

**WHAT IS THE EXPERIENCE LIKE OF
LEAVING A COLLEGE PRESIDENCY OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study examined the lived experiences of Lutheran college presidents leaving the presidency. The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of former college presidents who were associated with Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America (ELCA) colleges. Research on university and college presidents has focused mainly on those who lead large universities or small community colleges. The themes and meanings that emerged in this research are discussed in light of three phases: pre-exit, exit, and post-exit. The results of this research include significant and meaningful lessons learned by these former presidents that may be helpful for current and future college presidents. Implications for practice and future research are provided.

Approximately one-fourth of all institutions in any year are preparing for a presidential change, are in the midst of one, or have just selected a new president (George, 2004). Some of these presidents leave due to their own choice, and others leave involuntarily (American Council on Education, 2007). The individual circumstances may vary by institution, but the exit process is the same. A college president leaves and a search committee is formed to select a new one. Understanding the presidential exit process is an important part of leading a college in a healthy manner (Bornstein, 2003). The purpose of this study was to learn about the experience of leaving a college presidency of the ELCA.

As of 2005, there were 4,216 degree-granting institutions in the United States (Sanaghan, Goldstein, & Gaval, 2008). Each is led by a president or chancellor. Before 1965, many state university presidents had much longer tenure in office than did their successors in the late 1990s. In 1965, 43.7% served 15 or more years in office. In 1997, it was only 3.6% (Davis & Davis, 1999). In 1984, the Association of Governing Boards warned, "The American college and university presidency is in trouble" (p. xix). Ten years later, Kerr (1994) observed that the office of president was still in trouble, stating, "I started out wondering why presidential terms were so short and getting shorter"

(p. x). Kerr raised a critical issue. Given the importance of presidential leadership in the nation's universities and colleges and the relationship between length of service and leadership effectiveness, little substantive research has been done on the topic (Davis & Davis, 1999).

A subset of universities and colleges in the U.S. are religion-affiliated colleges. Andringa (2005) estimated that there are 900 self-described religion-affiliated campuses in the U.S. "The American Council of Education reports that the average length of a college president of a religion-affiliated college today is about 5.9 years" (Bob Andringa, President of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities, personal communication, July 28, 2005). A subset of U.S. religion-affiliated colleges is Lutheran colleges. The average length of tenure for a Lutheran college president has also dropped. Ralph Wagoner, Lutheran Educational Conference of North America (LECNA) President, said:

I would maintain that we are in a different era with a different set of variables from those who served in the 1960s to late 1980s. I would predict that we will never see the long terms we read about from the 1920s to the 1950s. (personal communication, August 4, 2005)

In 2005, the average length of tenure for a Lutheran college president was 5.07 years. In 2006, the tenure was 4.79. As of mid-February, 2007, it had dropped to 4.68, and in August it was 3.86 (Arne Selbyg, Executive Director of Higher Education Division of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, personal communication, August 7, 2007). Lutheran college presidents do not serve for as long a period as they did in the past.

It is not just college presidents who are turning over more often. "In recent decades, college presidents have become more like Corporate CEOs" (Selingo, 2005). According to Pedderson (2007), more chief executive officers left their jobs in 2005 than in any other year. These frequent transitions can be disruptive (at best) (Bear, 2000) and very costly for the leader, the leader's direct reports, and other internal stakeholders (Manderscheid & Ardichvili, 2006).

Turnover among top college presidents is also costly and related to job satisfaction (Glick, 1992; Vaughan, 1986). Turnover at the top ultimately results in slower change and less responsiveness throughout the institution (Padilla & Ghosh, 2000). A failed presidency is a tumultuous event for the entire college. A presidential failure hurts the institution, costing time and money, damaging reputations, and disrupting momentum in planning, fundraising, and recruitment. A failed presidency means that the board has failed, and, in the long run, the institution, faculty, staff, and students suffer (Bornstein, 2003b).

Previous studies have addressed some of the challenges of college presidents in large universities (Basinger, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002; Boggs, 1997; Bornstein, 2002, 2003a, 2004, 2005; Cotton, 2002; Evans, 1998; Rhodes, 1998; Selingo, 2005). Research has also concentrated on presidents of community colleges (Evans, 1998; Gregg, 2004; McFarlin, 1999; Oglesby, 1996).

