

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN LEADERS  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

by

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A THESIS

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Although women continue to make significant advancements in the workforce, there is still progress to be made to overcome biases and systems of exclusion. Since women play an increasing and influential role in the administration and leadership of higher education institutions, understanding their unique contributions is critical. In this study, qualitative methods were used to gather data on common characteristics of women leaders in higher education administration. Data were gathered from interviews with twenty women working in a cross section of professional positions at four comprehensive public universities in the Pacific Northwest. Results showed that the participants used collaboration, communication, and information sharing and addressed conflict to build relationships, establish trust, and inspire a shared vision. Most of the participants in this

study indicated that they were rewarded, recognized, and supported in their positions; however, some indicated that discrimination still occurs based upon gender.

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Dedicated to my mother, a true leader.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*Sometimes the mirrors you get are in shards,  
but they can still reflect something true.*

*~ Rochelle Smith*

Understanding higher education administrators and how they operate is critical in understanding the success or failure of universities and colleges. With continuing financial crisis and increasingly competitive markets, the ability to adapt and react both quickly and appropriately are crucial skills for school leaders. Taking an organization through change and emerging on the other side safely and ready for further innovation is one true test for a leader.

As women play an ever increasing and influential role in both the administration and leadership of schools, understanding their contribution is vital. According to Thomas Sergiovanni, there is a clear delineation between how men and women approach opportunities, “for most men, achievement has to do with the accomplishment of goals; for most women, achievement has to do with the building of connections between and among people” (2003, p. 88). Others have found that “gender identity and leadership are more complex than to simply fit them into one gender construction model or another” (Christman and McClellan., 2008, p. 3). It is essential to understand how gender influences achievement, especially for those in leadership positions.

This paper hopes to inform the literature surrounding the characteristics of women leaders in higher education administration. Qualitative methods were used to gather data about common characteristics of women leaders in higher education administration. Data for this study were obtained from interviews with twenty women working at four comprehensive universities in the Pacific Northwest. Participants were originally identified through nomination by the director of the student union or auxiliary services director at each school. Directors were asked to nominate women regardless of position or title in an effort to capture information representing a diverse range of women who were known for their leadership, not merely by rank and position.

Each woman was interviewed for one hour. The interview questions were organized around the following five points that constitute the basic framework of information for each section in this paper.

1. How did women get to their current positions of leadership?
2. How do women assess and understand the nature of leadership?
3. How do women lead?
4. How do women characterize the culture of their working environment?
5. Do the women have concerns that have not been anticipated by the current literature?

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and composed the entire body of data to be analyzed. In areas of consensus or shared language, key themes were discussed and identified. In areas of variance, an attempt was made to show the scope and breadth of the women's experiences. Throughout the discussion pseudonyms were used for both individual respondents and the schools at which they work.

Chapter II will explore literature related to leadership and women. This creates a theoretical framework for understanding both past and current environments in which

women leaders perform their work. Chapter III provides specific information about the methodology used in this study. Chapter IV is a summary of the data compiled from the interviews, focusing on areas of both consensus and variance. Finally, Chapter V summarizes and discusses the relevance of the study and suggests policy implications and possible areas of further research.

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND

This chapter will explore literature related to women and leadership. It will begin with a discussion of the history of women in higher education. This will be followed by discussion of the importance of mentors. Next it will look at how women assess leadership and the specific ways that women lead, generally and in times of conflict. It will review studies of the current environment for women and the ways this affects the perceptions of being rewarded, recognized and supported. Finally, additional information will evaluate a few key ideas that are also of importance to this area.

#### Literature sources

While literature exists for women in the university presidency role and academic positions there is little written for the specific area of women in administrative positions in higher education. Sources from educational leadership, business and academic sources were all used to bridge this gap in the literature. Parallels were found between the women in this study and women working in a number of other fields specifically, corporate and business leaders.

### How do women get to positions of leadership?

This section explores the history of women working in higher education, including the role of the Dean of Students. It continues to explore the ways that women have advanced through this field including interim positions and the help of mentors.

#### *Positions- advancement and enjoyment*

When evaluating where women currently are in their careers as leaders, it is important to understand the starting point. As Rosener summarizes:

Until the 1960's, men and women received different signals about what was expected of them. To summarize a subject that many experts have explored in depth, women have been expected to be wives, mothers, community volunteers, teachers and nurses. In all these roles, they are supposed to be cooperative, supportive, understanding, gentle and to provide service to others. They are to derive satisfaction and a sense of self-esteem from helping others, including their spouses (1990, p. 124).

Past perceptions of women's role in society, along with the expectations of *how* women are expected to behave, are important to understand because they are still relevant today regarding how women are perceived in the work environment.

As Schwartz states, "the entire field of student services, from admission and orientation to student activities, to residential housing to career services, can be traced to the work of the deans of women" (1997, p. 505). This early perspective helped shape how universities were formed and how student services are delivered. As Schwartz continues:

Much of the initial research on students, student cultures, and intrinsic and extrinsic value of higher education was completed by women. Many of these women were deans of women

themselves or women engaged in the education of women. In truth, the development of student-centered research was generated, conducted, and supported by women, some as early as the 1880's (1997, p. 518).

These previous pioneers and advocates paved the way for women to be part of higher education and pursue careers in this field.

Working in higher education can be a challenging and enjoyable career. As Sachs and Blackmore found in their study of women in school leadership roles, "satisfaction that the job provided was important for all the women interviewed. It was one of the pleasures of the job that the women talked about. Getting a sense of a job well done, that was either acknowledged by peers or by past students was frequently reported" (1998, p. 272).

As women have transitioned into lead positions through student service organizations they have begun filling a variety of positions through the organization. Gardner states, "we must not confuse leadership with status." Further, "most positions of high status carry with them symbolic values and traditions that enhance the possibility of leadership" (2003, p. 18). It cannot be ignored that women are leading at all levels of higher education. Moreover, they are making an impact on those they lead.

As women move forward and advance through the ranks, they are often given interim or temporary positions. As Hill explains, "stretch assignments are usually assignments with which considerable positional power is associated. Sources of positional power include *relevance*, *visibility* and *autonomy*" she goes on to write, "the most effective and successful individuals do not simply wait for such positions to be offered to them; they pursue or create them" (2003, p. 155). Although these positions

may provide an opportunity for women to “try on” new job responsibilities Hill also warns that these moves should not be taken lightly because “people often underestimate just how difficult it is and how long it can take to master a job assignment” (2003, p. 156). While women may be responsible for creating their own opportunities, others play a significant role in how they find opportunities, advance and succeed.

### *Mentors*

In her study on women and leadership, Fine found, “in describing how they became leaders, the women emphasized the influence of early role models and mentors who instilled lessons of citizenship and community involvements” (2007, p. 182). This suggests that the role of mentors is important for setting examples and building connections.

Building this community of mentors can come from a variety of sources. As Hill supports, “instead of searching for that one “perfect” mentor (something far too many people do), those who are most effective at managing their careers cultivate multiple and diverse developmental relationships in an effort to build a “personal board of directors” (for example, coaches, sponsors, protectors, role models, counselors)” (2003, p. 157). As Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan find in their study on mentoring women in school leadership, mentors can fill a variety of roles including “mentor as teacher, mentor as guide, mentor as parent, mentor as spiritual or philosophical guru, mentor as gatekeeper, mentor as public role model and mentor as friend or peer” (2000, p. 11).

Building a community of mentors and advocates is critical to establishing relationships, giving and receiving advice, and learning new skills.

Gardiner et al found that in ideal mentoring relationships, “women are sharing inside information and teaching other women how to work within the power structures, and also to change the dominant system, to go with their strengths and bring women’s voices to bear on leadership” (2000, p. 27). They go on to point out that “women are located in a position to know and understand the system, and to defy and change it. Mentoring is a mechanism for these changes” (2000, p. 27). This suggests that mentoring can occur in a variety of ways and that it can influence change on a bigger scale.

However, finding these mentors can be a challenge. Bass states that this issue is due to fewer women in top positions leading to the fact that, “fewer high-level women are available to serve as mentors” (1990, p. 716). Additionally, Freeman contends that “women and minorities may have more difficulty in a mentoring relationship, not only because there are fewer people willing to mentor them, as the literature suggests, but also because of their complicated history with advice” (2001, p. 49). These authors make the case that there are fewer mentors, and additionally women and minorities may struggle with the messages shared in these mentoring relationships.

In their study of college and university presidents Wolverton, Bower and Hyle found that mentors were “key to successful navigation” of leadership roles. They found that, “several women we interviewed suggested that women in leadership should be

doing a better job of mentoring other women” (2009, p. 145). After reaching their own success it seems some women fail to help others reach the same.

This situation is not uncommon, as Rhode explains, “although the importance of mentors has long been recognized, the institutionalization of mentoring has lagged behind” (2003, p. 29). According to Rhode a “common obstacle for women leaders is the difficulty in obtaining mentors and access to informal networks of advice, contracts and support” (2003, p. 12). ). This suggests that schools could be creating situations where women at all levels help advance others.

Obviously, schools should “encourage well-placed, widely esteemed individuals to mentor women” (Eagly and Carli 2007, p. 62). Rhode explains, “for many women, the support of an influential senior colleague is critical in securing leadership opportunities. Mentoring relationships can also help prepare women to become leaders and to take full advantage of the opportunities that come their way” (2003, p. 29).

The renowned business leader, Warren Bennis, writes,

We need mentors and friends and groups of allied souls. I know of no leader in any era who hasn't had at least one mentor: teachers who found things in them they didn't know were there, parents or older siblings, senior associates who showed them the way to be, or in some cases, not to be, or demanded more from them than they know they had to give” (1989, p. 91).

Knowing and leaning on others is a common thread for women leaders.

#### How do women assess leadership?

Much research and writing has gone into defining the topic of leadership (Kouzes and Posner, 2002; Bass, 1990). Despite this abundance of information, defining

leadership is a dubious task. There are numerous theories and definitions that have developed over time ranging from “servant leader” to “one best man” with dozens of theories and systems between. As a general definition we can look at Komives, Lucas and McMahon who state, “leadership is about the task of solving problems – big problems and little problems, significant problems and seemingly insignificant problems – so that the group or organization can better meet its core purpose and be a good place for its membership” (2007, p. 314). Further, we can pull from Gardner who states, “leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (2003, p. 17).

The literature regarding women and leadership addresses at least three different areas: discussions of the ways women lead and different ways to define leadership, women’s leadership in maintaining stability and in promoting change, and evaluating women’s effectiveness as leaders. Each of these areas is briefly addressed below.

### *Ways women lead*

Surprisingly not all women, even those in positions that seemingly align with leadership roles, identify with the term *leader*. As Suyemoto and Ballou found in their study on women in leadership:

Some leaders become leaders almost “accidentally” through their contributions. Their intention is to contribute to moving toward the goal, but there may be no inherent desire for “leadership” per se. These leaders may be more likely to see themselves as influences, collaborators, or contributors. They may place the responsibility for naming and defining their “leadership” on

others with whom they are working. They may resist the unspoken assumptions in the language of “leader” (2007, p. 41).

Werhane, Posig, Gundry, Ofstein and Powell in their study on women in business found, “unlike leaders in hierarchically structured organizations, these women do not view their authority as a matter of power, nor do they think of themselves as persons in superior positions of formal authority” (2007, p. 177). As the definition of leader changes, it makes sense that some people cease to identify with past stereotypes of an idea. However, a reluctance to associate with the formal term of leadership aligns with some of the new ways of defining and thinking about women leaders.

Eagly and Carli summarize the important leadership framework introduced by leadership scholar James MacGregor Burns,

Transformational leaders establish as role models by gaining followers’ trust and confidence. They state future goals, develop plans to achieve those goals, and innovate even when their organizations are successful. Such leaders mentor and empower followers, encouraging them to develop their full potential and thus to contribute more effectively to their organizations (2007, p. 6).

Rosener describes transformational leadership in the following way, “getting subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interest of the group through concern for a broad goal.” She goes on to describe that these leaders “ascribe their power to personal characteristics like charisma, interpersonal skills, hard work, or personal contacts rather than to organizational stature” (1990, p. 120).

Transformational leadership is often contrasted to the idea of transactional leadership, which has been historically associated with a more masculine form of leading. Eagly and Carli summarize, “by contrast, transactional leaders establish give-

and-take relationships that appeal to subordinates' self-interest. Such leaders manage in the conventional manner of clarifying subordinates' responsibilities, rewarding them for meeting objectives, and correcting them for failing to meet objectives" (2007, p. 6).

However, it is important to realize there are no clear boundaries in this definition.

"Although transformational and transactional leadership styles are different, most leaders adopt at least some behaviors of both types" (Eagly and Carli, 2007, p. 6). This is evidence that one of a leader's skills is knowing how best to utilize different types of leadership at the right times.

Additional descriptions of styles of leadership abound in the literature on women in leadership. Rosener coined an additional term, "interactive leadership," based on her observations that the women in her study "actively work to make their interactions with subordinates positive for everyone involved" (1990, pg.120). This style suggests an intentional focus on creating positive working relationships with others.

