bring something up, can this group handle the issue?” So, I am constantly thinking and monitoring what I am saying, to which audience, the tone...because of how it may be interpreted.

I have seen other Latino presidents and other presidents of color not really deal with this and they walk away in pain...unresolved. Some of them can’t stand the pain they’re in, so they walk away or they remain in silence...not knowing
what to do or say. That’s why it so hard to retain people in these positions...Again, porque lo que tenemos que aguantar (because of what we have to endure as presidents of color)... 

And this can have on impact on us...it’s impacted me physically, emotionally, psychologically; it has taken its toll on my health. And, you know, many of us deal with this unhealthiness by incorporating alcohol...drugs.

For Latina presidents, we have more issues with respect to family than male presidents. We have to negotiate around responsibilities to children, to our spouses...So, we are more measured in our decision-making around timing...the timing of when to apply for presidencies, when to want to have children...

Men have more options. They are more flexible...they have more career choices. They don’t necessarily have to worry about the timing of children. The expectation with males is that the family will follow their career.

The men don’t carry the same burden that the mujeres do – there’s a connection that men simply don’t have. It’s not that they don’t care, but as Latinas, we show our cariño (affection) and respect for each other as women openly – this is something that men wouldn’t do for each other.

And, yes, there is different treatment and you just have to be aware of it as a woman and a Latina. But I think it is worse for male Latino presidents. When they see me, they are not necessarily threatened by me. I am lucky because I am tall, attractive, and well spoken...and I don’t speak with an accent. I am not your stereotypical Chicano walking through the door.

For Latinos who are short, dark, and speak with an accent...olvidate (forget it)!...they have a real hard time. People are looking and assessing the whole package. The more Chicano you look, man, the more trouble you will have...

Norma agrees that the journey to the presidency when compared to the experiences of others is different for Latinas and Latinos, and explains it in this way:

I do believe that what we go through is different. I think it is a bit easier now for a Latina or Latino to become a community college president – I’m not saying it’s easy, but it is easier now because those that came before us sort of paved the way for us. The people before us had it tougher.

At that time, they were the first ones, the few, and the presidency carried with it elements of loneliness...not having others for support...someone to share
their experiences with, someone to give the added support. Our journey towards the presidency should be our legacy, our responsibility, and I would go so far as to say, our obligation to respect those Latino presidents who have gone before us.

We also have a perspective of the world around us that is unique. We are exposed to different ways of looking at things. Our education is from a cultural perspective – and it is not just the formal learning, but the informal ways we come to know things. For example, in my family very few received a formal education, but they were bien educados (learned, cultured).

Our experience as immigrants, and for me growing up along the border, gives us an added perspective when looking at things. We understand the values we have are important. Values like respect, family, compassion, giving and our involvement with civic matters. We have a broader perspective and we can relate to issues at different levels.

I think we always have to be keenly aware that we are in a unique spotlight and that you’re going to get pulled from different groups and that the expectations that people have of a Latino or a Latina president are different from an Anglo point of view. If you’re coming from an ethnic background, groups expect that you’re going to have super sensitivity to all of their issues.

Ultimately, I think you have to be true to your own self. Don’t lose your soul just because you have a position or you are now in a leadership position... you don’t lose your soul.

Ben provides his perspectives on the same subject:

I don’t know if the journey towards the presidency is much different for a minority person as opposed to a white person’s. The group of presidents is so small to begin with – what are there... 109 community college presidents in California – that I am not sure if the experiences are vastly different. The job is very difficult as it is and the pool is small. For presidents of color, there could be different challenges – I’m just not sure.

I think it is more difficult the longer you stay as president. There is more opportunity for criticism from others, whether it is the Board, faculty, or community... people find more reasons to take pot shots at you; they are more critical. If you are there too long, you can get criticized for being stale, not having fresh ideas.

At this level, problems can happen because of political differences, especially with the Board – and there are examples of that. It can occur in any
organization. So when problems occur with the Board, the president probably didn’t read the Board correctly...and it can be costly.

I do know this – once you gets sideways with a Board, you’re done. It is just a matter of time before you’re out...It is going to be hell afterwards if you stay.

Finally, Raúl adds his candid views of the “short leash” on which Latino CEOs can find themselves:

Latino/a presidents are heavily scrutinized and are kept on a shorter leash to establish ourselves as presidents. We are given less of the benefit of a doubt when things go awry. Any questioning of your integrity by the Board or the community can sabotage your candidacy. If we screw up, we are subject to much harsher consequences – you have to recognize that that’s the way it is.

SECTION III: RESPONSES TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

*Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written in the history of this generation.*

— Robert F. Kennedy

This final section of Chapter 4 presents and discusses the findings that specifically respond to the research questions posed by this study. Each question will be addressed separately after some introductory comments.

Research Question 1:

What are the significant experiences, events, and/or circumstances in the lives of Latino community college presidents that resulted in their being selected to be president of a community college?

The research participants identified several significant professional experiences, events in their personal lives, and circumstances in their workplaces that
aided in their ascendancy to the community college presidency. These salient experiences are generally described as follows:

- Participation in leadership development programs
- Access to and support from outstanding, caring mentors
- Exposure to a variety of college experiences at varying levels of responsibility
- Timely appointments to relevant interim positions
- Enrollment in graduate school, specifically doctoral programs in leadership, education, and the social sciences

Each of these positive experiences listed above was critical to their eventual selection as president and served as the foundation for their current success as executive at their respective colleges. Not surprisingly, each president wholeheartedly supports, encourages, and creates these exact types of experiences with his or her own staff because of the positive outcomes that can occur, both for the individual and the institution.

Each president attributes the trust and confidence of mentors as key in the preparation and attainment of their presidencies. Each readily admits that they routinely sought out advice and consulted with mentors who helped them understand the full scope of responsibilities and the challenges afforded by the presidency. These caring mentors were instrumental in providing external leadership development opportunities through various training programs and in exposing these leaders to a
host of timely on-campus interim assignments where a breadth of valuable experience was obtained.

Circumstances would change and interim appointments would prove to be an advantageous steppingstone to the presidency for all four of these presidents, who were either at the dean or vice president level at the time these opportunities occurred. Norma and Raul were asked to serve in as interim presidents at their institutions and Ben was the de-facto president at Merced College when the board agreed to run the college through the vice presidents while a search for the permanent CEO was launched. For these presidents, the timing and fit with the institution were such that each could try his or her hand at the presidency on an interim basis with the added security of being able to return to the VP role if the position of president was not enjoyable or did not have a favorable outcome. With the exception of Rosa, who had to travel across the bay to another college, the interim assignment of president gave these would-be CEOs an opportunity to “test the waters” in an environment with which they were familiar – their home campuses. An internal, interim assignment should also be viewed as a vote of confidence from the governing board. In contrast, Ben emerges from the K-12 sector where he was serving as superintendent of a nearby school district when the vice president’s job at Merced College came calling.

Enrollment in graduate study is also identified as a relevant educational experience that assisted in ascending to the college presidency. Raúl initially enrolled in graduate school as an academic pathway to the professorate, but soon thereafter found his calling in administration. Rosa and Norma enrolled in doctoral programs
while they were occupying vice president’s posts at the community college, but varying circumstances would prevent either of them from completing their doctoral journey. Nonetheless, the academic coursework and fieldwork bolstered their depth of knowledge of educational issues and provided them with an expanded network of colleagues.