Little, though, has been written about presidents of religious institutions, and almost nothing has been written specifically about Lutheran college presidents. Four books have been authored by former Lutheran college presidents (Carlson, 1977; Dovre, 2005; Frame, 2006; Rand, 1996), but none of the four is specifically about their experience as a president or of leaving the presidency. There is not much written or found on this topic in the current literature. This study of Lutheran college presidents' experiences can shed light on what it is like to leave a presidency. While there are only 26 Lutheran college presidents of the ELCA, the group serves as a microcosm of the 900 religion-affiliated college presidents in the country. These 900 colleges enroll more than two million students, employ upwards of 600,000 faculty and staff, and have operating budgets of more than \$35 billion (Andringa & Splete, 2005). The president of each of the 26 Lutheran

colleges has a complex leadership position that wields significant influence in terms of people and dollars managed (Tunheim & McLean, 2006). Such a study can help future religious college presidents understand their roles better, as well as what it means to leave a presidency. In addition, such a study can also help Human Resource Development (HRD) consultants in their work and consultation with these presidents and their institutions.

PURPOSE, NEED, AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of former college presidents who were associated with ELCA colleges. Past research on university and college presidents has focused mainly on those who lead large universities or small community colleges (Basinger, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002; Bornstein, 2002, 2003a, 2004, 2005; Evans, 1998; Gregg, 2004; McFarlin, 1999; Oglesby, 1996; Rhodes, 1998; Selingo, 2005).

This research contributes to HRD by concentrating on the experiences of former Lutheran college presidents in higher education and their turnover. It focuses on an area that has not been sufficiently explored in HRD, that of turnover of college presidents in religious higher education. It will increase the awareness of HRD scholars and practitioners, as well as current and future Lutheran (and other) college presidents, about the workforce needs of such leaders in the future. In addition, presidential or employee turnover is important for HRD professionals who are assigned the organizational role of developing and maintaining the expertise of human resources within such organizations (Peterson, 2004).

PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH DESIGN

This study used an interpretive research methodology because it provides insights into what people's experiences are, why they do what they do, and what they need in order to change (Rowan & Huston, 1997). Phenomenology is the most appropriate type of inquiry for this study because it aims at understanding lived experiences and helped us understand the experiences of ELCA presidents while leaving and after leaving the position.

Phenomenology asks the question: What is this experience like? It allows the researcher to study a phenomenon to learn about it. According to van Manen, phenomenology is a "search for what it means to be human" and "attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence" (1990, pp. 11-12). It is "the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience" (p. 10). An underlying assumption of phenomenology is that humans

seek meaning from their experiences and from the experiences of others (Gibson, 2003). Phenomenology allows the researcher to study the experiences and their meaning, and through them we gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world (van Manen, 2001). Phenomenology studies the essence or the meaning of lived experiences that individuals often forget are present.

RESEARCH METHODS

According to van Manen (1990), hermeneutic phenomenology consists of six research tenets. This is not a linear process but, instead, consists of “dynamic interplay” between and among these tenets (p. 30). The research tenets are:

1. turning to a phenomenon that seriously interests us and commits us to the world
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it
3. reflecting on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon
6. balancing the research context by considering the parts and whole (pp. 30-31).

These six research tenets serve as the basis of the research. An important assumption of this methodology is that, unlike natural sciences research, phenomenology is not a science of empirical facts for generalization. The findings of this study are not meant to be generalized. They are intended to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied as experienced by the participants.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

There are approximately 25 former Lutheran ELCA college presidents who have exited the role in the last five years. Ten were selected to be research participants for this study, based on convenience. All but three were located in the Midwest. The participants included ten males whose racial/ethnic makeup is Caucasian. All are affiliated with the ELCA.

INTERVIEWS

Eight of the ten participants were interviewed face-to-face. The final two were interviewed by telephone. Permission was given to audio-tape the interviews, and transcripts were created. The study was conducted under the guidelines and approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the university.

DATA COLLECTION

Each interview began with the research question, “What is the experience like of leaving the presidency of an ELCA college?” After a few probing questions, “Tell me more about that? What else did you experience?” two other questions were asked: “How did you feel during the process of leaving? What did you learn as a result?” These questions allowed the gathering of data about how the phenomenon was experienced by these ten former presidents.