Another common leadership theme associated with women leaders is that of "servant leader." As Werhane et al. summarize, "the ultimate goal of a servant leader is fulfilling others' needs. [They] serve followers to promote their empowerment and enable them to accomplish organizational goals" (2007, p. 85). This style of putting others first and supporting them to be successful is closely aligned with many past expectations associated with women.

In their study of school administrators in Australia, Sachs and Blackmore found "all of the women interviewed spoke of being professional and presenting themselves as professional. Being professional was a code word for being in control, being perceived

as efficient by both peers, colleagues and members of the community and was expressed in their dress and general demeanor.” They go on to state, “Being in control of your feelings and emotions was important if you wanted to be taken seriously in the job and if you were to be rewarded by a promotion” (1998, p. 271). This ability to be professional and in control might be seen as one other way that women are leading within their given environments.

A final broad way of leading can be seen lining up under the term “feminist leadership.” This theory includes promoting social justice and inviting previously unheard voices to the table. Through encouraging broad participation, shared decision making and empowering others this system hopes to challenge the status quo and provide remedies to the inequalities that exist (Lott, 2007, p. 28).

In summary, while women lead in a variety of ways, there are some key leadership theories that specifically address how women are perceived. Transformational leadership embodies much of the relational characteristics that are associated with women in leadership roles. Feminist leadership is a broad overview that focuses on social justice and inclusion. Multiple other terms have also tried to capture the essence of what is particular to women’s ways of leading.

### *Maintaining stability or change*

The ability to anticipate, create, and successfully navigate change, especially unplanned organizational change, is crucial for higher education systems. According to Barth, “leading in a culture of change means creating a culture (not just a structure) of

change. It does not mean adopting innovations, one after another; it does mean producing the capacity to see, critically assess, and selectively incorporate new ideas and practices – all the time, inside the organization as well as outside it” (2003, p. 177). If the ability to manage change is critical for success in any organization, then leaders must be able to identify the need and shift direction when faced with it.

According to Kotter, “leadership and management are two distinct and complementary systems of action. Each has its own function and characteristic activities. Both are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile business environment” (2001, p. 85). Kotter defines leadership and management as two separate but necessary skill sets within an organization. He goes on to say that people within organizations are either managers, who maintain stability, or leaders who manage risk, but not necessarily both. Though each function is critical to an organization, both are not necessarily embodied within the same individual.

Budget changes and constraints commonly cause a need for change in higher education organizations. The study of women in business conducted by Werhane et al., found that many of the women had encountered economic crises and, “rather than becoming discouraged, some of the women we interviewed saw these problems as challenges, and became change agents and attacked them with enthusiasm and intelligence” (2007, p. xix). Dealing with change successfully is a complex process; however, dealing with it effectively is critical to the success of leaders.

In their book describing how to become a leader Komives et al. point out, “leadership committed to ethical action is needed to encourage change and social

responsibility. Leadership happens through relationships among people engaged in change” (2007, p. 5). The notion of keeping people and relationships whole is a reoccurring theme in the literature, especially when looking at how women navigate leadership situations.

Komives et al. continues, “facilitating change is complex, fragile, exhilarating, and rewarding” (2007, p. 328). Being able to manage change is critical for the success of any organization and leaders must be able to identify and correctly steer when faced with it. Additionally they state, “leadership is not static; it must be practiced flexibly” (2007, p. 5). If “losing control is a common fear of human beings and a common concern when change is introduced in organizational environments” (Komives, 2007, p. 314) then leaders have to both overcome their own discomfort while addressing the needs of others. Navigating this balance is especially critical in the ever changing environment of higher education.

### *How are women evaluated in their leadership?*

Leaders are faced with both external and internal expectations to perform. The pressures of being a leader, including being simultaneously evaluated in both formal and informal ways, can be staggering. Additional stress from bias and stereotypes can further complicate this issue.

Understanding how women are perceived and evaluated in their leadership is critical to understanding the support and acceptance that they experience. Unfortunately, “stereotypes color how behavioral information is encoded,” and “as such, the provision

of relevant individuating information may not be enough to overshadow stereotypes and, as a result women may be viewed as a female first and a leader second” (Scott and Brown, 2006, p. 240). Similarly, Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, and Tamkins in their study of how people respond to women who succeed in male gender-typed tasks, found that their “results were taken to support the idea that gender stereotypes can prompt bias in evaluative judgments of women even when these women have proved themselves to be successful and demonstrated their competence” (2004, p. 416). This is strong evidence that women are judged by more factors than their work performance alone, they are also being evaluated specific to their gender.

So, how are women evaluated by others and by what standards? As Babcock and Laschever point out:

For women who want to influence other people, research has found that being *likeable* is critically important – and that women’s influence increases the more they are liked. Since negotiation is all about trying to influence people, this means that women must be likeable in order to negotiate successfully (2007, p. 95).

According to Heilman et al. “being disliked was shown to strongly affect competent individuals’ overall evaluations and rescind organizational rewards, including salary and special job opportunities” (2004, p. 426). They go on to summarize:

These results suggest that being disliked can have detrimental effects in work settings. Evidently, when making evaluations and judgments about personnel actions, competence is not the sole consideration. Negative social reactions to highly competent employees can adversely influence both overall evaluations and recommendations for how they should be treated. Thus, being disliked is likely to be not just unpleasant but also a hindrance for upwardly aspiring women (2004, p. 425).

Women already operate in a complex world with multiple perceptions of them being formed at the same time. Being “liked” is of extra interest because of the amount of effort and behavior modification that goes into being “likable.”

As Komives et al. explain, “leadership effectiveness begins with self-awareness and self-understanding and grows to an understanding of others” (2007, p. 5). This ability to be both introspective and aware of others gives leaders an ability to be grounded, while remaining relational to others. Self assessment is an additional step of being able to assess situations and lead others.

#### What do women do to lead?

As with the difficulty of defining leadership, defining who a leader is, how they behave, and how they show success is equally challenging. Historically, the definition of a leader was based on the gender of the person in the role, with the accepted standard being men. Eagly states, “in many contexts, the Powerful Great Man model of leadership no longer holds. Good leadership is increasingly defined in terms of the qualities of a good coach or teacher rather than a highly authoritative person who merely tells others what to do” (2007, p. 3). This shift in expectations has allowed the space for women to enter the field of leadership through the workplace.

As Bass states, “we are in period of transition. Much of the cultural support is diminishing for maintaining sex differences in leadership and, more important, for maintaining different attitudes, beliefs, and values about women leaders” (1990, p. 709).

This transition is marked by an increase of women in positions of power, influence and leadership. It is also marked by a continual and watchful evaluation of this social shift.

The next section outlines the active discussion in the literature about the differences and similarities between men and women leaders. This dialogue of how women operationalize their leadership with others, and how successful they are, is important for understanding how women are leading within higher education. Additionally, how women specifically handle conflict is also explored to further understand women's leadership.

#### *Gender and leadership - what is the difference?*

Fine points out that "women's leadership styles are distinct from men's, and that they are likely to use more collaborative, nurturing, and egalitarian strategies that emphasize communication" (2007, p. 181). Yet, Eagly assess, "leadership styles are not fixed behaviors but encompass a range of behaviors that have a particular meaning or that serve a particular function. Depending on the situation, leaders vary their behaviors within the boundaries of their style" (2007, p. 2). While some authors point out fixed behavior for women, others contend that actions are flexible and tend to mold to the circumstances rather than a gendered norm.

Christman and McClellan's found that the participants in their study, "suggest that gendered leadership norms are too simplistic and that women leaders must be willing to shift into multidimensional gender and traverse conventional borders" (2008,

p. 3). It may be that women are able to pull from both the feminine and masculine to ensure their success and authenticity.

Interestingly men may be taking the same approach. Appelbaum, Audet, and Miller view this phenomenon through a different lens:

When women attempt to prove their competence by “acting like men,” they are considered to be less than women. When there seems to be some merit in what would normally have been considered a “female” approach, men adopt it as their own. What was seen as weak is now thought of as flexible; what was emotional now combines with the rational to bring balance. The concept of “greater good,” once inappropriate in the competitive world of business is now visionary. Surely, the qualities themselves have not changed (2002, p. 49).

This shift lends credibility to the contributions that are attributed to a women’s way of leading.

#### *Positive attributes of women leaders*

The examination of women leaders has fostered further appreciation and understanding of the positive attributes of women’s leadership as they have been evolving. “Although revealing relatively small differences, findings indicate an advantage for women leaders. Women, more than men, appear to lead in styles that recommend them for leadership” (Eagly, 2007, p. 5). As Hegesen discusses, women bring specific and positive values to the work place:

These values include an attention to process instead of a focus on the bottom line; a willingness to look at how an action will affect other people instead of simply asking, “What’s in it for me?”; a concern for the wider needs of the community; a disposition to draw on personal, private sphere experience when dealing in the public realm; an appreciation of diversity; an outsider’s impatience with rituals and symbols of status that divide people who work together and so reinforce hierarchies (1995, p. xl).

Other societal views on women leaders may also be shifting. As Eagly found, “attitudinal prejudice against women leaders appears to have lessened substantially, although even now there are more Americans who prefer male than female bosses.” She goes on to state that “research has established a mixed picture for contemporary female leadership. Women leaders on average manifest valued, effective leadership styles, even somewhat more than men do, and are often associated with successful business organizations” (Eagly, 2007, p. 9). This positive shift shows the continued progress of women leaders.

#### *How do women leaders engage others?*

The ways that women work with others is key to understanding how they solve problems and engage in successful leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner, there are five practices that good leaders share, and how they work with others:

- They model the way by showing others their values and work ethic.
- They inspire a shared vision by looking into the future and making it accessible to those around them.
- They challenge the process by embracing change, taking risks and stepping into the unknown.
- They enable others to act by making it possible for others to do their best work.
- They encourage the heart by showing appreciation, recognizing and celebrating others (2002, p. 13).

Specific characteristics for how women tend to work with others in many cases align with this definition. As discussed below building relationships, being a role model, lifting up others and communicating align with the five practices that are outlined

above. However additional themes have also been established in the literature, including sharing information, collaborating and a focus on the bigger picture.

### *Relationships*

As Babcock and Laschever state, “extensive literature in virtually every discipline in the social and behavior sciences concludes that relationships play a more central role in the lives of women than in the lives of men (2007, p. 128). According to Hill, “for emerging leaders, relationships become the linchpin that ensures continuous development and success” (2003, p. 159). Further, “devoting time and attention to growing and nurturing a network of relationships not only helps managers obtain stretch assignments but also helps them manage the risks associated with such assignments” (Hill, 2003, p. 157). Building and retaining these relationships support women leaders throughout their careers, not only in their personal development, but also with solving problems.

### *Communication*

In their study of women in business, Werhane et al. found, “many women identified communication and accessibility as key ingredients to a successful relationship. Open and direct communication with both employees and clients was stressed as a critical success factor for maintaining positive relationships” (2007, p. 178). This emphasis on communication as part of relationship building is key to the

leadership styles for women. Only through thoughtful communication over time can core relationships that support success be possible.

### *Sharing information*

Sharing information is a critical part of successful communication for both women and men. As Rosener found in her study about how women lead, “these women use participation to clarify their own views by thinking things through out loud and to ensure that they haven’t overlooked an important consideration” (1990, p. 122). Rosener continues, “these women say they willingly share power and information rather than guard it and they make apparent their reasoning behind decisions” (1990, p. 122). If information is power, then women share both information and power with others. This is a contributing factor in developing trusting and open relationships.

### *Listening*

The other side of sharing information freely is the act of conscious and intentional listening, or really hearing what others say. The business women in Werhane et al.’s study mentioned “a willingness to listen to employees” as one of the key components of having a successful organization. According to Hegesen, “women value listening as a way of making others feel comfortable and important, and as a means of encouraging others to find their own voices and grow” (1995, p. 245). Strong relationships based on communication and listening may help provide the support for successful organizations.

### *Collaboration and teamwork*

The women in Fine's study on leadership "repeatedly described the importance to leadership of building a team, seeking consensus, and getting all points of view. Leaders listen to and rely on people, and they reach out to people and make them believe that they have a role to play in accomplishing the group's purpose or work" (2007, p. 183). Concern for both the individual and the group facilitates a particular group dynamic. This focus on others is echoed in the findings from Hegeson's study looking at four successful women in business. She found that:

Sharing was also facilitated by their view of themselves as being in the center of things rather than at the top; it's more natural to reach *out* than to reach *down*. They tended to structure their companies as networks or grids instead of hierarchies, which meant that information flowed along many circuits, rather than up and down in prescribed channels (1995, p. 28).

Working collaboratively was seen as an essential extension to relationship building and information sharing. Eagly and Carli suggest, "rather it may be that collaboration can get results without seeming particularly masculine. As women navigate their way through the double bind, they seek ways to project authority without relying on the autocratic behaviors that people find so jarring in women" (2007, p. 7). While perhaps not conscious, working collaboratively is a cornerstone of how women tend to lead.

Building teams and supporting staff are critical components to the success of women leaders. As Eagly and Blair found "consistent with stereotypic expectations about different aspects of leadership style, the tendency to lead democratically or autocratically, women tended to adopt a more democratic or participative style and a

less autocratic or directive style than did men” (1990, p. 233). This focus on inclusion leads to the feeling of “flat” organizations that value contributions made by each person.