Although Rosa and Norma never completed their doctoral programs, each is clear about its necessity and relevance in running today’s community colleges at the CEO level. As Rosa so poignantly admits:

Not having the doctorate has kept me from getting interviews for three presidencies that were of interest to me in the last ten years. It is a standard today that only people like Norma Hernández and me, who come from an earlier generation and have tremendous institutional experience, can overcome...

All agree that the doctoral degree can give presidents both the increased knowledge in organizing for success in higher education and can give the individual and the institution, both the specific college and the community college system, added credibility with both on- and off-campus constituents.

It can also serve to motivate staff and faculty to pursue advanced graduate study. Brice Harris, Chancellor of the Los Rios Community College District in Sacramento, California, describes the doctorate as a “union card,” allowing access and giving promising educators an opportunity to pursue a presidency.

Perhaps as importantly, each president was a “good fit” with the institution in which he or she became president. Their personal values and administrative skill set matched well with the goals and aspirations of the institution. The personality of the
college was now to be shaped by their vision, leadership style, and approach to serving students and the community. Finding a college that is a good match for aspiring presidents is perhaps one of the most critical factors that can determine the success and effectiveness of a presidency. Regardless of the individual talent a person “brings to the table,” it has to fit. In addition, the campus community and the governing board must be receptive to the leadership style the president brings and be supportive of his or her efforts to improve the college.

Preparation combined with opportunity equates to success, according to these presidents. As they ascended to the community college presidency, each had built strong portfolios of competence and trust as educational leaders, both on-campus and in the community. The elected board of trustees, too, trusted them in their roles as leaders of the colleges and as the custodians of public trust.

Research Question 2:
What cultural and/or institutional advantages or opportunities did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? What was their impact?

Institutional advantages and opportunities are best described as Board or college-supported activities, programs, and efforts that had a positive impact in the development of these aspiring presidents. The institutional advantages and opportunities experienced by each of the presidents were principally addressed in responding to Question 1 and in part in the Chapter 4 discussion on emergent themes, but they bear mentioning again because of their relevance, importance, and impact.
Similar to what was found in Research Question 1, the institutional advantages and opportunities are listed as follows:

- Participation in leadership development programs
- Access to and support from outstanding, caring mentors
- Exposure to a variety of college experiences at varying levels of responsibility
- Timely appointments to relevant interim positions
- Enrollment in graduate school, specifically doctoral programs in leadership, education, and the social sciences

Another advantage not to be overlooked is the nature and working relationship between the president and vice president at the college in which each vice president ascended to the presidency. In these cases, the leadership context at each college was conducive to the leadership style of the would-be president and, again, a good fit with the culture of the institution. As a poignant example, the incumbent presidents at each of their respective institutions were not threatened by the skill and popularity of their second-in-commands. The vice presidents were not hampered by a style of micro-management “from the top” or by the curtailing of opportunities where they could demonstrate their leadership prowess. On the contrary, they were encouraged by their presidents and assisted in their efforts to learn and do more. This point is referenced as a salient institutional advantage because that is not always the case at all colleges and universities, and one that should not be taken for granted.
Another institutional advantage fits into the same category - a positive campus environment. Again, in these cases, the campus environment was conducive to the growth and success of these aspiring presidents. Both upper management and the "rank and file" staff embraced their leadership style and as a result, good things happened and campus morale flourished. Cooperation occurred amongst disparate groups and collaboration was encouraged. That is not to say that conflict did not occur at their colleges; it did. The campus community, however, bought into a set of principles for problem-solving and dispute resolution that was nurtured by trust and respect. Staff and faculty on campus affirmed and recognized the strengths of their leadership and began to see these rising stars in a different light, a light usually associated with the executive leadership of community colleges. It was a case of the "right leader for the right institution" and everyone benefited.

Besides institutional advantages, there were other substantial advantages brought forth by the norms, way of life, and value system of Latino culture. At first glance, it may seem inconceivable or illogical that one's *cultura* could provide assistance in ascending towards the presidency of a community college, but in fact it can and did.

In addition, each president brings a set of strengths to their leadership portfolio as educational leaders, as noted by these self-assessments:

**Rosa:** My greatest strengths as an educational leader and president are as follows: I am grounded in principles and in my deep sense of purpose. I am very spiritually and indigenously nurtured. I also have schooled myself in understanding and using power dynamics and have a very strong skill of successfully enlisting a variety of
stakeholders behind goals. I know and use shared governance well. I am very articulate and an inspirational speaker. I speak to the heart of all in our communities and am colorful, passionate, and engaging. I am also successful because I take the time to get to know and show value to my employees. I am seen on campus with varieties of student groups and individuals. I am demonstrative and throw great campus parties for any and every occasion.

Ben: In terms of my strengths, I would say that as a generalist I am able to see the ‘big picture,’ which enables me to be free to hire experts in their areas and not be intimidated or threatened by my cabinet members.

Norma: My greatest strengths are skills that I acquired as a counselor working in the inner city. I am a good listener, problem-solver, and very resourceful.

Through the initial interviews, follow-up interviews, and group gathering, five salient traits and characteristics emerged from the conversations that are worth noting:

- Personal expectations of higher standards
- Focused drive, motivation, and valor
- Uncommon resilience, especially when overcoming obstacles such as poverty, racism, and sexism
- Pragmatic in their leadership style and roles
- Infectious and persistent optimism

Today these four presidents possess the Latino traditional values of family, compassion, resilience, and a dogged work ethic learned in an earlier part of their lives that is congruous with the norms of today’s community colleges. There is a glove in hand match between the values that these four leaders carry and the mission of the community college. The irony is that what at times has been popularly characterized
as a liability – one’s culture and ethnicity – is now being touted as value-added. In other words, having a defined culture and identity are plus factors when running community colleges.

Community colleges, especially in California, are the most ethnically, culturally, and economically diverse educational institutions of higher education in the world. As such, immigrant, working class, and first-generation college-bound students fill the hallways and classrooms of today’s two-year colleges. It is a distinct advantage when the president of the college can relate to the experiences, expectations, and aspirations of students – and not just those who are Spanish-speaking, but all students. Norma shares this view about the value of culture in leadership:

Some of the cultural traits that we bring from our Latino, Méxicano heritage really serves us well...just this personal touch we have that serves us well. In this day and age, as leaders we have to be team-builders, facilitators, communicators...we have to believe in shared governance, which to me is like familia – the familia concept is very important for us.

It’s interesting to see more Latino CEOs, but we are also starting to see a trend where more people who have student services backgrounds are breaking in, breaking the mold. “Why is that?” It’s because our institutions are in dire need of the personal touch...we’re becoming large institutions...and we’re all crying to still maintain that sense of familia...that sense...with our upbringing and our backgrounds, we bring those valuable traits...

These experiences help to shape policy and practice, and give presidents a unique prism to look through. In some ways, it is like looking in a mirror, recalling that three of the four presidents studied here enrolled in community colleges at some early point in their educational careers. It is common to find presidents with this type of background to be staunch student advocates and outspoken proponents of affirmative action, diversity, and equity initiatives. They want to ensure that access to
higher education remains open where quality is present, and that other talented students can participate in and enjoy the fruits of higher education.