The phenomenological interviewer must remain attentive to the quality and interpretive value of the lived experience data being gathered, constantly evaluating the depth and breadth of descriptions as they emerge (Becker, 1992; van Manen, 1997). Follow-up questions were asked typically probing for additional detail regarding the experience.

RESEARCHERS' VIEWS

One of the unique facets of phenomenological studies is that the idea for the study is typically conceived when a researcher finds a phenomenon that is interesting or fascinating and wants to understand it more (van Manen, 1997). The first author's interest in presidents of Lutheran colleges goes back 30 years, when she began attending Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. Before beginning the interviews, it was required for her to identify and reflect back on her own experiences at Concordia and with Lutheran college presidents. Her experiences as both a student and, more recently, as a consultant working with Lutheran college presidents were important. She started and maintained a journal as recommended to avoid biases that might have arisen from these past experiences (van Manen, 1997), to capture her thoughts and bracket her preconceptions. Through this process of journaling, she was able to set aside her own views concerning the exiting process of Lutheran college presidents. The second author also attended a religion-affiliated college and served on the boards of two such colleges.

DATA ANALYSIS

The interviews were subjected to hermeneutic phenomenological reflection to allow themes to emerge. A theme is “a major dimension, major aspect, or constituent of the phenomenon studied; expressed more simply, a partial descriptor of the phenomenon” (Tesch, 1987, p. 230). Texts were read a total of four times. The first two times were just to understand the data. Giorgi (1997) suggested that this is critical to assisting the researcher in understanding how the parts are constituted. The third time she read the texts through very slowly, highlighting important lines. Tesch (1987) described this step as one where the reader is looking for the material that is at the center of the experience. Barritt, Beekman, Bleeker, and Mulderij (1984) described it as looking for the “moments which fly up like sparks from the description” (p. 6). The fourth time the first author documented the highlighted lines from the texts and later categorized them by theme and participant.

Two Excel spreadsheets were then created: the first was a summary of the themes by former presidents and the second by the themes themselves. These documents served as the summary of the transcribed data.

Finally, after a review of the themes by the second author and subsequent revision, she sent the theme and sub-theme list back to the participants. She scheduled a second, follow-up interview. She talked with nine of the ten participants one by one. One was in Africa for an extended period of time and was unable to participate in this validation process. The former presidents shared their thoughts with her about this list and how it resonated with their own experience. The presidents offered their validation and also their disagreement with some of the themes. This feedback resulted in a final list of themes and sub-themes.

LIMITATIONS

A number of limitations influenced this study. The first is not really a limitation, but those who do not understand the methodology may see it as such; it is about the purpose of the research. Van Manen (1997) reminded us that “Phenomenology does not problem solve” (p. 23). This study’s purpose is not to solve the Lutheran college turnover problem. According to Polkinghorne, 1989, “The objective of the phenomenological researcher is to help those who read the research findings come away with a better understanding of what it is like for someone to experience the phenomenon” (p. 41).

A second sometimes perceived limitation, though it really is not, is that the findings cannot be generalized. This study summarizes the themes from ten former Lutheran college presidents who each had a unique exit experience

from the presidency. The purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of these former college presidents who were associated with ELCA colleges. Generalization across these ten is not what was intended and cannot be done.

FINDINGS

An analysis of the interview transcripts produced four main theme categories and 13 sub-themes (Table 1). They are organized into a pre-exit phase, an exit process phase, a post-exit phase, and lessons learned. In this article, the first three themes, the three phases, are discussed. Some verbatim detail from the former presidents will also be shared to represent the text. Due to space limitations, only one or two texts per theme and sub-theme will be presented.

PRE-EXIT PHASE

All ten participants described a questioning period they went through and discussed when to exit the presidency with their spouse. Two themes emerged from the texts in this phase: there are institutional reasons that influence the timing of the decision to exit, and there are personal reasons that do the same.