Rosener found the following when looking at how women lead:

More specifically, women encourage participation, share power and information, enhance other people’s self-worth, and get others excited about their work. All these things reflect their belief that allowing employees to contribute and to feel powerful and important is a win-win situation- good for the employees and the organization (1990, pg.120).

Eagly explains, “among other important qualities of this coach/teacher model of leadership is inspiring others to be creative and to go beyond the confines of their roles” (2007, p. 3). Empowering others with the expectation of performance, trust and inclusion builds a group of people dedicated to a single, shared goal.

This suggests that through sharing information and focusing on the unique contributions of other people women are able to build collaborative working relationships. Another way of looking at this is the formation of teams or teamwork. This system of inclusion may help people working for women feel included and involved.

### *Lifting up others*

The study conducted by Rosener found that women “talked about giving others credit and praise and sending small signals of recognition. Most important, they expressed how they refrain from asserting their own superiority, which asserts the inferiority of others” (1990, p. 123). When asked about an “ideal organization” the women in Werhane et al.’s study “discussed the importance of bringing out the best in

employees” (2007, p. 180). As these authors suggest, women may be intentionally focused on elevating those around them so that they feel empowered and integrated into the organization.

### *Model the way*

Eagly goes on to say, “it is also critical to serve as a role model who elicits pride and respect to present a vision that delineates the values and goals of an organization” (2007, p. 3). Again in Werhane et al.’s study, “for many of the women, their personal values were closely aligned with the corporate culture that they strived to instill, and many highlighted the importance of their employees having a clear sense of right and wrong” (2007, p. 180). While setting an example and driving the vision of an organization are typical of traditional leadership theory, this also holds true when looking specifically at women as well (Kouzes and Posner).

### *The bigger picture*

Women may work with an eye toward the bigger picture. As Hegeson found, “what distinguishes the women’s view of the big picture, however, is that it encompasses a vision of society – they relate decisions to their larger effect upon the role of the family, the American education system, the environment, even world peace” (1995, p. 25). This bigger view can allow women to step outside of the immediate situation and inspire their work within the scope of a bigger cause.

### *How do women handle conflict?*

Dealing with conflict is an unavoidable part of engaging with others and leading. Komives et al. state, “it is not uncommon for people to want to avoid conflict, so they often ignore it or pretend it does not exist” (2007, p. 228). According to Babcock and Laschever, “women’s strong urge to foster and protect relationships can make many of them fear that a disagreement about the outcomes of a negotiation – a disagreement about the issues being discussed – actually represents a personal conflict between the negotiators involved” (2007, pg 131). As Hegeson states, “women’s values for interdependence and mutuality make them treat negotiations within the context of continuing relationship that require contact, interaction, and agreement” (1995, p. 247). While conflict can be uncomfortable women tend to focus on using previously established relationships to navigate through situations.

### What is the work culture for women?

Culture shapes many of the opportunities and support systems available to women within higher education. While the concept of culture is important, it is also elusive. As Tierney points out, “an organization’s culture is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it. It concerns decisions, actions, and communication both on an instrumental and symbolic level” (1988, p. 3). He goes on to say, “effective administrators are well aware that they can take a given action in some institutions but not in others. They are less aware of why this is true” (1988, p. 5).

*Where are we now, where are we going?*

As they entered the workforce, some suggest that “women learned to ‘play the game’ by adopting traditional masculine characteristics, dressing like men, and aligning themselves with men” (Kruse and Prettyman, 2008, p. 455). However, “as women align themselves with men, adopting and replicating core patriarchal values and leadership methodologies, they both gain power and are subordinated to the men with whom their power resides” (Kruse and Prettyman, 2008, p. 456). These new characteristics may both help and hinder the advancement of women.

By adopting new ways of being, women were balancing on a double edged sword. As Chin states, “all too often, behaviors associated with femininity rate as negative with respect to leadership,” she goes on to explain “conversely, women are also viewed negatively when they adopt styles and traits characteristic of men leaders” (2007, p. 14). As Valian points out:

A woman who is very feminine runs the risk of seeming less competent; the more she typifies the schema for woman, the less she matches the schema for the successful professional. On the other hand, a woman with masculine traits runs the risk of appearing unnatural or deviant. The more she typifies the schema for the successful professional, the less she matches the schema for a woman (1999, p. 15).

While operating at either extreme of the leadership behavior spectrum puts women in jeopardy, the same cannot be said of male leaders. Looking for ways to authentically lead Chin explains that while, “there is much to suggest that women lead differently than men” there is still “significant overlap between the leadership styles of men and women” (2007, p. 2). Appreciating and understanding how women lead both

differently *and* similarly as men, without the exclusion of either, opens a new window to understanding women and leadership.

*How do women navigate bias?*

Numerous authors suggest that the stereotype that “a good manager is still perceived as predominantly masculine” exists, pointing again to the fact that this issue remains current and, therefore, begs discussion (Powell, Butterfield and Parent, 2002, p. 177). According to Kruse and Prettyman, “while women do lead today, and lead in effective ways, the public still perceives leadership in terms of masculine traits and characteristics that continue to define what leadership is and who is able to lead” (2008, p. 453). Additionally Wolverton et al. found:

Gender bias and racial discrimination continue to influence the cultural mind-sets of many Americans – perhaps not as overtly as in the past, but they persist just the same. And they persist in higher education, an environment supposedly open and accepting of difference (2009, p. 148).

Eagly explains further, “when the female role is inconsistent with a leader role, prejudice toward women as leaders or potential leaders is a common outcome” (2005, p. 465). Women still face challenges associated with their integration into the workforce, including women who work in higher education.

When looking at the advancement of women these challenges include a wide array of issues and depth. Eagly and Carli identify four obstacles that create career barriers for women:

1. Prejudice: Men are promoted more quickly than women with equivalent qualifications, even in traditionally female settings such as nursing and education.
2. Resistance to women's leadership: People view successful female managers as more deceitful, pushy, selfish, and abrasive than successful male managers.
3. Leadership style issues: Many female leaders struggle to reconcile qualities people prefer in women (compassion for others) with qualities people think leaders need to succeed (assertion and control).
4. Family demands: Women are still the ones who interrupt their careers to handle work/family trade offs. Overloaded, they lack time to engage in the social networking essential to advancement (2007, p. 62).

These obstacles create a system in which women cannot partake of the many of advantages of their male counterparts. The issues include hiring; evaluation; promotion; and pay (Valian, 1999). "[I]n almost all types of business women fare worse than men. Sometimes women and men start out on equal salary footing, but disparities arise as their careers progress. These disparities exist even when qualifications are equivalent" (Valian 1999, pg 198). Valian states "men earn more money and achieve higher status than women do" when looking at (a) business, (b) college graduates, (c) MBA's careers, (d) managers, (e) international business, (f) the CIA, (g) engineers, (h) law, (j) judiciary, (k) medicine and (l) sports (1999, p. 214).

Valian maintains that women and men are evaluated differently, "to oversimplify, we expect men to do well and see their behavior in the rosy light of our positive expectations. Conversely, we expect women to do less well and judge their actual performance in the darker light of our negative expectations" (1999, pg104). It is surprising that even when equally qualified and doing an equal job, women will receive harsher evaluations than a man in the same position.

In addition to the challenges already discussed, Ryan and Haslam also found that “the leadership positions that women occupy are likely to be less promising than those of their male counterparts” (2005, p. 88). According to Valian, “statistics on women’s progress in the professions buck up the idea that a succession of small events, such as not getting a good assignment, results in large discrepancies in advancement and achievement” (1999, p. 18). The cumulative effects of compounding factors, over both time and career, account for significant differences between men and women.

Additionally as Babcock and Laschever explain, “the higher a woman rises in an organization, the more likely she is to encounter stereotyped responses to her behavior – because there don’t tend to be many women at the higher levels of most organizations” (2007, p. 101). This suggests that the road to success is challenging at multiple points along the way, even when advancements are being made.

For some the established glass ceiling symbol is currently being replaced by an image of a labyrinth. As Eagly and Carli explain, “as a contemporary symbol, it conveys the idea of complex journey toward a goal worth striving for. Passage through a labyrinth is not simple or direct, but requires persistence, awareness of one’s progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead” (2007, p. 64). This imagery mirrors the idea that women are navigating their careers by finding the right path, among many.

Yet, while in many areas women can be seen advancing and moving forward in the workplace Babcock and Laschever state, “just because a few women manage to succeed despite the impediments our society erects in their path doesn’t mean that these impediments don’t exist or that there’s no problem” (2007, p. 18). They suggest that

continued attention should be paid to this issue and the patterns that create a system of exclusion for women.

The lower salaries of women may relate to the gender differences in leadership style discussed above. According to Babcock and Laschever, “caring more about relationships than about personal gain represents a powerful gender norm for women” (2007, p. 108). As further explained by Babcock and Laschever, “most women don’t expect to get paid very much, so when they don’t get much – as so often happens – they are less likely to be disappointed” (2007, p. 48). They go on to say, “because they’re not dissatisfied with what they have not sure they deserve more, women often settle for less” (2007, p. 60). They note that this cycle, unfortunately for women, can be both destructive and self-fulfilling.

Valian found that when determining how much women should be paid in a position they look at how much they think other women in that position would make, which is usually less than their male counterparts. Even though women tend to make less than men in the same positions she found that “women in general express relatively little dissatisfaction with their earnings.” She found that only after they are told how much the position is worth do they then allocate equal pay to themselves (1999, p. 162-163). This perception of recognition and reward can only be detrimental to women. As women know they make less money, feel unrecognized, unrewarded, and dissatisfied, they will continue to struggle to catch up to men in terms of pay equity, both in their bank account and their self-image.

Several authors suggest that discrimination still exists. “Despite high levels of political correctness popular in North American corporate society today, the “old boys’ network” is alive and well and not always women’s greatest source of support. In fact, there is active resistance by men” (Appelbaum, Audet and Miller, 2002, p. 47). In environments like this women may not feel supported, but instead feel disenfranchised, stuck, and devalued.

According to Appelbaum et al., it is important for organizations to recognize when women do not feel supported. They note that “organizations that ignore their high-achieving women by not offering them opportunities for promotion risk having them go elsewhere and therefore risk the loss of the value of the human capital they employ” (2002, p. 47). It is possible that creating systems where women feel valued, respected and comfortable will increase retention of women in their positions.

Despite the evidence, not all women acknowledge that they are viewed or treated differently from men. Valian points out that,

Women thus face a cruel set of choices: make an accurate intellectual evaluation of the situation and feel helpless: or make an inaccurate evaluation and feel in control. Many women, not surprisingly, prefer to take the latter course. They risk experiencing the low self-esteem that their relative lack of achievement entails but find the risk a worthwhile trade-off for the feeling of being in control of their progress and remaining in a field they love (1999, p. 166).

Even unconscious decisions such as these, deepen the divide between women. The divide affects both women who are aware of this situation, as well as frustrated by it, and those who are unaware it even exists. However, Valian points out a third option, “women can learn how gender schemas work, recognize instances of disadvantage, and

develop methods of correcting imbalances” (1999, p. 166). Perhaps this approach of awareness and action offers women the most concrete way to address this reality.

#### Additional factors to be considered

Two factors also deserve attention when looking at the issues that affect women and their advancement. Additional expectations and stereotypes accompany women who have diverse components involved in their identity. Having a family also impacts and influences how women are perceived and treated.

#### *Diversity - an additional topic for consideration*

Being female is not always the defining factor that the women identify with, especially among women from diverse backgrounds. According to Sanchez-Hucles and Sanchez, “there has been growing recognition that many women do not identify along a singular dimension such as gender but instead identify in accord with multiple identities without prioritizing one over others” (2007, p. 211). Being a woman may not be the only or first characteristic to which a professional woman relates.

Women struggle with more than just gender issues. As Rhode explains, “problems of exclusion are greatest for those who appear “different” on other grounds as well as gender, such as race, ethnicity, disability, or sexual orientation” (2003, p. 13). This issue is complex, “ideas of what is feminine and what is not become more complex for diverse women, given cultural stereotypes that define “feminine” based on Euro-American standards and then regard women of color, lesbian and bisexual women, and

women with disabilities as somehow not conforming to the feminine stereotype” (Sanchez-Hucles and Sanchez, 2007, p. 214). To truly understand issues surrounding women in higher education, all aspects, including those of gender, need to be evaluated.

### *Family*

Wolverton et al. discusses that one of the challenges associated with pursuing leadership in higher education, “detours abound, but having a family is probably the most challenging, and tempting, detour on the road less traveled” (2009, p. 145). According to Rhode, “women with children face additional double standards and double binds. Working mothers are held to higher standards than working fathers and are often criticized for being insufficiently committed, as parents or professionals” (2003, p. 10). It is important to acknowledge that family issues do not only include children. Spouses, partners, and aging parents are all factors that women have to balance with their jobs.

### *Policy implications*

Many authors agree that work still needs to be done to remedy this situation. According to Chin, “evolution and advocacy to create gender-equitable environments and transform institutional cultures are needed” (2007, p. 361). According to Ireland, this process requires everyone to pay attention and work toward the goal. She states, “I want to make three important points about progress: progress is not inevitable, progress is not equality, and progress is not irreversible” (2003, p. 193). She continues,

All of us have a role to play in continuing to advance women's leadership and contributions to our society. Some will work from the inside of the institutions that shape our culture; others will push from the outside. Some will figuratively – or in some cases literally – kick open the doors of opportunity, knowing that more moderate women will then walk through and, we can hope, will serve as role models and mentors and create change from within (2003, p. 201).