The presidents' bilingual and bicultural skills learned early in life provide another advantage for the presidency. Each grew up with cultural pride, a strong sense of self, and a firm foundation of ethnic identification, and a strong connection to family and community. Language and culture are connections to community. For these leaders, the presidency has provided clarity of purpose, conviction, and a deep and profound sense of social justice and obligation to serve to community. Indeed, these presidents possess an unusual commitment to public service. These are not just jobs; they are powerful callings to community service and to servant leadership.

Raúl and Ben recalled some of the first Chicano and Latino presidents – Al Fernandez, Bill Vega, and Raúl Cardoza. Raúl recalls, "As Latino CEOs, Raúl Cardoza tried to get something going for mentoring and training of Latino leaders, but it never really got off the ground."

Rosa and Norma recall that they had the benefit of outstanding examples from some of the few and early Latina CEOs in the 1980s, such as Judith Valles and Vera Martínez. Rosa remembers the early days for Latina leaders:

Judith Valles, she is a pioneer, one of the first Latina CEOs in California. Judith was very effective and was a role model and coach for us. She had a compelling personal story...Judith began her career as a classified person and moved her way ultimately to be president and then Chancellor...She gave the rest of us a lot of esperanza (hope) that we could do it, too.

She and Vera Martínez were pretty much alone though. Vera came out of the California State University system and didn't really have the support networks that Judith had. Judith remained culturally connected with the community as she went through.
Judith was really something...she had presence and was elegant...she had the genetics...and you knew when she walked in a room...She taught us a lot of things as women. She would say, “Use your talents...use all of you.” She taught us about proximity when speaking to others and how to stand... She taught us how to use the dramatic elements in our culture.

Rosa concludes her reverence for the pioneering Latina CEO in the following way: “She is “La Sagrada Madre (Sacred Mother of Latina CEOs)”...It is incredible how much she sacrificed for the rest of us...”.

Research Question 3:
What cultural and/or institutional obstacles did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? What was their impact? How were they overcome?

It is not a revelation to discover that presidents can encounter obstacles on the path to a community college CEO position. One would expect that any journey to the top of any organization would possess its particular set of challenges. It is important to know, however, the nature of the obstacles and their impact. How are the obstacles the same or different for aspiring Latino presidents than for others?

Not surprisingly, the four presidents of this research study experienced obstacles and challenges in their ascendancy to the presidency. Some commonalities were found in their experiences, as well as specific challenges peculiar to their circumstances. The journey towards a community college presidency in California is a journey not often taken – there are 109 community colleges in the state, which at first glance seems like an abundance of opportunity, but not so when one accounts for the vast geography of the state and the huge volume of students served.
Common experiences of overcoming cultural and institutional obstacles were found among the four presidents researched in this study. The obstacles and challenges in the early years are generalized through the following descriptions:

- Adopting to new customs, cultural mores, and a new language
- Experiencing school as first-generation immigrant student
- Growing up in a blue-collar, working class family
- No history of access to higher education
- Experiencing college as a first-generation college attendee
- “Straddling” two worlds: a traditional Latino worldview and an Anglo-centric world

Again, not surprisingly, institutional obstacles appeared along the pathway to the presidency, as well. They can be encapsulated and described as such:

- Of challenging bias, stereotypes and institutional racism, as outlined in the last theme of the previous section
- Of breaking barriers of access to the presidency and changing attitudes
- Of being the ‘First’
  - First Chicano president at their institution (Raul, Ben)
  - First Latina/woman president at their institution (Norma, Rosa)
  - First Latina VP in CA higher education (Rosa, 1981)

Norma offers her view of being the first Latina to lead SWC:

The significance of being the first Latina president at Southwestern is felt most when other Latinas, especially those starting their careers, see me as a role model and mentor – the connection is very powerful.

Rosa reflects on the isolation that the presidency can bear:
There is a loneliness to the presidency that I don’t think people understand... Our positions as leaders can isolate us... it is important to stay connected to the issues... to the community.

And Ben comments that the job of president is no longer as attractive as it once was:

You know, folks are not lining up for our jobs... they’re tough jobs – we have to do something about it. People are weighing their options carefully... and they’re not going. You’re not going to pick up and leave to another district for a $10,000 raise – it’s not worth it... other things matter.

In addition, there was also the pressure to meet the multiple expectations of the Latino community, as described by Raúl:

It seems that everywhere I’ve been, I’ve been the first... the first Latino president, the first this... When I was chosen president there, it was like “Alleluia,” praised the Latino community. We had a big pachanga (party)... everybody in town came and it was just incredible. I never had a welcome like that before...

And that puts a big burden on your shoulders; you don’t want to let down your Raza... you want to make sure you’re a good role model. And so people would come up to me and say, “We’re proud of you, you’re doing a good job,” and that makes me feel good because I do have the doubts...

Because there’s this thing... some people will say, “I’m more Chicano than you, I’m more Mexican than you,” and... because I don’t speak Spanish really well, because of this or that, you always wonder how people are looking at you. They think you’re a coconut or this or that... that kind of stuff. You think about those kind of things and... from my heart... that’s why I taught Chicano Psychology, that’s why I do a lot of the things I do, because I want to see our students, Latinos, and all students but... I have a special affinity for Latino students – I want to see them do well. I want to see them become the next president, the next engineers, and the next scientists and doctors.

There is also the persistent obstacle of being viewed and labeled as a Latino/a president, as opposed to being viewed as a president who is also Latino. With that labeling comes the unfair perception of only being interested in serving the interests of
the Latino community, as opposed to being viewed as a president who serves all students. Rosa weighs in on this topic:

My only barriers to applying for the presidency were due to the stereotyping of me as a “Latina” candidate. There were groups that mobilized against me because they viewed me as singular in my interests for the Latino community and not enough of a universal leader. I also sense that I was being viewed more as an “ethnic candidate” than as an accomplished, experienced administrator and leader, even though I had many more years of upper level management experience than any of the other candidates competing against me. I obviously prevailed, but these issues swirled around me. Race is always brought up as an issue. For me, personally, the issues of race and culture have followed me all the way through my career.

Norma has this to say about the barriers she experienced at SWC and shares a recent incident that was cause for concern:

The barriers I experienced were not personal or internal – I knew I could do the job once I applied. The barriers came from others in the district who saw me in a stereotypical way and did not believe that I could lead the district into the future.

We also have to be mindful that when we hire Latinos, we can be accused of only “hiring our own” and this can have a negative effect.

This happened at Southwestern – we were referred to by non-Latinos as the “Mexican Mafia” because I have four trustees who are Latinos on the Board and a vice president who is Méxicano. During one of our flex days, when we, the executive staff, all came into the hall, introduced through a music processional, the music changed when my vice president was introduced. They used music from “The Godfather” for him. Some people thought it was cute and funny...I certainly didn’t. Can you imagine that happening somewhere else?

Ben provides this perspective on his experiences and barriers at Merced College:

I didn’t experience barriers when I applied here. I just considered the process as being open and it was. As president, I don’t feel that I have been subject to different treatment by my Board or faculty because of my race or ethnicity – it has been very little, if at all. I have never, ever felt that my ethnicity has been an issue with them – it has never come up with them. For the staff here, they are much more interested in the job you are doing or are going to do.
As president, especially the longer you stay, people are going to take pot shots at you – that’s just the way it is. The longer you stay the more chance there is that people will change the way they perceive you.