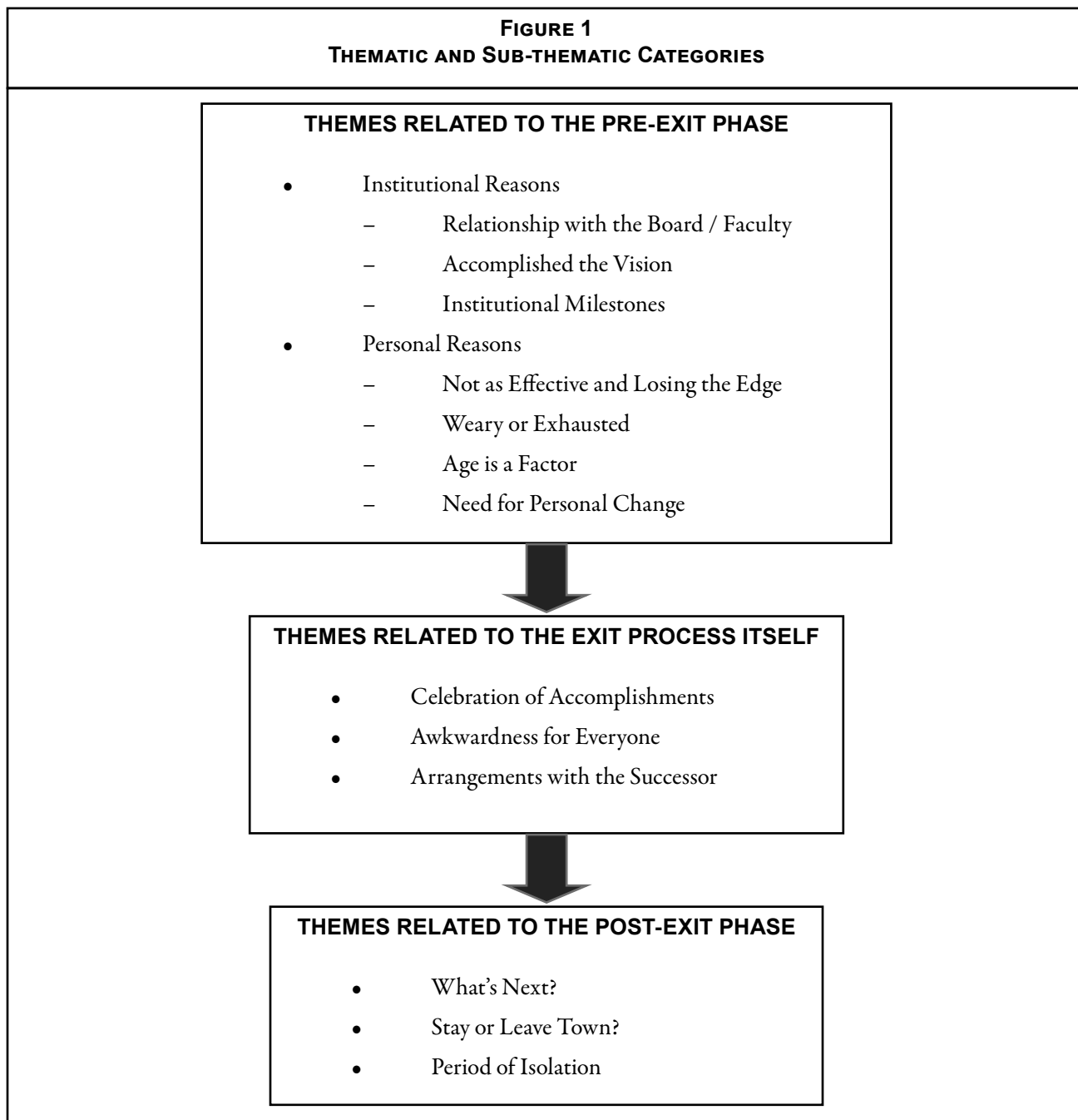
Institutional Change

Three sub-themes emerged from the texts relative to institutional issues causing presidents to start thinking about exiting: relationship with the board/faculty, accomplished the vision, and institutional milestones.

Relationship with the board/faculty. Eight of the ten former presidents interviewed stated that the relationship of the president and the board is a complex one. The board hires the president, evaluates the president, and can fire the president. The following excerpt represents the frustration a former president felt due to his weak board:

We had accomplished a pretty significant agenda in the first three-year period. But in thinking about the future, I was beginning to question the commitment of the institution to really move forward. From a board standpoint, I think I had a very agreeable board but it was not a particularly committed board. It was becoming clear that it was going to be a difficult run. Looking forward, I was feeling less confident or optimistic in what the real commitment to change was going to be.

Accomplished the vision. Another reason why presidents begin to think about leaving their institutions is due to their success. One participant stated:



We completed the campaign. We got the Phi Beta Kappa Chapter. We had fifty years of being in the black. We had a balanced budget. You start thinking, "What am I going to do next?"