Most agree that creating fair and equitable work environments where women feel respected, valued and receive equal pay and recognition is the goal. Many suggest that raising awareness surrounding issues of inequity is a good place to start. According to Eagly and Carli organizations should “increase people's awareness of the psychological drivers of prejudice toward female leaders, and to work to dispel those perceptions” (2007, p. 8). Often this information is delivered in the form of diversity training, however some suggest that there are more practical ways to deliver information. Valian contends that awareness trainings may, in fact, be counterproductive and instead suggests providing people with more systematic, data driven methods to increase awareness (1999, p. 315). Despite the method of delivery, many authors suggest that raising awareness is essential to fixing the issues addressed previously in the paper.

Another way of lessening the effects of bias is through fair evaluations for both men and women. As Valian states, “the most common professional outcome of gender schemas is the under-evaluation of women's performance.” She suggests that “evaluators also need to understand that every evaluation is important, because evaluation contributes to the accumulation of advantage or disadvantage” (1999, p. 303). As Eagly and Carli continue, “greater objectivity in evaluations also combats the

effects of lingering prejudice in both hiring and promotions” (2007, p. 8). This suggests that evaluating employees on an even scale will lessen the gap between men and women.

Eagly and Carli suggest that organizations should “prepare women for line management with appropriately demanding assignments” (2007, p. 8). Barnes supports this in suggesting that organizations are responsible for “ensuring that women are included on influential committees within the organization” (2007, p. 184). Many authors state that additional training and networking allow women to prepare and position themselves for advancement, before they are promoted.

Additionally Chin also suggests that “consistent with feminist principles, we need to mentor and train new and emerging women leaders in ways that empower them to lead. We need to provide them with role models of a new generation of feminist leaders” (2007, p. 361). Perhaps the most critical tool of all is simply relationship building and teaching, both skills uniquely fitted to higher education.

Finally, there are many other ideas that are suggested to advocate and help the progression of women in the work place. Barnes outlines additional ways that allies can help to create change:

- Emphasizing the need to have a diversity program that includes women
- Supporting diversity training for all members of the organization, from top management on down
- Ensuring that the organization’s strategic plans include substantial provisions relating to the hiring, retention, and advancement of women, with concrete programs focused on achieving specific goals.
- Insisting on public goals and timetables for the hiring and advancement of women, as well as written policies on nondiscrimination (2007, p. 183).

While there are a variety of suggestions outlined here, many other regulations also exist related to Affirmative Action, mandates and non-discrimination laws. The common thread between all of these is the acknowledgement that action needs to be taken to address this issue.

### Summary

This section looked at five areas related to women in leadership. First, it explored how women moved into positions within higher education including the role of mentors in this progress. Next, it looked at how women assess and understand leadership, including specific styles of leadership associated with women, how women deal with stability or change and how women are evaluated in their jobs. Looking at specific ways that women lead and deal with conflict was discussed third. This was followed by a section that evaluated the work culture and how it influenced women's feelings about being adequately rewarded, supported and recognized. Finally, additional factors of diversity and family were covered. The remaining chapters of this paper will look at the experiences of twenty women administrators in higher education and see to what extent their stories parallel what has been described by others in the literature.

### CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter will outline the methodology of the study conducted by looking at the sample and procedures, measures, and method of analysis of the twenty interviews with women in higher education administration.

#### Sample and procedures

Qualitative methods were used to gather data about the common characteristics of women leaders in higher education administration. Data for this study were obtained from interviews with twenty women working at four comprehensive universities in the Pacific Northwest. These data were collected from January through February, 2009. Nineteen interviews were administered in-person; one interview was completed over the phone.

Five women from each of four comprehensive universities located in the Pacific Northwest were interviewed. These institutions are identified in this document as University A, B, C and D. These schools were similar in that they were all large comprehensive public universities, located in two states in the Pacific Northwest.

Participants were originally identified by a nomination by the director of the student union or auxiliary services director at each school. Initial contact by the

researcher was made with the student union directors by phone asking them if they would be willing to participate in this study. Each director agreed to take part in the study. A follow-up email further explained the research process and asked directors to nominate seven to nine women at their school who were known for their leadership (see Appendix A). Directors were asked, via the phone conversation, to nominate women regardless of their position or title in an effort to capture a diverse range of women known for their leadership, not their rank or position.

Next, the researcher contacted an initial five women via email (see Appendix B). These women were contacted in the ranked order submitted by the union directors. As women confirmed that they were interesting in participating in the study they were then mailed, via US Postal Service, a packet of information. Each participant received a memo outlining general interview topics (see Appendix C), an interview consent form (see Appendix D), and an audio recording consent form (see Appendix D). Non-responders were contacted up to six additional times. A negative response or a non-response resulted in the next woman on the list being contacted to participate in the study.

Each woman who agreed to participate was scheduled for a one- hour interview within the next two months. In many cases, this scheduling occurred through the personal assistants and office assistants who worked with the participant. The interviewer scheduled time to visit each respective school and meet where and when the participants selected. Most of the interviews were conducted in the participants' offices, while a few were conducted in nearby conference rooms.

Each interview was scheduled for one hour, although the time length varied from 28 minutes to 1.5 hours. Participants were asked the same series of questions, with additional probing questions if necessary. All women were asked if the interview could be audio recorded, two participants declined, citing a general unease of being recorded. Handwritten notes were also compiled as part of each interview.

### Measures

Each woman who participated in the study was asked the same general set of interview questions. Because the participants answered each question to different levels of completeness, some follow-up questions were also asked to fully understand each topic. Additionally, some questions were skipped when participants answered multiple questions prior to being asked. The order of questions also varied slightly as to allow for smoother transitions between questions.

The list of interview questions that was compiled prior to conducting interviews changed once interviews started. The original list of questions was shortened and the order changed to accommodate a more natural flow of conversation and fit the interview within the one hour time slot. One additional question about the budget situation occurring at the time of the interviews was also formally added after it was noted that it was being discussed in almost every interview.

The final list of questions was:

1. Can you tell me about your job here at University A, B, C or D?
2. What was your career path?
3. Who is your influence when you reflect on your leadership style?
4. How do you see yourself leading at your institution?

5. How is your approach received?
6. How do you assess how you are doing? Do you have a formal or informal process to get feedback?
7. Would you say that you are most often involved in maintaining stability or managing change within your organization?
8. How do you engage with others?
9. How do you engage with others when there is conflict?
10. Are you actively grooming people to take on leadership roles and mentoring them? How do you accomplish this?
11. How are you approaching the current budget situation?
12. Is your work environment supportive of you as a woman in a leadership position?
13. For the work that you do, do you feel that you are adequately recognized and rewarded?
14. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

These 15 questions parallel the five main areas of interest outlined in the literature review in Chapter II:

1. How did women get to their positions?
  - a. Addressed with questions 1-3
2. How do women assess leadership?
  - a. Addressed with questions 4-6
3. How do women lead?
  - a. Addressed with questions 7-11
4. How do women perceive their work culture?
  - a. Addressed with questions 12-13
5. What other areas are of concern to women higher education administrators?
  - a. Addressed with question 14

### Analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and composed the entire body of data that was analyzed. Transcripts were read several times before key themes and supporting statements were coded from each interview to a basic summary sheet. These summary sheets were then gathered and references from each woman were broken into the original interview question categories. Additional sub-categories, including new

information that emerged during the interviews, were also identified and collected on the summary sheets. This coding allowed the researcher to collect and identify emerging themes in the interviews.

The analysis of the data began after all of the data from the summary sheets was gathered into a single document organized by both the themes originally defined by the interview questions as well as the additional themes that came out of the conversations with the women. This list of roughly twenty themes was then qualitatively analyzed for areas where answers were common between women and those areas that appeared to be more variable. These twenty areas were also consolidated to cover the five basic themes listed above.

In areas of consensus or shared language, key themes were identified. In areas where responses varied, an attempt was made to show the scope and breadth of the women's experiences. In addition, the data were examined to see if these variabilities in the women's responses were associated with variations in their work environment or other experiences. All names used in the presentation of results are pseudonyms, as are the names of the schools visited.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

This chapter will summarize the results from the interviews conducted. Information is organized around the five key areas reviewed in Chapter II including: how the women advanced to their positions, how they assessed leadership, what they do to lead, their work culture and then any additional thoughts added to the interviews.

#### How did the women get to their current positions?

Participants' past work history showed an array of rich employment experiences. Represented were a variety of positions within higher education. Each participant had worked in administrative positions, but only two participants had work experience in academic administrative positions (such as Dean or Provost). Of the 20 participants interviewed, nine were currently directors of specific units such as Facilities, Career Center, or Auxiliary Services. These positions specifically dealt with the management of staff, budget, and strategic planning for their units.

Three of the women interviewed had held high-level support positions, such as Special Assistant to the Vice President or Special Council to the President. These positions did not supervise staff, and were identified as having an indirect leadership role through their relationship with the lead people for whom they worked for.

Six of the women currently held positions that could be considered lead positions. These positions spanned a variety of roles including Vice Provost, Dean, Vice President, and Assistant Provost. Generally, participants working in these positions supervised larger sections of the organizations, with multiple units reporting directly to them. They were focused on strategic planning and resource management associated with higher-level administrative positions. For instance, Heather explained her job as “Developing strategic plans, and developing procedures to put the school into the place where we’re doing the right thing, in the world.” Her articulation of both specific procedures and general goal-setting was repeated by all participants working at this level.

Interestingly, of the three participants working as Dean of Student positions, all three were interim positions. All three participants in these positions held the position while national searches were being conducted to fill them. One of these participants split her duties between Dean and Director roles, while the division was being restructured.

In describing how they attained their current positions the women described their career paths as well as the role of mentors.

### *Career path*

The women in this study, in general, had a similar path to higher education. While the range of time varied, most all had spent a significant amount of time in the profession. Most of the participants enjoyed their work, some even seemed taken aback by the level of success that they had achieved.

*Choosing a career in higher education*

Seventeen of the twenty participants had worked in higher education throughout their entire careers. Many of them accidentally discovered higher education as a career choice while working on their undergraduate degrees. This chance discovery sprung out of a job the participant held. In addition, each participant mentioned that a person in higher education had encouraged them to continue in the field. After working in Housing as an undergraduate, Daisy explains, “I realized that I really enjoyed and was energized by working with undergraduates at that transformative phase in their lives.” After explaining her long and dynamic career, Cathy explains, “And one could say that the meaning of that story is that I have never actually planned anything. And it’s just been a series of accidents and coincidences and nothing much and I just kind of hung out and life happened. Or you could say that is all true, but as well, what I did was not close doors. I did things that put myself in a position to take advantage of whatever opportunities occurred.”

A few of the women entered their undergraduate degree program with a career in higher education in mind. Jessica stated, “I knew that I could be really happy fostering the educational experience in and out of the classroom. I knew that was something I could be happy with, but I didn’t know that I could be this happy with it for this long.” Satisfaction from working in higher education positions was echoed by several women.

Other participants gravitated to their positions because of life circumstances. As Karen explains “My goal was to go to law school, but I had a child, and became a single parent. That really forced me to rethink all my career goals and decide: I’m going to

have to stay in administration because I have this person to raise.” Several women commented how the relative stable nature, benefits and work environment were strong positives that drew them, and kept them in their positions.

Among the three who moved to higher education from other sectors two had worked in the public sphere and one had worked in private industry. All three had been encouraged by people working in higher education to look at the opportunities that were available to them in this field.

### *Career progression*

The length of participants’ careers varied between 8 years and 30 years, and spanned a multitude of job experiences. Most participants spent a significant amount of time at the same institution. Some participants spent their entire student and professional careers at the same institution. These individuals started as undergrads or graduate students and then entered jobs at the same institutions.

Other women had a much more individualized path. As Karen points out “Basically, I pretty much created all my jobs myself. That’s the truth, so it can be done.” Elly also shared her story of taking 20 years off to raise kids before returning to complete her graduate degree and start her professional career. These paths, while not the standard, show the multiple ways that women found their place in these careers.

Working in interim positions was highlighted multiple times as a way in which some participants were able to advance more quickly. Pam explains her approach to the interim position, one which she eventually obtained, “OK. I’m going to behave as

though I'm the permanent person. I'm going to put some initiatives in place, and be bold about what I was doing. So, at the end of my interim period, if I was bold enough in what I was doing and the president/provost felt that it was the right direction, then I would get the permanent position. It was really a risk – a gamble.” Her story, and those of others, began with someone giving them a chance to ‘try on’ positions before advancing into it.

Many participants have moved up to positions with increasing responsibilities over time. Several participants commented on the distinct separation from student contact that resulted in these higher level positions. This reality caused several participants to consider their positions and to creatively attempt to link their passion to their position. As Colleen explains, “That’s part of the challenge that I face. How do you be an administrator and yet stay connected to the teaching and other pieces that you love? I am in the ‘what do I do next’ stage. I don’t know. That’s what I am trying to look at.”