And Raúl offers his cautionary and realistic views on this subject:

There is a duality in our roles as presidents...I sometimes struggle with this. I am a Latino president, yes, but I am also the president for everyone, too. You’re not going to survive if you only focus on Latino issues.

I have been fortunate that when I have applied for jobs, it has mainly been about competing with my credentials. For the most part, my race/ethnicity has not been an issue, but I know that it can be. But I think that’s still wrong but there’s going to be places...where they’ll probably never hire a Latino president. But I think most everyplace else is pretty open nowadays.

Unfortunately, I am aware of several examples where our Latino race and ethnicity has had an impact in either being first hired by a district or in our success once we have reached the presidency – yes, it still happens in some districts.

Lastly, two of the four research participants shared their challenge in overcoming the notion of “being good enough” for the position that they hold and constantly having to prove themselves worthy. One might think that possessing these posts of prestige, power, and privilege would forego any self-doubts of performance...think again. Rosa shares:

It took me to the position of the presidency to stop questioning myself of whether I was good enough and could do this job... It was only until then that I stopped thinking this way. Throughout the journey, I was always questioning myself. Then I realized when I was president that I had to set the tone for the organization.

Raúl, too, at times questions his ability, as illustrated in the following passage:

Even to this to this day, I think...I’m always having to prove myself... legitimate the fact that I belong, that I’m a good president. I mean, I’ve heard this from other presidents, even (former president of Sierra College) Kevin
(Ramírez) has said some things like that at times but, there’s always a doubt there, you know... I think that’s what keeps me going, that’s what gives me the drive to constantly be proving that I’m good, you know, and that I’m effective. The irony is that everywhere I’ve gone, I’ve been successful... and that’s the validation.

In closing, by reviewing their remarkable life histories and their ability to overcome obstacles, one can assess that these barriers and challenges were successfully addressed by having: (a) a strong belief in themselves; (b) possessing strong and supportive networks, including family and mentors; (c) having faith and spirituality; and (d) never losing sight of the importance of the work of community colleges to improve the lives of students and the community.

SUMMARY

Chapter 4 presented the findings from the research that emerged as a result of interviews with four research participants, all of whom are community college presidents in California and all of whom are first-generation, college-going Latinos from working class, immigrant families.

The chapter began with an introduction to the research study and its focus, and definitions of terms that are utilized in the presentation of findings. A snapshot of each president was provided as a useful guide to the chronology of leadership experiences of each educational leader. Their individual narratives follow. The narratives concluded with commentary on the analyses used to identify the themes that derived from the participant interviews.

While it was not the intent of this study to draw broad generalizations regarding the pathway to the community college presidency for Latino educators or to
make comparisons about their relative experiences – but rather to share their stories as they evolved – seven themes emerged from the narratives and were presented:

- The Powerful Influence of Family
- A Sense of Struggle, Overcoming Obstacles, and Resilience
- Positive Connections to Schools and Learning
- Great Benefits from Quality Mentoring Experiences
- Growth from Participation in Leadership Development Programs
- An Unusual Commitment and Dedication to Public Service
- The Impact of Race, Culture, and Gender on the Presidency

Each theme was expanded upon with the use of personal quotations from participants. Particular attention and added treatment of the last theme – the impact of race, culture, and gender – was pronounced because it emerged so prominently as a theme in the study and throughout the data collection and analysis phase. The intent of the discussion of themes was to provide valuable insight and a deeper understanding of the experiences of Latino community college presidents from working class, immigrant backgrounds. The voices of each participant were invited to the narrative and are interwoven in the narrative and final presentation of findings.

It was the expressed goal of all participants that their stories, individually and collectively, would inspire all people to pursue this noble profession of community college leadership, but especially those communities whose voices are yet to be heard and whose leadership potential has yet to be realized.
The final chapter of this research study, Chapter 5, will focus on and address the following subjects:

- A personal reflective summary of the research project
- Recommendations for future research
- Recommendations for leadership practice at community colleges
- Conclusion and final thoughts
CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

The odds are great but my spirit is strong.
My faith unbreakable, my blood is pure.
I am Aztec Prince and Christian Christ.
I SHALL ENDURE, I WILL ENDURE.

– From the 1968 poem I am Joaquin
by Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzalez

This chapter of the research study may possess the least in terms of actual pages, but may, in fact, have the most to say about the future directions and success in the community college presidency for aspiring and current Latino CEOs. It begins with a reflective summary of the rich experience of working with some extraordinary individuals, the subjects of this study, who lead our state’s community colleges.

The next section comments, in a brief, outlined format, areas for consideration for future research. This section might be particularly useful for those seeking doctoral subjects and for those wishing to add on to the existing knowledge and insight presented through this study. It will pose ideas on subjects that can contribute to the paucity of literature on the educational journey of Latinos and others from underrepresented groups.

The section that follows is intended to inform educational practitioners with, again, a listing of recommendations geared to strengthen and improve our leadership practice in higher education, and, in particular, at community colleges. It is meant to inspire reflective practitioners to consider the ramifications of our current ways of
thinking and doing – despite our best intentions. The chapter closes with concluding commentary and final thoughts.

REFLECTIVE SUMMARY

I witnessed and benefited from incredible personal and professional growth as a result of initiating and completing this research study. I knew that in order to sustain my interest in this doctoral journey, I had to select a topic that was deeply personal, culturally-grounded, and professionally relevant – and I believe I did just that. I purposefully was not a subject of this study, although I met the criteria of selection for participation. And although I am passionate about this particular topic, I wanted to present as objective a view as possible of their lives and the lived experiences to which I was also privileged to have been exposed.

I vastly enjoyed getting to know the subject presidents on a personal level and appreciated the trust and confidence conveyed that allowed me to capture their voices, their stories, and their ensuing legacy in an authentic way. I myself grew from being exposed to their professional maturity, their insights, and their commitment and dedication to our community and to our craft as college presidents.

Conducting a study such as this also allows me to pay homage and respect to those Latino/a community college presidents that have come before me. Because of their personal and professional sacrifice, the pathway is much smoother for folks like me and for aspiring presidents from working class, immigrant roots around the country. I have certainly benefited by their sacrifice and owe a great deal of courtesy and respect to our first Latino/a community college presidents – the women and men
who had the foresight and courage to break the gender and color barriers at our nation’s community colleges.

Reflecting on the themes presented in Chapter 4 that emerged from the conversations is useful, too, and perhaps can provide insight into a journey not often taken by first-generation immigrants from working class families. The stories presented here are just four examples, four stories worth noting, considering, and learning from – but there are others who have followed a similar pathway whose stories, too, are worth sharing. While the stories presented here are not presented as recipes to guarantee success at the presidential level, it nonetheless offers views and perspectives that validate and affirm our experiences.