Institutional milestone. The former presidents talked about completing significant fundraising campaigns and celebrating important anniversaries of the colleges for which they worked. The former presidents termed these as institutional milestones. These milestones became poten-

tial events or times appropriate for exiting the presidency. One reported:

I was hired during the 120th year of the college. I created, with the board's approval, a 125th anniversary commission to start the study and plan. We did some incredible things with almost no money. We got a \$150,000 grant. But we had incredible things that went on during that 125th year. It became fairly clear to me that, as we wound up those celebrations, that was the perfect time to go.

Personal Reasons

Four additional sub-themes emerged from this issue: not as effective and losing the edge, weary or exhausted, age is a factor, and need for personal change.

Not as effective and losing the edge. A number of presidents shared how difficult the job was through the years, realizing at some point along the way that they were not as effective in their role as they had been in prior years. The following description sheds light on this aspect:

I remember having feelings at times that I didn't have the patience anymore. I must have had a sense of not having many months or years left, and kind of tried to move things faster than they could be. I was lacking patience and tolerance. I also wasn't listening as well. It was hard for people to get my attention. That's another reason I decided to retire. I didn't trust my immediate reaction to things as much.

Weary or exhausted. All ten participants said that the job requires a lot of time and energy to do it right. After working in the role for a number of years, they found themselves exhausted without much time for a break or personal renewal. One respondent described this exhaustion:

I have been out of the job for almost a year now and I am tired still! A president feels like he is always "on" in this job. The job was so very intense, I didn't know if I had it in me to stay longer. Everything is immediate. I mean everything. There was much more needed to be given by the president. And I didn't know if I had it in me to give much more. Therefore, it felt like it was time to go.

Age is a factor. Energy can also be tied to biological age. This reason was also an influencing factor with regard to when to exit the presidency. The participants talked about their age and how that factored into the timing of the decision to leave. This participant spoke about the timing for retirement:

The timing to leave was just perfect. I was 59 and a half and that made me eligible for retirement. It seemed like the timing was just right to leave.

and

My wife had retired three years ago, and I turned 70 in May. That's long enough.

Need for personal change. This sub-category was the most personal of the themes. These presidents self-disclosed important personal reasons for exiting the presidency, namely, grandchildren and a low level of motivation.

I thought it is time while we still have our health

and the ability to do some other things. Our grandchildren live in another city and we can't see them enough.

and

I was not interested in doing a big strategic planning process again. I just didn't want to go through all of that again.

EXIT PHASE

All ten presidents talked in great detail about their own, unique exit story. Three themes emerged: celebration of accomplishments, awkwardness for everyone involved, and arrangements with the successor.

Celebration of Accomplishments

All ten men shared their exit story. Each mentioned that there was a celebration of accomplishments, whether they had been in the position for a long or short period of time, and whether the decision was a free choice or they were being pushed out of the position. A former president highlighted his celebrative ending experience:

We really left on a high. The community was very, very gracious and affirming of us, more than I could have imagined. We had such a marvelous experience. My wife and I met wonderful people. We loved the kids. We just absolutely felt that we were blessed to know these young people. As president and first lady of that college, we were really part of the learning community with them. Another participant was very intentional about his exiting celebration period.

Awkwardness for Everyone

Most of the former presidents described their feelings about leaving their institution. I was surprised when four former presidents reported that it was awkward for everyone involved. One said:

It got a little awkward when the search started. You don't know whether you should be involved in it in any way or not. It's the recognition that things are going to be different and need to be different. And things have to be better even than you may have thought they were when you left. There's a certain awkwardness about it all.

Arrangements with the Successor

Eight of the ten former presidents commented on the agreement they made with the incoming president. They ranged widely. There does not appear to be a best practice in this area. Each outgoing president decided to do what was right for him and the incoming president. It is their individual relationship to determine. It appears that some agreements are implicit and some are explicit. At one end of the continuum, three former presidents gave the gift of space and said very little:

I told my successor over a one hour lunch, "I'm going to do you the best favor I can. I'm moving 800 miles away." I never call him. He's doing fine on his own.

Another participant responded with a completely opposite point of view:

My predecessor could not have been more helpful. He was a perfect gentleman. He was available to answer questions. I never heard the slightest hint of criticism of anything I was doing that he might have dropped, not even too far away. He was just wonderful about that. I've tried to emulate that with my successor. We have a very good relationship. We're trying to meet once a month so that the president can pick my brains and just unload if they want to.