### *Career satisfaction*

There was a general sense of enjoyment and passion from the women in these positions. Odette explained, “I figured out I was a people person, and then I figured out my population, which was college students. It’s not about age, it’s about time and life – that hope. That possibility of your life changing.” Daisy continues, “I realized that I really enjoyed and was energized by working with undergraduate at that transformative

phase in their lives. So I got traction in that job, and I've remained in that field throughout my entire professional career, here.”

These two statements mirror the sentiments of most of the women interviewed. There was a steady theme that emerged in all of the interviews, with the women reporting that they enjoyed working with college age students and the environments that support them. Even among those who did not take an obvious path to higher education a general sense of satisfaction with the jobs was expressed.

There were a number of similarities among the women who expressed high levels of satisfaction in their jobs. Genuinely enjoying talking to and working with people was the most common theme in this area. As Georgia stated, “I just love to talk to people, I love it! In all situations this is the highlight of my day. This makes my job so much fun.” Working for a higher cause or “doing the right thing” was also common among those who enjoyed their jobs. Several commented that they felt strongly that they were making the world a better place. Some responded that they enjoyed their jobs despite that they did not feel supported or fairly compensated for their positions. All of these women pointed back to working for a higher cause and their connection with people as reasons why they gained satisfaction from their positions.

Among those who voiced less enthusiasm in their jobs, there was a strong theme of not being recognized or appreciated. There was also a lack of personal connection and community. As Rachel stated, “I have given this school the best years of my life, and people don't say thank you. They just don't even take the time to say hi in the hallway.” The frustration of going above and beyond the call of duty (and often being

asked to perform in this manner) and then not being rewarded with promotions or pay raises was voiced clearly.

There was an especially strong sense of those who were relatively new to their positions and the career that there was a struggle to balance life and job. The delicate act of attending events, meeting with employees, keeping up on academic reading, juggling children, family, social life and taking care of the self were all mentioned as conflicts. As Jean stated, "I would love to be more available and more visible and at all of the events and all of the places where all the folks are who I see myself needing to lead." She went on to state that she simply felt pulled in too many directions.

### *Career Shock*

Those at the top positions also indicated a certain reluctance to be seen as pioneers in the movement of women into the field. Darcy spoke about her initial career decision, "And again, there were a lot of fields where you'd be too much of a pioneer, as a woman, in those fields. I was ready for a career, but I wasn't necessarily ready to break new ground or be the only woman." While perhaps not an initial goal, those who had been in the careers the longest were most able to identify with past experiences of overt discrimination and the most able to point out where advances had been made. They were also most vocal about where improvements still needed to be made in relation to gender.

There was also a certain amount of shock or reluctance to be seen as in a top position. As Odette states, "I've had a blast being number one, and I'm very capable of

it, but I think if I went with my natural born talents, I'm the number two role." Others had very strong senses that they were going to be "found out" or that they had somehow slipped into these positions without the proper vetting process. As Georgia said, "I keep thinking they are going to come and take this beautiful desk, nice office and comfortable chair away; that someone is going to figure out that someone else can do this job better."

### *Mentors*

Mentors were mentioned as important parts of the careers for the women in this study. In this section, we hear from the women about who their mentors were, how they helped them, the desired attributes in mentors and the impact when mentors cannot be found.

#### *Who are mentors and how do they help*

All participants articulated strong agreement that mentorship played a crucial role in their career advancement. As Celia stated, "Anybody who is able to advance in this field is lucky enough to have had a couple of people look out for them." This support was seen as a crucial part of how these women were able to be successful.

All of the women interviewed were able to identify mentors who had helped them along the way. Even those who had created their own way professionally talked about mentors who helped them develop insight, wisdom and connections. Most listed both men and women as mentors, with a handful of women reporting that they had been

specifically mentored only by women. Cathy remembers, “And there were those women. I don’t remember any of them saying anything about core values. They behaved that way, as is always the case, the strongest, the best way to influence someone is by your behavior and not by what you say.” There were also a few women who identified that they had experienced primarily men as mentors and bosses.

Some participants felt well supported throughout the progression of their careers. Cathy emphasized the importance of being connected to others on campus as it related to her job progression, “The thing that was helpful for me was that I had the kind of job that created occasion for that wide sweep, for that ability to get to know people everywhere.” A majority of participants indicated that at least one person along the way encouraged and guided them into advanced positions.

Three participants stated how their families had influenced their development, as well as mentoring them. Jessica spoke at great length about how her father taught her to be kind, gentle and gracious. Bessy continued this theme, “I think it’s easier to identify that the family structure definitely influenced the way I kind of operate in the world, in general, including the work world.”

Almost all participants indicated that their mentors had come from within higher education, many as bosses or colleagues. Yet, several participants stated that they did not look to their current supervisors for mentoring. Pam did not think of supervisors as mentors because of the role they played in the formal structure of her position. She felt that it was impossible to be totally open about insecurities or questions about leadership, but “With those that I consider mentors, I’m totally open about everything.”

Most participants identified specific ways in which their mentors helped them. One of the key themes that emerged was the opportunity identification by mentors as it related to their careers. Another key area was creating networks and meeting people beyond their normal social circles.

Celia explains about her mentor, “She was someone who looked out for me, who found opportunities for me, who identified me as a young professional, brought me into the fold with other women who were doing great things. This was mentoring at its best. Really informal but it was wonderful.” Odette continues, “For me, mentors have indeed invited me behind the curtain, so to speak, or tapped me to either sit at the table of a meeting that I wouldn’t normally have access to, or to be on a committee, or take on a project or deliverable. You know, they believed in me more than I believed in myself.” The women suggested that being pulled into these opportunities gave them the chance to perform and prove themselves to a broader audience.

The literature reviewed in Chapter II suggests that an important element of the mentoring experience is having a mentor spend the time to identify the potential of a person. Carolyn explains how her mentors helped identify and push her growth, “There are many, first of all, who really took time out of their career to really look at me and see potential and guide me and give me projects that would let me achieve.”

Mentors also helped the women be successful in interim positions, committee appointments and additional job duties. For example, when Odette was invited to be interim dean she points out that her mentor “Took really good care of me, in that first year of mine, not letting me fall flat, and letting me find my own authentic style.” This

support past the original expanded duties was discussed as critical to the subsequent success of the women in the study.

Creating and fostering relationships is a critical piece of mentoring. Again Celia points out the following about her mentor, “She introduced me to a lot of really key people. She was just good to me, she would call and check up on me and see how I was doing and became a good friend.” A common thread among participants was how mentors both introduced them to key people in the profession and community and took the time to develop long-term relationships with them.

Learning the profession from a mentor is critical. As Audra explains about her mentor, “She taught me a lot about expectations of working in a business – going right from being a college student to going into this professional business environment. You know – how to dress, how to talk, things to do, writing letters, etc.” The women in this study appreciated learning the key nuts and bolts of how to be a professional, as well as how to navigate the higher education system. Learning these skills early was mentioned as being particularly helpful.

Mentors were described as being supportive in a holistic and sustained manner. Bessy explained, “It was kind of a personal relationship, and she was really wanting to understand what I needed in order to move forward in my work and being very cognizant of my personal life and that connection to work. In a lot of ways, being very supportive and affirming.” This idea of being a “cheerleader” or the “winds beneath my wings” were both common ways that relationships with mentors were described.

The impact and importance of simply having a mentor made an impact on participants well past the initial relationship. Nancy explained, “All of those women throughout my career – their willingness to share and mentor and sometimes give direct, needed feedback rubbed off on me. So I now see that as a responsibility of mine. So, even though my days are busy, if somebody contacts me, I make time to do that because all of those folks made time for me.”

### *Desired attributes in mentors*

Each woman seemed to have clear ideas about who their mentors were and how their relationships were built. Mentors were described as people who, ultimately, helped them align their own strengths and find their own path. As Karen said, “You want [a mentor] that you not only learn from them as a person, but about yourself, through that relationship.” Odette explained, “All of my mentors, they kind of coach you, but they’re not trying to turn you into them.”

Mentors were also described as well- rounded women in both their careers and lives. Being able to observe and then offer feedback and direction were critical pieces of the mentor role. Jean explains, “I think a good mentor is someone who’s honest, and real, and authentic, and paying attention, and knows enough to be able to give feedback that’s helpful.”

The women who participated in this study were very clear in pinpointing and describing the actions of their mentors and how they gained their support and respect. The issue of trust and believing in people came up repeatedly. As Karen said of her

mentor, “He is willing to taking a chance on people. That takes a great deal of trust in humanity.” This idea of having a basic faith in the goodness of people was expressed numerous times as a quality of highly regarded mentors. The ability to build and sustain relationships was also highlighted consistently by participants.

Celia expressed specific details about the role of a mentor, “[He] set a really nice bar for how to be good. How to be authentic, how to be more than just like, coming to work to just earn a paycheck, but how to align it to my principles and my values.” Working for a higher cause, and having a strong sense of moral obligation were communicated as strong characters of effective mentors of participants.

Many of the women spoke of other women who were able to navigate their career successfully. Nancy explains how her mentor, “...was tough, believed in bringing people together, too. She wasn’t somebody who got walked on in a male dominated field. She was successful because she could bring people together and be tough when she needed to.” Many participants reflected on the attributes of other women, and many indicated that they made efforts to emulate their mentors.

A sense of reverence for mentors was consistent across all interviews. Pam especially identified with one of her mentors, “I said, “God, I want to be like that, as a leader. I want to manage my staff like that.”” She goes on to explain how her mentor created an environment where, “Her staff, they worked hard, oh my god. She was a taskmaster, but there was just a sense of coming to work every day and having fun, even though we were working our butts off. We had so much fun – there was always a lot of

laughter in our office. She laughed at herself.” The sense of working hard and having fun were also consistent across interviews.

*When mentors were lacking*

At some institutions, mentors seemed to naturally appear into participants’ lives. This occurred through both work and social connections. As Nancy states, “Everywhere I’ve landed, there’ve been women who’ve taken the responsibility to mentor other in the department.” Not having to seek out a mentor seems key to creating a supportive situation. Participants indicated how the culture of some institutions was more conducive to mentoring than others. All participants at University D spoke clearly of having a strong sense of being mentored and supported.

Interestingly all of the women at University A identified a noticeable lack of mentoring. These participants seemed to build relationships with people outside of the institution, because they found a hole when it came to finding people at their school. As Lori points out, “It was really marked and obvious when I came here as a mid-level professional, that there weren’t the same women mentoring other women in this organization like other places I’ve been, or even cross-gender binary people mentoring each other – there wasn’t that same commitment, you know, to the idea of “We see the potential in our mid and entry level staff, and we want to develop that and keep people here, and create opportunities.”” She goes on to say, “Everywhere else I’ve ever worked, there’s been a really firm commitment to that.”

The women in the most obvious lead positions of vice president and provost, and to some degree the directors as well, talked about having primarily male mentors and supervisors throughout their whole careers. Several of them commented that there were just no other women at their levels with whom to make these connections.

Perhaps a more key observation came from Jean who pointed out how critical it is for women to seek their own mentors, “I actively seek mentors, because I have had some very good ones, and I think they’re our best way of learning.” This initiative seemed to be key in identifying those who found long term mentors. Especially when a culture may not be overtly supportive of mentoring, identifying and asking people to be mentors is crucial to developing these relationships.

As several women pointed out, finding and keeping a mentoring relationship takes two people to engage and commit to be successful. Several women commented on having been approached by potential mentors or found people whom they would like as potential mentors without engaging in sustained relationships. These breaks were often because of lack of time, position moves, perceived lack of interest or a social “disconnect” that made the interactions awkward or unnatural.

Interestingly, Bessy spoke about the opposite of a mentor when she described a previous supervisor whom she called a “tor-mentor.” She explained that she learned volumes about how she wanted to behave in the world based on witnessing how he performed. She had actually cultivated specific skills as a response from observing this individual while basically learning “what not to do.”

### How do women assess leadership?

The women in this study were asked how they saw themselves leading at their institution, how their approach was received and how they collected and evaluated feedback to assess their leadership for this section of the paper. There are two main sections that address their responses to how they assess leadership. First are the responses to how women see themselves leading, followed by how others assess their leadership.

#### *How women perceive their own leadership*

This section outlines how the women in this study evaluated their own leadership. It begins with the overview of leadership given by the women and continues with their observations about how they identified with this definition, or in some cases how they did not identify with it. It concludes with a breakdown of key ideas such as how relationship building, trusting staff and the difference between maintaining stability or change contribute to how women see themselves leading.

#### *General definition*

Multiple definitions of leadership emerged during the conversations with these twenty participants. Most of the participants were able to describe the meaning of leadership in ways that were either scholarly or personal observations. However, several participants expressed how they struggle with the definition of leadership and their image in professional roles.

Many of the women had very clear ideas of what leadership meant to them. Celia easily identified that, “Leadership in my mind is an alignment of a couple of things. A desire to lead. There is the skill and the capacity to lead, and there is a kind of willingness for other people to follow.” Jean followed with a similarly broad definition, “if I were to define leadership it would be: getting people’s energy around an idea, and helping them to get there – facilitating the getting there.”