What also became apparent through this study was the continued impact and pervasive presence of race, culture, and gender on the presidency. While I am not naïve enough to think that all biases dissipate over time, it is somewhat discouraging to know that in addition to the enormous amount of work and energy in preparing and applying for the presidency, one also has to be aware of the omnipresent issues of power, institutionalized racism, sexism, and privilege that exist and that it will vary by region and by community college district. It is a lot to consider and that alone may discourage excellent candidates from pursuing community college presidencies. Our access to and success with the presidency, on a consistent basis, will assist in eroding some of the historical vestiges of bias and will surely open doors of opportunity for others.
These four presidents maintained a strong sense of identity throughout their formative years and in their ascendancy to the presidency. They maintained a sense of who they were and what they believed in, and never lost touch with their working class backgrounds or immigrant roots. In fact, it was their firmly grounded sense of identity that nurtured their souls and allowed them to be resilient in light of the many challenges. Other college presidents may or may not have experienced the same strong sense of identity as they ascended toward the presidency and may have had to compromise their cultural identity to move ahead. That was not the case presented here, but it is certainly possible in other cases.

In reflecting on the influence of gender, it is once again interesting to note at least two differences in the experience of the male research subjects versus the females. The two male presidents, Raúl and Ben, completed their doctoral degrees, while Rosa and Norma did not. Rosa comments that this may be due to professional timing issues with which women have to be more in tune generally; there is more to consider as a woman, such a family – men have more flexibility.

In contrast, the female research subjects were politically awakened during their college years and became student activists – experiences that would later inform their respective career pathways. Raúl and Ben were not nearly as engaged with the student movements as college students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following subjects, presented in an outlined format, are recommended topics for future research. These include ideas conducive to both quantitative and
qualitative research designs. This section could be particularly useful for those wishing to augment existing knowledge of the insights presented through this study. It might also be useful to those seeking potential dissertation topics. It presents ideas on subjects that can contribute to the dearth of literature on the educational journey of Latinos and others from historically underrepresented communities.

Topics for Future Research

- Explore the journey towards the community college presidency of other current presidents in California and the United States.
- Explore the journey towards the presidency of retired community college presidents of Latino descent.
- Conduct case studies of exemplary community college presidents of Latino descent and present it as a “Profiles in Leadership” study.
- Conduct case studies of Latino college presidents who were subjects of institutional racism and sexism, and as a result lost their posts.
- Survey and compare the presidential experiences of first-generation Latinos versus second and third generation Latino college presidents.
- Conduct a survey of the experiences of current Latino/a presidents at predominantly white institutions at community colleges or four-year colleges and universities.
- Further explore the differences and commonalities in the experiences of men versus women Latino college presidents, and what this means for the
designing, delivery, and curriculum of doctoral programs for working professionals.

- Compare the lived experiences of ethnic minority college presidents versus majority-culture presidents.

- Compare the experiences of presidents, in general, at community colleges versus four-year colleges and universities.

- Investigate the experiences of Latino presidents at HSIs versus non-HSI colleges and universities.

- Investigate strategies to bolster the educational pipeline for Latinos into doctoral programs in educational leadership.

- Investigate national doctoral programs in educational leadership and determine who has the best practices and highest success rates for prospective leaders of color.

- Analyze the usefulness and efficacy of the doctoral degree in education.

- Investigate ways to encourage more interest in the community college presidency, especially by Latinos or other persons of color.

- Survey the necessary competencies of leadership for success in the presidency role at community colleges.

- Conduct a study of Latino community college trustees and their influence on the decision-making of the district, especially the hiring of presidents of color.

- Explore the role of faith and/or spirituality on the college presidency.
Related to future research on the role and impact of Latino trustees, it is important to engage with Latino trustees as they wield the formal authority and the power that goes with it, especially as it relates to hiring decisions. The Latino Trustees Association was once a powerful association, but according to the Ben and Raúl, “it has fallen off a bit since then.” The role and impact of Latino trustees has tremendous potential, if harnessed and Strategically appropriated. Their influence is undeniable. But when attending the coalition of California Latino, African American, and Asian community college trustees, Ben was highly discouraged by what he saw – a lack of focus on systemwide educational issues and African American and Latino trustee “in-fighting” over power and privilege. Ben was upset by the deep-seated and seemingly intractable polarization. While he understands and respects the potential positive influence of the trustees, he is discouraged and has not returned to a meeting since. What can be done to strengthen this group?

Nonetheless, research on the role and impact of Latino trustees is worth pursuing because of the large promise it carries to influence the direction of community college districts and how it allocates its resources to serve the community, and, as importantly, whom it decides to hire as its CEO.

Lastly, the AACC (2005) has recently published a listing of core competencies for community college leaders (see Appendix E). The competencies were derived from a national panel of community college leaders who reflected and reached consensus on the most critical leadership competencies. The six core competency areas are described as follows:
- Organizational strategy
- Resource management
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Community College Advocacy
- Professionalism

A recommendation for future research is to review these core areas periodically and adjust them as necessary to ensure that they align and are consistent with the leadership competencies needed to lead our nation's community colleges.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

One of the stated outcomes of this study is to provide useful information for educational practitioners and policymakers. This section provides some practical advice and insight and is intended to improve our leadership practice and educational policy at community colleges and in higher education. Recommendations include:

- Levying institutional and personal support for existing professional development efforts that are afforded by the various educational organizations and institutions in the United States (see Appendix B).
- Strengthening the fellowship program sponsored by the National Community College Hispanic Council, as it has had remarkable results in identifying and preparing Latino community college presidents.
• Conducting an analysis and critique of current educational leadership programs and assessing whether the curriculum is timely and relevant for leading today’s community colleges.

• Encouraging and creating pathways for doctoral study in education, which includes financial incentives, paid time off for study, and other institutional support.

• Creating formal internship and shadowing programs for aspiring administrators.

• Creating formal mentoring and support programs for aspiring administrators.

• Creating additional and bolstering leadership development opportunities for mid-level administrators in community colleges.

• Encouraging the pursuit of doctoral study for mid-level educational practitioners.

• Forming a Latino/a Leadership Consortium of California community college CEOs for the purpose of cultivating future leadership and strengthening our ability to mobilize around issues impacting low-performing students and underserved communities.

• Conducting a leadership succession plan at the local level to address the anticipated leadership shortfalls in higher education.
- Creating a national Presidents of Color Leadership Academy for aspiring administrators and inviting current and retired CEOs as faculty and group facilitators.
- Engaging in productive scholarship as educational practitioners; publishing articles in major journals and presenting at educational conferences.
- Conducting leadership and cultural competency training to community college boards of trustees.
- Sharing research articles and leadership literature on the experiences and expectations of administrators of color with trustees and executive search consultants.

Perhaps equally useful to educational policymakers and practitioners is the real and perceived relevance of the Ph.D. or doctorate degree in education. The research participants shared the following views, which are sobering and candid, and are worthy of serious consideration. Ben offers his view of the usefulness of the doctorate and his training:

There are some specific seminars and trainings that are helpful. There is no guarantee that the doctorate prepares you -- the doctorate should not be viewed as the Holy Grail. My doctoral degree did not necessarily prepare me for the presidency -- in fact, it did not. It didn’t show me how to be successful as a K-12 superintendent. What the doctorate credential allows you to do is to play in that arena...but it doesn’t show you how to do your job.