POST-EXIT PHASE

This phase references after the president and spouse leave the institution. Three themes emerged: what's next, stay or leave, period of isolation.

What's Next?

All ten of the former presidents talked about what they did after leaving the presidency. Three of them retired completely and have not taken other jobs. Seven went to work in other positions, three as interim presidents or deans. Three different responses show the continuum of feelings at this point in one's life:

There's a sort of the "end-of-the-earth syndrome" after a presidency. Where does it drop off to? I really struggled with that.

and

Leaving the presidency meant that on the one hand, it was a very considered decision and an obvious decision for my wife and me for which we were prepared. We said, "Okay, now we're on to a new chapter. Let's see what things present them-

selves." We had some ideas about what might happen, but nothing firm. We had confidence that that it would work out. And it has.

and

Thank the good Lord I had something else to go to. I think it saved my marbles and my marriage!

Stay or Leave?

Should the exiting president continue living in the college community or move away? This question has been debated quietly by exiting presidents for years (Moore & Burrows, 2001). Most would say, "Get out of town so that the new president can get established." Andringa (2005) reported that there have been a number of situations where the past president stayed around, generally fundraising for the college. He suggested that the majority of presidents believed this has caused numerous problems for institutions and successor presidents.

Of the ten Lutheran college presidents interviewed in this study, eight left town. Of the two who stayed in town, one immediately took a series of interim positions. Essentially he left town but kept his same residence. The final president did not move, and, from his perspective, things appear to be going well in that situation.

Again, there were differing opinions among the participants:

We wanted to stay here and live here. We've been here 13 years. We have a lot of friends here. We like this community. We like the people. What I told the board chair and my successor is that although we live in town, I was going to keep a very low profile, especially for the first year. And I didn't want people to misinterpret that. I think the only function I have been to is one football game. People know we're around. They know that I have a high opinion of my successor. I never ask anyone how things are going. That's a huge mistake. Whichever way the answer goes you don't want to hear it. It's just not a good idea to ask. If anyone asks me about something at the university, I say, "Well, that's interesting, you know. But that's not my problem." It's not my problem and it's become a mantra.

A different president stated:

I think you have to get out of town. It's the Old Lutheran Pastor model. If you leave, the new pastor can get things going. The same goes for presidents.

Period of Isolation

One of the biggest surprises was to learn about the post-exit period of isolation that typically occurred. After they moved out of the presidency, there appears to have been a quiet, lonely phase. Seven of the ten mentioned it. Some seemed surprised by this period, while others were not. Three separate points of view are illustrated here:

My wife and I absolutely disengaged. We didn't go to anything. We just stopped. I wanted to stay out of it. Some people would write me notes. I'd say, "Look, I'm not there anymore. It's not my problem. It's none of my business, frankly."

and

Since leaving, there's some sadness that remains. It didn't end the way I wanted it to.

and

It took me two and a half years to get my feelings in line. My wife and I were driving in the car, driving down to Chicago, and we had on a tape and they were talking about loss and grieving. She was driving and I remember leaning forward saying, "That's it. I've been grieving." She said, "Of course you are." She knew it all along. But I had to get it through my thick head. She said, "I wondered when you'd figure this one out."

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study offers a number of possible recommendations for consideration. Care must be exercised with these recommendations as findings from phenomenological research cannot be generalized.

Recommendations for Practice

First, current presidents and boards may need to get even more intentional about Lutheran college presidential preparation and succession. They may need to send high-potential staff and faculty to the American Council on Education or Thrivent Fellows Leadership Development programs that are available. In addition, they need to develop these high-potentials in the areas of finance, fundraising, and the personal side of being a president. Succession planning is done quite well in business (Bullcock, 2007). Academia needs to be more intentional about building the pipeline inside each institution and among the 26 Lutheran colleges.

Second, presidential finalists may need to do a thorough job of learning about the finances at the institution before they accept the position. Eighty percent of new presidents are surprised about something when they get the job (Moore & Burrows, 2001). The literature reports that it is usually in the area of finances (Sanaghan, Goldstein, & Gaval, 2008). Doing as much due diligence as possible will help reduce the number of surprises, which, in turn, could help new presidents be more successful and turn-over less.