While others defined leadership in more specific ways Karen cued in right away to some of the smaller ideas that make up this large concept:

It is the subtle things that we often take for granted. How a person greets you in their office. (That is why I told you I was sorry I had cold hands this morning.) Whether someone gives you full attention in a conversation, even in the middle of a busy day. It’s how someone engages others, on and off campus. Are they friendly? Do they do any charitable work? Does this person engage with marginalized people? Both on and off campus in everyday life? Are they really a genuine and authentic leader?

Some spoke about being flexible, leading by example, evaluating decisions closely, managing staff and being involved in strategic planning. Other critical pieces of defining leadership were rooted in the concept of situational leadership, which is tied to leading at the right moment and inspirational leadership. Both of these examples were tied to having a solid core and set of goals and expectations that the women were working toward.

Interestingly, the ways participants spoke about leadership in the interviews varied. Four participants only used the terms “we” or “you” instead of referring to their thoughts in the first person. These participants would consistently use phrases such as

“when dealing with conflict you need to” or “we are leading when.” These four participants consistently avoided any reference of their own leadership by using the word “I.” While only four consistently used this speech pattern through their interview, eight more participants went back and forth to varying degrees using “we,” “you,” “they” and “I” intermittently.

### *Identifying as a leader (or not)*

A small number of participants were visibly uncomfortable being identified as a leader. Celia said, “Maybe it doesn’t quite resonate with me, to be called a leader on this campus.” Daisy echoed this statement with, “It’s funny, because I interview students on leadership all the time, but I don’t have a definition for it. It’s always personal, a personal one. If push came to shove I would not necessarily consider myself a campus leader, by any stretch of the imagination.”

Although most participants did not shy away from being defined as a leader, several felt sincere surprise that they were in leadership positions, or were seen to be in leadership positions. Darcy summarizes this when she said, “It always surprises me. People are listening because I’m in the position that I’m in, but it never ceases to amaze me. “Wow, that’s amazing. You listened to *me*?” And I think that other women have that experience, also. You bring certain humbleness to your position. But as a leader, people are following you, and that always catches you by surprise.”

### *Leading indirectly*

Several of the women interviewed were in “help mate” or “number two” positions, working with another person, such as a president or vice president. These women clearly identified that they were operating as leaders outside of the normal definition. As Celia put it, “I don’t supervise people; I don’t have a division under me, or a department under me. I don’t even have student workers under me. So it all has to be very informal leadership.”

Cathy was able to share a very developed sense of what it meant to be in a position of “indirect influence.” She explained, “What is true for me is that I, by far, prefer this role to the other role. And it’s not that I have no interest in power, influence and leadership, because I do. The way that I think this role has been created, I believe that most people would say that I have played a significant role at the university for a substantial period of time.” She went on to explain,

I am halfway through a term of teaching theories of leadership now and none of these theories talk about people who do what I do because it’s not what sells books. People want to read books about how to become the CEO of GE, that what all those leadership books on the shelves are all about. They are not about indirect influence, as much. Fine with me... there is not much competition for my job (laughs).

### *Building relationships*

The strongest theme among how participants define leadership was the ability to build and maintain relationships. Daisy explained, “Relationship building and ally building is my leadership.” This focus on other people and interpersonal interactions

was mentioned as key for building support and moving initiatives forward. Odette hit on a significant idea when she mentioned, “I think, sometimes, that leaders are healers, to be honest. You’ve got people coming from their personal background or you’ve got them from bad leadership – So, you’re kind of healing people so they can perform well.” From start to finish, the idea of having successful relationships was how most participants framed the idea of leadership.

#### *Putting trust in staff – value work*

Another significant theme in this section was the idea of hiring the right people and stepping back to let them do their work. Elly said it best when she said, “I don’t direct as a director, I get out of the way. I think that’s the biggest thing with leadership, is get out of people’s way and let them do their best work.” The women expressed the idea that people were inherently good and wanted to do a good work was repeated several times during the interviews. As Odette said, “I just think that leadership is about bringing out the best in everybody – giving a voice to those that don’t have a voice, and really understanding that people and organizations are really systems.”

#### *Maintaining stability or change*

When asked if they were managing stability or change at their institution, an overwhelming majority of participants indicated they did both. The notion that change can only occur in an environment that is well supported was voiced over and over again. As stated by Colleen, “I offer the structure and infrastructure to provide the support.

And then the change is all around that.” Daisy echoed this statement when she said, “It’s a little of both worlds. I’m looking to stabilize in a very dynamic and organic and sometimes uncontrollable environment.”

The process of being able to address both at the right time was noted by Lori, “That’s really the dual nature of the proactive and the reactive work.” In general, there was an appreciation for being able to focus and balance aspects of both change and stability at the same time. As Heather put it, “I think the job is actually both of those simultaneously. The better I could balance those two, the better I would be.”

Karen summarized nicely when she said, “Everything changes, so as a result, keeping things stable I think is important, only in so far as keeping your vision, your mission and your goals and your ethics stable.” This picking from both worlds to make an organization successful seemed to be a very familiar and well-used manner from which these women operate.

Participants who indicated that they primarily work with change reported a sense of urgency or need to address and work with constant change. Karen stated, “We live in a world where things are constantly appearing, reappearing, and disappearing, and if you can’t function in a world where there is change, then you need to get out of the game.” Many participants who noted a strong sense of change in their work indicated a strong leaning toward creating change. As Carolyn explained “Oh, I manage change. Every flippin’ day of the week. Our laughing point is that we’re on the bleeding edge of change – not the cutting edge, but the bleeding edge. I’m always pushing the envelope to try to for something new. The only constant is change.” Jessica went on to explain,

So, I think it's a really important time, to get comfortable with change pretty fast. You have to. And I'm definitely not so brazen to imagine that I understand this fully. I know when to bring in good articles, documentation, great people to advise and give me support and ideas. We're not, at any point in our careers, beyond asking people who have a better sense of some of these things than we [do] for their help and support.

The few women who indicated that they managed stability showed a strong tendency to want to be in the know and ahead of changes coming at them. Jean summarized this point by explaining, "It's human instinct, at least it's my instinct, to want stability and to feel like we can predict what's going to happen."

#### *How women believe they are perceived by others*

This section looks at how the women in this study believe that others perceive them. It outlines how the women in this study perceive their reputation first. This is followed by how women are evaluated by others.

#### *What are they thinking?*

When asked how others perceived their leadership, participants had a variety of answers. In this section, issues associated with perceptions seemed to play a primary role. Gender, stature, race, age, and other external factors were stated as playing a role in how they were perceived. Karen explained an issue she is facing "[As a woman] if you have an original thought, or original idea or even an original question, people are either, sometimes surprised, taken aback, or even in some instances, see it as almost a

subversive move.” She consequently works very hard to craft good questions so that this perception is not made. Celia went on to explain,

I’m an Asian woman and I think that there are expectations that I’ll be meek, and I’ll sit back and I’ll play a supporting role. There are a couple of things that I won’t do – I won’t ever take minutes at a meeting for instance. I think some of those things come across as a little bit unnecessary. Why would you need to assert yourself that way? It is really important to me as somebody who looks down, who looks small, who’s yellow and female, that I can claim my space a little bit from the get-go.”

This adjustment of behavior was echoed a number of times by other participants, including setting specific boundaries around behaviors.

Jean went on to explain,

I think age and gender influences how people see me. And being kind of petite, I think, sometimes there’s something about that, too. Like, the physical stature of people sometimes gives them more ability to command authority or to be heard. I sometimes feel in meetings that I will say something and someone else will say the same exact thing – and the other person says it, and everybody in the room says, ‘Oh! Excellent point!’ You know? And I’m like ‘Yeah. That was an excellent point.’

She has the distinct impression that “there are certainly people that interact with me who I feel like look at me and think. You can’t possibly know what you’re talking about.”

Many participants commented immediately that they felt people liked them.

Bessy responded, “It’s hard to say how my leadership is received. [laugh] People like me! People like working for me!” Others simply stated that they were well liked around campus or that they felt that people liked them. Jessica counters this idea with the following thought, “As much as we want to be liked – and it’s always been hard for me in my life when that hasn’t been the case – its not about, “Do they like me?” anymore.

Its about, you know, “Am I setting the right standard so that people – both internally and externally- can see that this is a really well-run operation?”” She continued,

You’re never going to please all of the people all the time. I think, as women, that’s one of the things we really have to contend with, because we tend, by our natures, to be more pleaser-oriented than, you know, “It’s my way or the highway,” kind of people. Men seem to be able to that and not have any regrets about that, but I think for women that tends to be really hard.

Several also gave specific examples of the way that they work and the actions they take to build a reputation on campus. Cathy explained what she hopes people think of her, “That if they call they will get a call back, they will get an email back. I don’t always do what they want, but it is tended to one way or another very quickly. You can count on me.” She went on to explain that she never wastes peoples time by being clear on the phone and in email and constantly aware of others times and energy.

Several of the women in support positions explained that they felt that their reputations had a bit of fear built into it. Cathy explains,

There are people who are afraid of me. They are afraid of me because of my position. So they think that I am dangerous (laughs) so they are nervous just because of my title and where I work and I don’t like that. I don’t like people to be afraid of me or uncomfortable. It drives me crazy. So I do what I can to calm them down. To help them relax and be comfortable around me as we begin to get to know each other.

Several women touched on the fact that they believe their reputation is built on relationships on campus. Bessy reflected, “For the most part, I work pretty hard to have good work relationships not only with the people who report to me, but with other circles because [of] those ripple effect of people that you work with regularly.” There

was awareness that relationships were far reaching and could impact how the participants were thought of across campus and beyond.

Respect was another word that came up regularly when asked about how they were viewed by others. Jessica said, “You know reputationally, I’ve been around long enough [that] I think people know the quality and effort of my work. I think that there’s a general level of respect. Those that know me would say that they respect me.”

Finally, passion was another common theme. As Darcy put it, “I think I’m perceived as somebody with a lot of passion for what I do, somebody who works really hard, somebody that can be a little volatile but is generally good-spirited, somebody who’s impatient, somebody who’s focused on the future – which is good for the most part, but some people find very stressful.”

One particularly interesting observation was made by Lori who stated that “I think my leadership has been well-received here, on many levels.” She went on to say that she had recently found out that she was an unsuccessful candidate for the interim position she was holding. She explained, “The feedback that I heard was the perception in going to the next level for me, here, was that I was not as viable a candidate as others because, in my time here, I’ve been too consumed with details. And so, that has caused folks to not have confidence that I could lead at that broader 360,000 foot view.” This feedback was obviously at odds with how she believed she was perceived at this school.

*Formal or informal feedback process*

When asked how they received feedback about their leadership, three general responses emerged: formal evaluations, informal feedback, and self-reflection. Participants reported that they received the majority of their feedback in informal scenarios. Despite the lack of formal evaluations, there was a sense that feedback in general was an important part of their positions. As Nancy explained, “I think it takes a leader to be able to be open to feedback and to want to grow, and to try not to take things personally. That’s, I think, sometimes challenging for people – myself included – to realize that, while sometimes those things are hard to hear, it makes you better and it helps you grow as a leader.”

Those who received feedback from informal methods relied on conversations, often prompted by the participant, with their immediate work community. Not only did participants note verbal feedback, but they reported that they ‘observed’ feedback from others as well. As Darcy outlined, “On a day-to-day basis there are no formal mechanisms. It’s basically just listening to people, and you know, maybe trying to hear what they’re attempting to communicate without necessarily saying it right out. In subtle ways, they’re letting you know when something is a problem.” Participants relied heavily on this intuitive feedback based on observing the people with whom they work.

Participants were clear about recognition and that the higher up the ladder a position is the less likely they were to receive feedback or direction. As Darcy says,

When you get to my level, I think, the people that I report to, like the provost, don’t give you much guidance. They’ve got so many other problems to deal with. You’re sort-of on your own. You can read a lot, and talk to your colleagues – I do that with people from

other universities who are in my position. I get advice and consultation that way. But once you get to a certain place in the organization, chances are the person you report to is so damn busy with so many other things that they can just nod when you're talking to them, and maybe give you a little bit of feedback. But there's not much. I guess if you were doing a really bad job, there'd be an email about it.

Few participants received consistent formal feedback from their supervisors and staff. Most mentioned a system that was in place, but few said that it occurred consistently. Of the few who had consistent formal feedback, this happened as frequently as every 2 weeks to the span of every 5 years. Many spoke to the fact that solid goals, reflective writing, and checking in with advisory councils were built into their formal evaluation systems.

Finally, there was a sense that a few participants were their own worse critics, relying heavily on their own standards instead of those set by others. As Jessica explains, "I think our "unconfident self," at whatever age and whatever level experience we are, tends to really chew on the on the things that don't go well. [I] second guess those a million times, and try to ask myself what I could've done differently." Odette explained further, "I'm incredibly critical of myself, but I'd guess that most folks don't know that. When you're like that, when you're somewhat insecure and you're in charge and you don't want people to know [that] you're scared to death, you're pretty conscientious of not asking too much." Balancing this self reflection and other feedback sources was an area that several participants said that they could improve, both with themselves and with their employees.

### How do women lead?

This section outlines the responses that address how the women saw themselves engaging with others normally and during times of conflict. It also looks at how the women are engaged in mentoring. Finally, it looks at the budget situation occurring during the time the interviews were conducted as an example of leadership in action.