Raúl agreed, but also shared his view of the importance of the degree: “Yes, I agree that it doesn’t show you how to do your job, but the lack of a doctorate can be a
gatekeeper, too.” All of the presidents agreed that the absence of a degree could prohibit opportunities for ascendancy to a college presidency.

Although she encourages the pursuit of the doctorate to others, Rosa has a scathing, personal view of what’s being taught in today’s curriculum to equip current educational leaders and had this to say, rather emphatically:

I think the doctorate is a complete and fucking waste of time...it doesn’t expose you to the stuff that really matters...and I am not willing to put up with the bullshit!

I started a program through Nova University in the 1970s while dean and it was a bunch of crap – complete bullshit! It didn’t show me how to be a leader in Latino body...

The doctorate education in community college leadership should be about “unpacking” institutionalized racism...period – everything else is bullshit! Which program addresses it, where’s it at? It should be about understanding racialized oppression in our system, about power dynamics, about who’s being left behind – that’s what’s really needed for community college leadership.

Norma offers this view of the importance of the doctorate degree: “I think we need to (still) continue to encourage the doctorate...especially with our deans and VPs. There are untapped resources in our system.”

Lastly, the research participants had an opportunity to reflect on our leadership practice collectively and reached consensus on the following points:

- The importance of identifying and cultivating new Latino leadership into the executive and CEO pipeline.

- The need to increase the pool and quality of Latino applicants for administrator positions, to the point of having conversations with them before they interview.
The need for continuous professional coaching and mentoring, once presidents are in the CEO position.

Latino student performance and academic success remain pervasive issues for which Latino educators need to better understand and advocate.

The positive influence that 30 or so Latino CEO voices could have on elected officials, especially lawmakers of the state legislature (i.e., form a Latino CEO Caucus). "We could have an impact if we speak as one voice...25-30 voices can be powerful! It's time to do that," declares Ben.

The need to support and provide information to the Latino Trustees of the California community colleges.

The need to develop an inventory of personal and leadership characteristics that are needed to succeed as president. This can assist in the provision of information to interested candidates and help to avoid false expectations of the role of president.

The doctorate will not show a CEO how to do his or job. Relevant curricula and practical application are missing from the doctorate programs for educational leaders.

CONCLUSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS

This study presents findings derived from interviewing four research participants, all of whom are community college presidents in California and all of whom are first-generation, college-going Latinos from working class, immigrant families. It is not the intent of this study to compare experiences, draw conclusions, or
to necessarily suggest recipes for success. Rather, it is the goal of these stories to be authentic, illustrative, and substantive in chronicling a journey not often taken by persons of Latino heritage in the United States. Their story is intended to be informational and descriptive of their respective pathway – not an all-inclusive account of their personal and professional lives. Four stories are shared here, but there are others, too, that need to be told.

Consistent with the narrative tradition, the voice of participants is invited and incorporated, particularly in Chapter 4. These narratives are presented with the full participation of the participants as co-authors. Collectively, these stories capture the essence of the leadership legacy upon which these remarkable and inspirational leaders have embarked – and the good news is that their work is not yet completed. This body of work is also intended to be useful and insightful to the research participants as well, from the standpoint of personal and professional reflection and renewal, and affirmation of the learning lessons along the way.

It should once again be noted that each profiled president is pleased to be a part of this study and is honored to have his or her individual story told and life history shared. They understand the paucity of literature available on this subject and desire to make a contribution. Collectively, they hope that their journey towards the community college presidency can inspire and assist others, especially first-generation, immigrant students from working-class backgrounds, towards the same goal.

Lastly, I must comment on the importance of having a former community college president as my major advisor, who is also Chicano. This journey towards
completion would not have been made without the support of Professor Alex Sanchez. He understood the topic, having lived it, and gave poignant, striking comments throughout the various revisions of this study. Because of his cultural and professional background, I did not have to explain my intent for the direction of this research study. He understood the relevance of this topic and his tutelage was invaluable and greatly appreciated. Also, the composition of my dissertation committee – all highly accomplished, culturally grounded educators of color – is inspiring and provides the added strength to complete this journey.

This study is completed out of respect to all those who came before, who struggled and paved the way and made it much easier for people like me – first-generation, working class Chicanos from immigrant families – to be at the helm of today’s community colleges.

SUMMARY

The final chapter of this research study, Chapter 5, focused on and addressed the following subjects:

- A personal reflective summary of the research project
- Recommendations for future research
- Recommendations for leadership practice at community colleges
- Conclusion and final thoughts

This chapter of the research study has much to say about the future directions and success in the community college presidency for aspiring and current Latino CEOs. It began with a reflective summary of my personal and professional growth that
resulted from researching and getting to know with some of California's community college leaders, who were the focus of this study.

Areas for consideration for future research were also explored, including the relevance of today’s curriculum in educational leadership and the role and impact of Latino trustees. This section might be particularly useful for those seeking doctoral subjects and for those wishing to add on to the existing knowledge and insight provided through this study. It poses ideas on subjects that can contribute to the paucity of literature on the educational journey of Latinos and others from underrepresented groups.

The last section is intended to inform educational practitioners with a listing of recommendations designed to instigate thought and action, in turn, inform and improve our leadership practice at community colleges and in higher education.
EPILOGUE

This component of the dissertation shares some current, up-to-the-moment information on the research participants and the author of this study. It might be interesting to note that Ben knew of but had not met Rosa or Norma in person before, so the final group gathering provided an excellent opportunity to meet new colleagues. This small example dispels the misconception that all Latino CEOs know each other – not the case in a state as large as California.

BEN DURÁN

Ben is planning to complete his educational career at and retire from Merced College:

I have absolutely no interest in going somewhere else. I don’t have any idea when this retirement will be – I haven’t thought about that, but I know it’ll be from here. By that time, I will have more than 40+ years in education.

I also don’t have any interest in taking “my gun” somewhere else. Once I am done, I’m done. I don’t want to be a retired CEO and take my services elsewhere. I will probably get into something else, but it probably won’t be in education.

NORMA HERNÁNDEZ

Norma plans to be at Southwestern College for another year and a half, and expects to retire in the summer of 2007. She is already informally recruiting for the CEO position at SWC, wanting to ensure a strong pool of candidates who can follow her and build on her contributions to the college and district. She is very mindful of the investment she has made – 30+ years at SWC – and has committed to her staff that she “will leave the college in good hands.”
ROSA PÉREZ

On August 1, 2005, Rosa Pérez became Chancellor of the San Jose/Evergreen Community College District. After a national search, Rosa was chosen to lead the two-college district consisting of San Jose City College and Evergreen College. Rosa had served as president of Cañada College for six years.

Rosa is one of only three Latina chancellors in the United States; interestingly, the other two – Susan Cota of Chabot-Las Positas Community College District and Sandra Serrano of Kern Community College District – also reside in California. These three Latina chancellors are joined by three other Latino chancellors in California, for a total of six Latino/a chancellors (see Appendix A).

RAÚL RODRÍGUEZ

Raul fully expects that he will serve as chancellor of a multi-college district sometime in the future. Raul has completed 10 years as president at three different campuses and has no plans to retire, as he is a young 53 years of age. He shares that he remains stimulated by the work and is continuing to enjoy himself. Right now, however, he is committed to Delta College and to its plans for growth and expansion.