The third recommendation is that board development may need to continue to be a top priority for presidents and board chairs. Presidents need to encourage their board chairs to go to AGB (Association of Governing Boards) seminars and learn from other successful board experiences. Getting a board engaged with "their noses in and fingers out" (R. L. Torgerson, personal communication, June 24, 2006) is often touted as the key to success.

Fourth, former Lutheran college presidents may need to be tapped more to mine their wisdom and expertise. This group could serve as an advisory or type of consulting group. They could vet presidential finalists for search committees or assist with performance evaluations for boards. Their expertise is rich. It needs to be utilized more than it currently is.

Another recommendation is that presidential evaluations may need to be conducted after the first year of a presidency, so that the new president can learn what is going well and what is not going well. Most boards wait until the third year and sometimes these formal evaluations do not happen until the fifth year of a presidency. Presidents need to know what is working and what is not, so that they can make adjustments.

Presidents, vice-presidents, and board members could also benefit from change management training. Learning about Lewin's (1956) unfreezing, freezing, and refreezing stages could help with strategic planning. Bridges' (2003) phases of endings, neutral zone, and new beginnings could help faculty as they cope with changes that all new presidents are going to eventually need to make. Kotter's (1996) eight steps to organizational change could be meaningful, as well. This knowledge would help all involved in making change happen on a large and small scale on campuses, perhaps with fewer no confidence votes.

Outgoing presidents may need to have explicit and clear arrangements with their successor. Whether their contact will be a little or a lot, having clear expectations and a healthy relationship will benefit everyone at the college.

We want to encourage more former Lutheran college presidents to write about their presidential experiences. We were surprised at how little has been published from

this group. Incredible learnings will be lost if they are not documented in one-way, shape, or form. With today's technology, we suggest that videos could be made if a president does not want to write a book. Aspiring presidents would greatly appreciate hearing former presidents tell what worked, what did not work, and why. Passing the institutional and presidential stories down could be important history lessons that should not be lost and need to be preserved.

Recommendations for Research

This study invites additional research. The themes that emerged in this study that had little to no literature with which to compare are excellent places to begin. For example, research could be explored in the pre-exit phase relative to presidents feeling as though there were not as effective and were losing the edge. In the post-exit phase, we could find little to nothing published relative to a period of isolation from the people and the institution. In addition, more could be learned about how lonely it is while a president and spouse are in the presidency.

This study suggests that presidents who take on leadership roles at financially-strapped institutions may need a different skill set than presidents at more financially-secure institutions. Do they need to be faster change agents? Do they need to offer more hope to the constituents? This could be a topic of future research.

More needs to be researched on presidential spouses, especially as more females become presidents. Female and minority presidents need more research attention, as well, as both are slowly increasing in the presidential role.

Finally, more research needs to be conducted on the job satisfaction of Lutheran college presidents. Surveying this group as a whole would be an interesting and informative study. In industry and business, the use of engagement surveys for faculty and staff could also be extremely helpful in leading change in these Lutheran colleges. We have not seen much use of these OD tools in Lutheran colleges. We observe presidents and institutions surveying students, alumni, and parents, but not faculty or staff to the extent that other industries do quite successfully.

We also suggest conducting this same study with other groups of college presidents. It would be interesting to see if the same themes emerged with a group of Jesuit or Methodist or other denominational college presidents. Repeating this study in other small, liberal arts colleges could affirm themes or identify new experiences while leaving the presidency.

We plan an additional article emerging from this research on the Lessons Learned by these college presidents, the

fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis. This, too, will suggest additional areas for research.

CONCLUSION

This study suggests three phases for the ten presidents in this study during his or her exit from the presidency: a pre-exit, exit and post-exit process. Themes emerged for each phase that the ten former Lutheran college presidents experienced. These data, once confirmed with positivistic research, might be helpful for boards of trustees and presidents to consider before, during, and after the decision has been made for a president to leave the position.

Switzer (2005) stated: "The U.S. college and university presidency is a complex position that requires an exceptional combination of expertise, life balance, and leadership" (p. 13). McLaughlin (1996) reminded us that, even though it is a complex and difficult role, "a presidency can be deeply satisfying" (p. 84). Showalter (2005) advised college presidents to give their institutions one last gift, a graceful exit. These exits are the end of a long or short tenure at an academic institution. Springer (2003) reminded us what is most important, "It is good to have an end to a journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end." (p. 28).

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