### *How engage others*

When speaking in general about what they did to engage with others and lead at their specific institutions, there was a variety of responses ranging from leading by example to working hard and having fun. It was clear from these responses that these women felt that it was important for them to be approachable and authentic in their interactions with others. Being kind, friendly and generous were also identified as good characteristics to have. Overall, the women discussed having a passion for their job and doing the job well. As Odette said, “I lead the way, I mean, all the way. I show up, I go to events, I care about people, and it’s fun for me.” This section outlines common experiences, as well as some very individual habits were expressed in this section, including relationships with others, communication, listening, collaboration, teamwork, vision and a focus on the bigger picture.

### *Relationships*

One of the most common themes throughout this entire study was the importance of relationships. As Karen said, “If you can’t build relationships, you just

aren't going to succeed. Relationships are primary; everything else that you do is derivative of relationships." This emphasis on relationships was repeated continually as the most important thing these participants did to be successful.

Having strong relationships was seen as part of being successful in their job. As Jean said, "My greatest strength as a leader is relationships." Elly continued, "I think whatever leadership I'm recognized for is always built on relationships. Above just about anything else, I think that collaboration and solid relationships are the way that work gets done most productively and most deeply. I have a reputation for being able to forge relationships across all kinds of divisions and places." This skill of establishing connections as a method of getting the job done, was identified and talked about often.

Commenting on what successful relationships look like Elly said,

Well, they're warm. They're trusting. So, you know, you're speaking with authenticity. I'm hearing things that I trust are authentic. I'm saying things that are authentic. That's just a shortcut to productivity. You just get work done, that way. But, it's based on the value of human relationships and the belief that everyone is a teacher and has something to contribute to a project." A strong link to productivity was evidenced as a way to successful relationships.

Over a third of the women volunteered that they simply like people and that relationship building came naturally. As Heather said, "I think that the greatest characteristic that probably defines who I am, independent of being a leader, but probably helps a lot, is that I genuinely love people. I'm a relationship junkie." Learning from others, being invested in their lives and having a sustained connection with others was seen as one of the most positive aspects of their jobs.

Also acknowledged was how maintaining these relationships required a certain amount of effort. Being trustworthy, keeping confidences, and following through with obligations and promises were highly important. There was also a sense that these efforts could and should be accomplished even when a leader was shy or introverted. The personal effort to engage in relationship building was well worth the rewards according to the participants.

An interesting theme that emerged when discussing relationship building was the use of informal meetings with food, candy, coffee, or tea. Many participants discussed meeting out of the office to develop deeper relationships with people. As Audra explains, “It’s a cheap investment for me to take someone to lunch or buy someone coffee so that I can talk with them for a few minutes or an hour, so that I can get to know them a little bit better – develop a relationship with them. It has helped tremendously.” Shirley shared that she uses frequent coffee dates to problem solve and check on relationships with people. During the interview she admitted that she doesn’t even like coffee, but has a reputation around campus for drinking it often, which of course is due to her meeting schedule.

### *Communication*

The second most common skill that was discussed in this section was the ability to communicate directly and well. This was also closely tied to relationship building and stressed the ability to both share information and listen well. Darcy identified that her entire job was structured to share information, “What does that mean on a day-to-day

basis? Two things: meeting and emails. It's all about communications. Some people think that if you spend your time in meetings and you spend your time on emails, that you're not getting anything done, but some people are. Because that's what the whole job is made up of: meetings and emails."

Sharing information with others was discussed as key to successful communication. Jean expressed,

I would say that I over-communicate, maybe. I want to make sure that people understand – every time that I have information, they have it too. So they're trusting that, although everything might not be perfectly clear, if there's new information, I'm going to get it to them as quickly as possible and give them access to the resources and to the information so that they can make good decisions for themselves.

This idea of communicating more than necessary was shared by more than five other women in this interview. It appeared that this was an effort to make sure that everyone had as much information as possible and that there was no perception of information hoarding.

Being active listeners was the second part of being a good communicator. Five of the women identified as feeling like counselors because of the amount of listening and coaching that they did. Colleen explained, "I try to listen more than I speak and I try to insert what's missing and speak up for the voices that aren't there." This idea of listening and hearing the other person was seen as critical to fully engaging in successful communication.

Five participants identified their role as the key holder of vision and mission within their organization. As Bessy said, "...but also, thinking about, you know, 'Where

are we headed? What are we about?’ You know, ‘Where are we going together?’” This responsibility to lead the big picture of the organization, as well as manage ambitious goals was seen as important to the institutions.

More than half of the women talked specifically about being tied into a system that was bigger than their immediate positions. Working for the education of students, for the state, school division, or the profession were all seen as a bigger picture of their work. Cathy said, “I believe, whether you are a support staff person, like a secretary, or an administrator, all of us are in service to the academic mission.”

Additional tools of communicating including have a good sense of humor. Laughing at themselves as well as finding humor in stressful situations was mentioned a number of times as being necessary for good communication. Keeping conversations short and to the point and discussing things face-to-face were also prioritized.

### *Collaboration and teamwork*

Being collaborative was the next common way that the women in this study engaged with others. Consulting broadly and including others in decisions making was seen as important, but also seen as having drawbacks. As Nancy explained,

I think my staff would tell you that I’m very collaborative. Sometimes that can be a strength, sometimes it can be a weakness. In some ways it may take us longer, because I’m often trying to see some type of consensus. I think it’s important that [we include] everybody involved in a particular development or a particular program, or whatever the case may be, and that I get a lot of input.

Being clear about when to ask and when to just make decisions independently was seen as an important distinction.

Specifically speaking about working with others led many to outline their expectations and relationship with staff. Hiring the right people, trusting them and supporting their decisions was discussed by almost all of the women. Elly explained, “I never try and make people do things. I’m pretty committed to finding the best employees, and then putting them to work on what they love most, and then it just happens so naturally.”

Creating a work environment that was inclusive and found ways to celebrate successes was seen as important. Odette explained that, as a leader, she is always “providing space for people to grow, and inspiring them, and providing vision. And then, at the end of the day, be willing to be held accountable to make the tough decisions.” Giving time to others and being interested in both their work and personal lives was seen as essential.

Meeting employee needs was also seen as an essential way of providing for employees. Bessy explained, “I have that day-to-day leadership mandate, or set of tasks, in terms of making sure that people feel like they have what they need, both morally as well as real, financial support and supply support so they can do the work they need to.” Several participants mentioned that it was their job to worry about money so that their staff could focus on their jobs.

#### *How engage in conflict*

When asked about dealing with conflict, participants had clear responses. Regardless of being comfortable with conflict or not, almost all had clear steps for

addressing it in the work environment. In many ways their responses paralleled their descriptions of their general leadership style. The areas brought up in this section include taking time to gather information, communicating, listening, relationships, self-evaluation, negotiation and other tactics for dealing with conflict.

### *Thoughts about conflict*

While a minority, three women very clearly admitted that they did not enjoy dealing with conflict. Cathy said clearly, “I don’t like conflict. Real conflict. When there is a whole lot of emotional heat around something and people are really angry about it, and I can’t see a way to find a comfortable place in which to move things further down the road. Those are tough, those are tough.” When asked how she handles these situations, she replied, “Um, I don’t have a good strategy. If I had a good strategy, it wouldn’t bother me.” Many of the women said that this was the most difficult part of their job.

Of the women who indicated that they were familiar and ready to deal with conflict there was a readiness to engage and work through it. As Nancy stated, “I’m not resistant to conflict. I think, in a lot of ways, it makes a unit stronger when you can work through that.” It was mentioned that sometimes initiating conflict, as well as helping craft the dialog to move through it was necessary to many of the roles and positions that these women held.

There was a general sense that conflict was something that could and should be worked through. As Odette said, “I really don’t think people show up to work and say, “I want to do a crummy job. I want to have bad relations.” I really do think that some

people just don't know how to maintain relationships, or get business done without fighting." Helping people work through times of conflict was a shared goal voiced during these interviews.

*Taking time for assessment/ gathering information*

There were a number of strategies identified as successfully dealing with conflict. The first step was taking the time to gather and assess the information around the conflict. As Heather said, "It's when I don't have access to the information, then I make stupid mistakes. If I don't have all the pieces, I can't actually use my gut, because I have holes. The holes are too big. So, I have to make sure that the fabric is almost intact. Then, it becomes relatively clear what the best way forward is." She went on further to say that she would take the time to interview each person involved in a conflict so that she could gather the appropriate information and then make a decision. Several other participants also said that taking time was also helpful to cool the situation and allow people to regroup.

*Bring it up/talk about it/communicate*

The next step that was identified was moving head-on to identify and communicate about the situation. As Nancy stated, "I'm a big communicator, so my strategy is, once people's emotions can be calmed, to get people in a room to sit down—whether that's two people or three people, or whatever – and try to help mediate, or negotiate through that." More than five women identified with being straight forward

people and having a responsibility to bring “the elephant in the room” out in public. Ignoring or avoiding conflict was seen as creating additional problems and making work relationships difficult. As Celia said, “I can be patient in this area, but I am going to talk about it.”

One important piece that Carolyn brought up was the mode of communication surrounding conflict. She outlined, “One of the things I will do immediately, if we’ve got a conflict, is get out of email and get it out of voice mail, so it’s face-to-face. I want us in a meeting and I want us nose-to-nose.” This face-to-face communication allowed her, and others, to read and understand the situation better.

### *Listening*

After surfacing the issue, sitting back, and allowing others to speak and be heard was outlined as a critical piece to this process. Karen said, “So, it is best to have that conversation, and I try to craft a conversation where I really get to hear if there is a concern, what that concerns is and take into consideration where that concern may be coming from.” Several participants supported this statement by saying simply that they “just stop talking, and listen,” which allowed people to vent as well as allowing them to pick up on where the problems are occurring.

### *Relationships*

Maintaining and building from established relationships even during times of conflict was a common concern during the interview. As Jean said, “Being in a

relationship with folks, I think, is best when every time we interact with them we're letting them be new. Trying really hard not to prejudge a situation and really be present in the moment, and honest, and trying not to talk." Allowing this dignity and respect for the person within the conflict was echoed several times.

### *Self-evaluation/separate from situation*

Another important piece of working through conflict was creating a personal separation from the situation or being self reflective about the conflict. As Daisy said, "I have to step back and reexamine my own motivations and presuppositions, and assumptions." Jean identified the challenge as "...often it's very hard to keep in mind that we have assumptions and we have the lens that was constructed by all of these things that came before that moment. It's hard to step away from that lens, and see the situation anew – especially with people, because, typically, we have a history with people." Trying to understand the situation for what it is was and not getting personally caught up in the conflict, was a message shared by a third of the women interviewed for this study.

### *Negotiating*

Many of the women felt that their role during times of conflict was one of negotiation. Audra explained that she negotiated, "By keeping it on the issue. [When there is conflict] I try to rely on facts and data. I try to respectfully negotiate the issues so that it can be a hopefully mutual win. But sometimes it can't be. You know,

sometimes they're wrong, and you know it. But you don't say that. You negotiate through the facts and the data until you get the issue turned around." Others added that they helped with this by monitoring the conversation so that it was "civil, respectful, non-emotional, and inclusive" (Darcy). Giving everyone a chance to speak and giving voice to those who may not naturally speak up was also explained as important.

### *Other tactics*

A variety of other tools were identified as helping the women work with conflict. As mentioned in the previous section, several participants brought up food and coffee dates as a way to mitigate conflict. Walking people where they needed to go and "owning" their problems were also seen as ways to connect with people and diffuse situations. As Odette stated, "I think it is very important that I don't lose my cool. I think one of the most important things I can do to help manage conflict is just be about as Steady-Eddy as possible." Having a sense of humor was also seen as an important tool for resolving situations.

### *Communicating the outcomes*

The resolution of problems was ultimately the goal for all participants. As Celia said, "I'm committed to the outcome, which is, we are working on this together. I can accept that we disagree, I can accept that this going on, and we need to get here, so lets stay focused on – "What do we need to get there?"" Carolyn identified that this can be a

challenge and that “Sometimes you get to a standstill and, no matter what, a decision just needs to be made and then, as a leader, you have to be able to do that.”

### *How mentor others*

This section, so far, has looked at the specific ways that women engage with others normally and during times of conflict. Passing these skills on and teaching these methods to others can be thought of the next step of leadership. Through mentoring others, the women in this study have the opportunity to share what works, what doesn't and help other women leaders as they progress.

When asked how they mentor others almost all of the women gave answers that described a specific task associated with building relationships, many associated with supervisory responsibilities. Several also stated that they did not mentor because they did not supervise staff.

The activities that were described for mentoring included a number of broad areas such as creating opportunities, grooming, encouraging and supporting others. Additional activities such as promotion, attending conferences, giving additional job duties, and attending additional committee meetings were all described as concrete examples of how these women participated in mentoring.