FRANCISCO RODRIGUEZ

I am completing my third year as president at Cosumnes River College and am continuing to enjoy and be challenged by my work and the role of president. I expect to be at CRC for several more years and plan to see through several of the educational
initiatives and facility improvements that will strengthen our institution and our ability to better serve our community.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Latino Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in California Community Colleges
(As of November 1, 2005)

Chancellors
Susan Cota  Chabot-Las Positas CCD
Edward Hernández  Rancho Santiago CCD
Rosa Pérez  San José-Evergreen CCD
Sandra Serrano  Kern CCD
Omero Suárez  Grossmont-Cuyamaca CCD
Ken Yglesias  Coast CCD

Superintendent/Presidents
Benjamín Durán  Merced CCD
Norma Hernández  Southwestern CCD
Rose Marie Joyce  Río Hondo CCD
Victoria Munoz-Richart  MiraCosta CCD
Jose Ortiz  Allan Hancock Joint CCD
Raúl Rodríguez  San Joaquin Delta CCD
John Romo  Santa Barbara CCD
Maria Sheehan  Desert CCD
Noelia Vela  Cerritos CCD

College Presidents
Adriana Barrera  Los Angeles Mission College
Daniel Castro  Riverside Community College
Rita Cepeda  San Diego Mesa College
Cecilia Cervantes  College of Alameda
Peter Garcia  Los Medanos College
Gloria Harrison  Crafton Hills College
Lydia Ledesma-Reese  Oxnard College
Erlinda Martínez  Santa Ana College
Ted Martínez, Jr.  Grossmont College
Ernest Moreno  East Los Angeles College
Francisco Rodríguez  Cosumnes River College
Juan Vásquez  Santiago Canyon College

Los Angeles CCD
Riverside CCD
San Diego CCD
Peralta CCD
Contra Costa CCD
San Bernadino CCD
Ventura County CCD
Rancho Santiago CCD
Grossmont-Cuyamaca CCD
Los Angeles CCD
Los Rios CCD
Rancho Santiago CCD
APPENDIX B

Leadership Development Programs

PARTIAL LISTING OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS

ACCCA Mentor Program/Admin 101
Association of California Community College Administrators
Sacramento, CA
www.accca.com/mentor

ACE Fellows Program
American Council on Education
Washington, D.C.
www.acenet.edu

Administrative Fellows Program
Harvard University
www.gse.harvard.edu

Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar
(Leadership Development for Women Leaders)
California Community College League
Sacramento, CA
www.ccleague.org

California Succession and Leadership Development Academy
The Academy for Leadership and Development
Mesa, AZ
www.mc.maricopa.edu/other/chair/academcy/index.html

Community College Leadership Development Initiative
University of San Diego
San Diego, CA
www.sandiego.edu/ccldi

Executive Leadership Institute
League for Innovation in the Community College
Tucson, AZ
www.league.org
Future Leaders Institute
American Association of Community Colleges
Washington, DC
www.aacc.nche.edu/FLI

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
Kellogg Foundation Leaders Program
www.hacu.org

Institute for Executive Management
Harvard University
www.gse.harvard.edu

The Leadership Fellows Program
National Community College Hispanic Council
North Carolina State University
www.ncchc.com

Latina Leadership Network of the California Community Colleges
www.latina-leadership-network.org

National Institute for Leadership Development
(Leadership Development for Women Leaders)
Phoenix, AZ
www.nildleaders.org

Presidents Academy
American Association of Community Colleges
Washington, DC
www.aacc.nche.edu

Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration
Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) and Bryn Mawr College
Bryn Mawr, PA
www.brynmawr.edu/summerinstitute
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alliant International University</td>
<td>Higher Education Administration, Emphasis on Community College Administration (Ed.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona State University</td>
<td>Educational Leadership &amp; Policy Studies (Ph.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Azusa Pacific University, CA</td>
<td>Higher Education Leadership (Ed.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capella University</td>
<td>Education (Ed.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colorado State University</td>
<td>Community College Leadership Program (Ed.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell University</td>
<td>Institute for Community College Development (four course on-line certificate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fielding Graduate Institute</td>
<td>Educational Leadership and Change, Community College Leadership (Ed.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina State University</td>
<td>Adult &amp; Community College Education (Ed.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Dominion University</td>
<td>Community College Leadership (Ph.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon State University</td>
<td>Community College Leadership Program (Ph.D./Ed.D.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stanford University</td>
<td>Higher Education (Ph.D.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of CA, Davis</td>
<td>Educational Leadership (Joint Ed.D.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CA State Univ, Sacramento; CA State Univ, Sonoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of CA, Davis</td>
<td>Educational Leadership Program (Joint Ed.D.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fresno State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of CA, Los Angeles</td>
<td>Educational Leadership Program (Joint Ed.D.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fresno State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of CA, Los Angeles</td>
<td>Educational Leadership (Ed.D.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of Nevada, Reno</td>
<td>Educational Leadership (Ph.D./Ed.D.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of LaVerne</td>
<td>Organizational Leadership (Ed.D.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>University of San Francisco</td>
<td>Organization and Leadership (Ed.D.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Texas, Austin</td>
<td>Educational Leadership (Ed.D.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community College Leadership Program</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C
Participant Consent Form

School of Education
Community College Leadership Program
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR 97331

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: Immigrant Lives & Presidential Dreams: Exploring the Experiences of Latino Community College Presidents

Principal Investigator: Dr. Alex Sanchez School of Education
Research Staff: Francisco C. Rodriguez OSU Doctoral Student

PURPOSE
The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to participate in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, what you will be asked to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not. This process is called “informed consent.” You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

This is an educational research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences, events, and circumstances that provided Latino educators the opportunity for ascendancy to the presidency of a community college. The study is expected to share the experiences and provide insight on the community college presidency from the perspective of a person of Latino heritage.

We are inviting you to participate in this research study because you are a community college president of Latino descent and have the experiences and insights needed for this project. It is anticipated that this study will include four to five participants selected from the California community college system.

PROCEDURES
The following procedures are involved in this study. If you agree to participate, your involvement will consist of an initial two-hour, face-to-face, audio-recorded interview, followed by a follow-up session where the results of your story will be shared, reviewed for accuracy, and rewritten, if necessary. Other follow-up may include non-recorded in-person contact, telephone conversations or an email to follow up on, clarify, and confirm points made during the interview.
Lastly, you will be invited to a gathering of all the study participants, once the data has been collected and analyzed, to share my initial findings.

During the interview, the researcher, Francisco C. Rodriguez, will ask you questions closely related to and aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. What are the significant experiences, events, and/or circumstances in the lives of Latino presidents that resulted in their being selected to be president of a community college?

2. What cultural and/or institutional advantages or opportunities did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? What was their impact?

3. What cultural and/or institutional obstacles did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? What was their impact? How were they overcome?

Probes asking for clarification, expansion, or examples will follow interview questions.

RISKS
Risks to you for participating in this study are minimal. Sensitive areas that emerge from the interviews will be addressed thematically and will not attributed to any specific individual, unless given permission to do so by you.

BENEFITS
The potential personal benefits that may occur as a result of your participation in this study and upon the results being made available to you include a deeper understanding and appreciation of your experiences as a community college president. The researcher anticipates that the educational community and prospective community college presidents may benefit from this study by gaining a more informed understanding of the experiences of community college presidents who come from the Latino community.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION
You will not have any costs for participating in this research project. You will not be compensated for participating in this research project.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies involving human subjects) may inspect and copy records pertaining to
this research. It is possible that these records could contain information that personally identifies you.

If you choose, a pseudonym will be assigned to you to ensure that both your identity and that of the institution for which you work remain anonymous. During the recorded interview, you will be referenced by your first name unless otherwise instructed.

A variety of steps will be taken to ensure the integrity of the process and the research data, including:

1. Being sensitive to you as an individual; allotting sufficient time for in-depth conversational interviews and paying careful attention to the setting;

2. Recording each interview; duplicate copies each recording will be made for the sole purpose as back-up recordings in the unlikely event of damage or loss. The safety of data will be ensured through its storage in the researcher's locked drawer in his office and safety deposit box.

3. Transcribing the tapes through the commercial services of a transcription professional;

4. Providing you access to the written dissertation drafts sections by the sections pertaining to your particular participation to ensure accuracy and consistency, and an appropriate interpretation of your responses; and

5. Keeping a journal with recorded notes of the procedures used, as well as reflections on the research process.

All data collected will be stored in a secure location to which only the researcher, Francisco C. Rodriguez, principal investigator, Dr. Alex Sanchez, and the professional transcriber will have access. In the event of any report or publication from this study, your identity will not be disclosed, unless your expressed written permission is granted beforehand. All tapes, both duplicate and original, will be destroyed three years after completion of the dissertation.

AUDIO RECORDING

By initialing in the space provided, you verify that you have been told that audio recordings will be generated during the course of this study. Interviews will be recorded to assist the researcher in the accuracy and completeness of data collection. Audio recordings will be accessed only by the researcher or principal investigator, will be stored in a secure location, and will be transcribed either by the researcher or a paid transcriptionist. Copies of the audio recordings will be given to you.

_________________ Participant’s initials
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION
Taking part in this research study is voluntary and you may choose not to take part at all. If you agree to participate in this study, you may stop participating at any time. During the interview, you are free to skip any question that you would prefer not to answer. If you decide not to take part, or if you stop participating at any time, your decision will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. If you decide to withdraw, and unless you indicate otherwise, data collected prior to your withdrawal may be included along with data from other participants in the study results.

QUESTIONS
Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: Dr. Alex Sanchez, sancheza@orst.edu or Francisco Rodriguez, (916) 691-7321, rodrigf@crc.losrios.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-3437 or by e-mail at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed): [Signature of Participant] (Date)

RESEARCHER STATEMENT
I have discussed the above points with the participant or, where appropriate, with the participant's legally authorized representative, using a translator when necessary. It is my opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

(Signature of Researcher) (Date)
APPENDIX D
Sample Interview Questions

Opening Questions
• When did you know you wanted to become a community college president?
• How did you get to be a community college president?
• What is it like to be a community college president?
• What are the significant experiences, events, and/or circumstances resulted in your being selected to be president of a community college?
• What cultural and/or institutional advantages or opportunities did you experience as you ascended to the presidency? What was their impact?
• What is the most significant challenge you have faced as a community college president?

Professional Experiences
• Tell me about X Community College.
• How long have you served in your current position?
• Prior to this position, what position did you hold?

Early Years & Personal Background
• Please share some information about your personal background. Where were you born and raised?
• Please tell me about the influence of your family on your decision to pursue higher education?
• What role did your spouse or partner play or is playing in your success?
• If you have children, what effect did it have on your career?

College and Education
• What were your experiences with school? What kind of student were you?
• What colleges did you go to and what degrees did you earn? How and why did you select your major?
- What types of activities were you involved with in high school and college?
- Were you the first in your family to attend college? What does that mean to you?
- Did you have role models or influential persons during your college years?
- If so, who were they and what influence did they have on you?

Pathway to the Presidency
- What was your first job?
- How did you progress through the career ladder?
- Did you have any mentors or persons who especially helpful along the way? How did they assist you?

Sense of Self, Overcoming Obstacles and Addressing Adversity
- In terms of ethnic identification, how do you identify yourself?
- What role has race and gender played in your career?
- Have you ever encountered discrimination in your career?

Personal Reflections and The Future: Looking Ahead
- What personal rewards have you experienced as president?
- If you had to do it all over again, would you, or would you do something differently?
- Any regrets?
- In your view, what can be done to prepare the next generation of leaders community colleges, especially at the presidency level?
- What would you advise Latinos who aspire to the presidency?
- Any concluding comments or thoughts?
Follow-Up Phone Interview Questions with Superintendent/Presidents

1. What role has race played in your ascension to or in your attainment of a community college presidency?

2. What role has gender played in your ascension to or in your attainment of a community college presidency?

3. What is unique for a Latino/a in a community college presidency?

4. How do you suppose the journey of Latino/a community college president is different from that of someone from a majority culture? Is it any different than someone from the majority culture aspiring to the same role? Is it harder, easier?

5. Is there subtle or overt, different treatment from others because of your race or gender, i.e., board members, colleagues?

6. Are you involved with mentoring other Latinos?

7. Any other thoughts or comments?
OUR STORIES

Section I: Cuatro Cuentos – Our Voices through Four Narratives
1. Raúl Rodríguez
2. Rosa G. Pérez
3. Benjamín T. Durán
4. Norma L. Hernández

Section II: Los Temas – Discussion of the Emergent Themes
1. The Powerful Influence of Family
2. A Sense of Struggle, Overcoming Obstacles and Resilience
3. Positive Connections to Schools and Learning
4. Great Benefits from Quality Mentoring Experiences
5. Growth from Participation in Leadership Development Programs
6. An Unusual Commitment and Dedication to Public Service
7. The Impact of Race, Culture & Gender on the Presidency

Section III: Las Respuestas – The Responses to Research Questions
1. What are the significant experiences, events, and/or circumstances in the lives of Latino presidents that resulted in their being selected to be president of a community college?

2. What cultural and/or institutional advantages or opportunities did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? What was their impact?

3. What cultural and/or institutional obstacles did Latino community college presidents experience as they ascended to the presidency? How were they overcome?
REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSION
Reflective Summary
Recommendations for Future Research
Recommendations for Practice
APPENDIX E

Competencies for Community College Leaders

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY
An effective community college leader strategically improves the quality of the institution, protects the long-term health of the organization, promotes success of all students, and sustains the community college vision. Based on knowledge of the organization, its environment, and future trends.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
An effective community college leader equitably and ethically sustains people, processes, and information as well as physical and financial assets to fulfill the vision, mission, and goals of the community college.

COMMUNICATION
An effective community college leader uses clear listening, speaking, and writing skills to engage in honest, open dialogue at all levels of the college and its surrounding community, to promote the success of all students, and to sustain the community college mission.

COLLABORATION
An effective community college leader develops and maintains responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promote the success of all students, and sustain the community college vision.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADVOCACY
An effective community college leader understands, commits to, and advocates for the mission, vision, and goals of the community college.

PROFESSIONALISM
An effective community college leader works ethically to set high standards for self and others, continuously improve self and surroundings, demonstrate accountability to and for the institution, and ensure the long-term viability of the college and community.

Source: American Association of Community College, 2005