Building relationships and taking time to visit with people was viewed as important aspects of mentoring. Many participants mentioned finding time to visit informally with people and offering advice about career moves and opportunities. These relationships were commonly described as ways for participants to provide

encouragement, support, and other feedback to the people who they were mentoring. As Audra was able to articulate,

I try to always make time for [mentoring], with anyone on campus. I make it a point of trying to have lunch with different people, and trying to make sure that I loop back with them on a semi-regular basis to continue conversations or ask them, if I see them on the street, 'You know, last time we talked you were mentioning this.' And I try to remember those things and bring them back up. I try to always celebrate other people's success or adventures that they are involved in.

Most responses were quite short and covered two or three of the above activities.

In contrast, two participants had very comprehensive and in-depth approaches to mentoring. Their approach is outlined next.

Nancy explained how she teaches master's students at the graduate level at her school and creates opportunities for promising students to job shadow and work on committees. She feels that she shares knowledge "So as the caretaker of the field, we continue to get top-notch people, whether they're men or women, into the field so that the field is strong and that we can continue some of the legacies that some of the people that have come before us have established in this type of field." She works to find people who are passionate and driven to make the field better.

Next, Nancy works with people who are new professionals in the field. She participates in a "Two-and-a half day boot camp, [consisting] of everything from how you interact politically on campus, how you develop a budget, how you hire staff, how you fire staff, how you lead, how you manage, and just sort of how you put the whole thing together." This step is geared toward preparing people for the next step and promotion in their career.

Finally, she works with established professionals by staying connected and helping people navigate difficult situations or problems. She mentioned that this was an activity that spans her whole career and that she helps others identify opportunities for mentoring. She mentioned, “I just remember that there are people that did and continue to do that for me, so it’s this cycle where it’s important, then, for me to do it to others, and hopefully instill in them that it’s their responsibility to help the next group of leaders come up and do that.”

Similarly Odette saw her role as one to identify hidden talent. “You just see potential out there, and maybe their boss is squelching them, or maybe they just don’t have the confidence. So I kind of tap some of those folks. Not just the ambitious ones that are out there saying ‘Pick me! Pick me!’” She explained how she is always pushing people to “Take a college class, get another degree” and offering them flextime so they can accomplish this.

Odette specifically explained her role as preparing for others to take over. “You know, I feel like it’s my role to prepare the future – you know, I intend to retire some day, and I’m entrusted in this leadership role for a while, and I need to leave this place better than I found it – and that typically means that there’s folks ready to take over.” This idea of succession planning and the temporary nature of the position were only mentioned by this one individual.

Odette expressed a strong desire to be an advocate for women and individuals from underrepresented groups. “I think it’s my role to believe in people more than they do, themselves, and push and guide. I do that. The same way that’s been modeled to me,

I just tap people, I invite people in.” She expressed a strong desire to see people succeed, both for the individual and the field that she works in.

*Leadership in action: the example of budgetary difficulties*

While not originally included as an interview question, issues associated with a budget situation occurring during the 2008/09 academic year came up at almost every interview. About one third of the way through the interview process, this question was formally added to the complete set of questions. This was fortunate because answers to these questions are indicative of leadership in action. Several participants commented that this is where the real leaders show-up and make decisions. Additionally, that it takes real leaders to act with courage and integrity to successfully navigate budget trials.

While some participants had a clear sense of direction, others did not; there was a general sense of stress and unease surrounding this situation. A sense of being overwhelmed but wanting to do the right thing was common. As Rachel said, “I just don’t know. I don’t know what to do....But I’m going do my best to be prepared for it.” Odette simply stated, “How am I handling it? Actually, for awhile there, I wasn’t taking action. I was just losing sleep.” This sense of paralysis was due in part to the uncertainty of the situation, as well as the fact that information was coming in bits and pieces from those who controlled state monies.

At the same time, however, many of the women described the ways in which they were dealing with the situation. Again, their responses parallel the ways in which they report other aspects of their leadership, trying to maintain open communication,

promoting positive interactions, protecting people, and collecting and sharing information.

#### *Mitigating panic and conveying information*

Several women said that their first step in dealing with this situation was mitigating the sense of panic caused by the unknown. Nancy summarized,

So, I think it's important to give the concrete information that you have, and to not fuel the rumors, and to try to keep people calm. And [be] confident that people are working on plans. We're not just sitting back and waiting for things to happen for us. The budget people are looking ahead and planning and asking budget managers and leaders to start looking at what it might look like. So we're being proactive.

An effort to share information and stop “rumor mills” was in place to take care of the community being affected.

#### *Positive outlook*

Looking at this budget situation as an opportunity to change operations and prioritize operations was also heard from the women. Darcy said, “It's so important, I think, to turn that around as quickly as you can. You know the old adage, ‘every challenge is an opportunity.’ It's important to turn it into that positive message – that message about opportunity – as quickly as you can.” Several participants had a positive outlook when thinking about going through their departments to align the budget with core services.

### *Protecting people*

One of the most salient responses to the budget situation was a sincere desire to protect people, first and foremost. When it came to planning, Jean summarized many of the women's thoughts when she said, "We're going to try to find the savings without having it affect human capital." Protecting people was identified as the most important because they are "An endless source of solutions. You know, you can do a lot of things for free if you've got people. If you don't have people, no paper helps you to solve problems" (Jean).

Many participants were faced with the prospect of having to let people go and were aware of the level of responsibility associated with this. One woman spoke clearly about making sure that "invisible work" was still recognized and taken into account when making decisions about budget cuts. As Odette stated, "I can't screw it up. These are people's livelihoods. Not just the delivery of education and students, but there's two hundred and seventy people assuming that I've taken good care of their work lives." All of the women with direct reporting lines had a clear sense of the impact that their decisions would have on the lives of their employees.

### *Collecting and sharing information*

Looking at best practices, talking to colleagues, learning the details of the budget and evaluating mission/vision statements were all mentioned as ways to help deal with the situation. More specifically, communicating, and instilling trust and fairness were mentioned as the ways that folks were handling this situation. As Pam commented,

Everyone in my department knows what our budget is, and they know what our situation is, and they trust that I'm being open and honest and things. They trust that, although we may have to lay people off, I'm going to make decisions in the best interest of the work that we're committed to be doing.

### Work culture for women

There was a marked difference in how each of the four institutions included in this study represented their work culture and it's responsiveness. On one hand, all of the first five participants contacted at University D responded to the researcher within a week of initial contact. Most of these responses were accompanied by offers to meet for lunch, help with parking or maps of the campus. During the interviews at University D, there were a number of similar terms used such as social justice, collaboration, and community. All five participants also spoke highly of the leadership on campus and many mentioned being inspired and being well taken care of. As Karen put it,

I have to say, that of all the work environments that I have been in, this one has been the most supportive. I am so very grateful for that because I have to tell you, that I don't think that I would have been able to grow as a leader, without this environment. Any other environment I was in, I was really struggling. It was a top-down environment. There was no room for flexibility, no room for creativity.

This sentiment was echoed by each participant interviewed at this institute.

In stark contrast, at University B there was little initial positive response to the researcher about participating in this study. More than ten people were contacted at this school to participate and the results of the contacts were mixed. Several women never replied, and many replied indicating that they did not have the time to participate. In the

end, the nominator was asked to participate in the study because the process was so long, with so little positive response. As Rachel explained her view,

...because this school used to be the kind of community that one person could be ill, but everybody knew about it and everybody cared and everybody did something about it. It's not like that anymore. I think from the top down; it's completely different. I don't see the connection with the community from that level down. I really don't.... you know, I don't want to work here anymore.

She went on to say "I think a lot of people who've been here as long as I have, are tired; tired of being constantly overloaded. I mean, I never go to lunch." This sentiment was echoed several times during the visits with women at University B. Again, contrary to University D the shared language of this school was related to strategic planning, working long hours for little pay and having incredible workloads.

Interestingly, one woman from University B responded quickly and enthusiastically to the request to participate in the study. She offered to help navigate campus and shared her interest in the research topic. During the interview, she expressed her desire to build community and trust within her unit, with a focus on social justice. Coincidentally, during her interview she revealed that she had recently moved from University D to University B. She expressed her surprise at the difference in culture between the two schools, and the time that it was taking her to adjust.

The other two institutes, University C and University A, fell somewhere between these two extremes in terms of responsiveness and culture. It was very clear at University C that the current budget situation was creating an effect that had people on edge. This uncertainty in the future built a tension into many of those interviews. At

University A significant change in leadership also created a similar tension. At both of these institutes there was a mix of positive and negative examples that explained the culture and atmosphere. The sections below describe elements of the work culture that the women described as supportive of their work and their leadership – both in general and as women.

*Feeling adequately recognized and rewarded*

When asked if they feel adequately recognized and rewarded, there was a strong division in answers. Half of the women indicated that they did, while the other half either felt that they were not recognized and rewarded or had mixed feelings. In most cases, this paralleled the differences between the schools mentioned previously. Those working at University C and D had the most positive responses, while those at University A and B had the least positive responses. However, variations in responses occurred at all schools.

Of those who felt they were recognized and rewarded, there was a strong association with the number and types of opportunities that were presented to them. As Karen commented about University D,

The opportunities are there. They're laid on a table. It's like a smorgasbord and nobody here is going to force you to do any professional development. You can sit in your little corner and be the same person you are for the past 25 years if you want to. I was so grateful to have a smorgasbord that I said, 'I'm going to try this. Let me taste that. Oh, you mean I can actually be on this committee? You mean I can learn about this? It's ok for me to learn?'

She goes on to say, “To have the opportunity to grow professionally affects everything in your life. Your personal life, your relationships with people. The way you feel about yourself even.” This recognition of opportunities and the impact it had on the growth of their careers and the satisfaction in their jobs was repeated throughout the interviews.

Participants who felt support and recognized also mentioned that they feel rewarded in ways other than money. The relationships and recognition from working with students and colleagues was mentioned over and over again as a system of reward for these participants. As Carolyn commented about her position at University B, “Fortunately, for me, it means that I don’t have to struggle financially. And I don’t want to be rich, I just want enough and be comfortable – and I have that. My reward, at the end of the day, comes from the relationships that I’ve got, and being able to make a difference.” Darcy echoed this, “You get so much. Just knowing people and having those relationships with people, is a huge intrinsic reward.”

A few participants felt that they were not recognized and rewarded in their positions. This seemed to be true for a variety of reasons, two being the type of working being done and how the visibility and perception of their work to others. As Celia outlines about her job at University C,

I think a lot of my duties and a lot of my work is invisible because it’s all through other people. Again, in not having a staff and not having a formal role, very often the work that I do is stuff that needs to get done, nobody quite knows how to handle it. That makes it difficult to be recognized in terms of pay, and in terms of advancement.

The general culture of the institution also seemed to pinpoint an area where recognition and reward were lacking. Several participants commented on feeling there

was a lack of acknowledgement and investment in the lives of employees from a higher level within their institutions. As Audra said of University B, “This University, in my opinion, isn’t one that takes good care of its existing employees as well as I would probably like to see it.” These participants were not only clear about not feeling supported or encouraged, but about not being recognized and rewarded as well.

Another area of where support was lacking emerged from the interviews. Although Carolyn felt supported at University B, she went on to say, “Am I paid less than my male counterparts? Yes. Including this one. [points at man walking past window] If I looked to that as my validation of reward, number one I think that’s pretty shallow. But number two, I get much more comfort out of knowing that I’m respected. If somebody has a question of ethics on the campus, they usually call me. And that means a lot.” Other participants commented that they earn less than men, but that they rely on the “stuff you store in your heart” or “making a difference to other people” to fill this gap.

Participants also voiced strong recognition that the longer a person stays in a position, the less that they are recognized and rewarded. As Jean states, “So, I do think that once you’ve been someplace for awhile, people get used to what you offer.” Participating in a job search clarified this for two participants. Bessy was recruited by another institution and felt more valued through that experience than she did day to day at University C,

But you start to wonder, ‘Am I only valued if somebody on the outside sees me as valuable?’ You know, it’s that difficulty. It happens in many organizations, not just universities, although it’s rampant in universities right now. ‘I have to prove my worth by

showing that others outside this institution are willing to pay for my good work' You know?

Lori on the other hand was not hired into her interim position at University A,

Having the recent disappointment of not interviewing for the job that I've been doing for a couple years, and probably facing being an unsuccessful candidate in that search, I don't know that I feel totally supported right now. I don't think that's been recognized. Having done an awful lot over just two years, above and beyond what's been expected, that's a disappointment.

Participants in high-level positions at their institutions reflected that it's simply lonely at the top. When it comes to being recognized and supported, they simply don't have the same support structure that others may. Odette relates, "Yes, in the sense that I have the resources that I need. I have a place to sit, a phone, a computer. And yet, I could use a little more touchy-feel now and then, but I get it. You have to create that yourself, I think, sometimes being in places where you solicit the feedback you need." Heather was also able to state, "There are not very many people above me, right? There's the provost and there's the president. So, no, I don't really hear much about that, which is interesting. It's not as if I've been undermined, in any way, I just think it's just "Do your job." It's invisible work that you just do. I never feel undervalued. So, I don't know. But I don't think it's overt."

The need to be recognized was common from all women. While they were all different, Nancy was able to articulate a fairly comprehensive response, "I don't need anything flashy. Just sometimes a thank-you or recognition of our students saying, you know 'You really helped me out in a tough situation,' is all. It'll carry me for weeks. So it doesn't have to be anything formal, but just those positive strokes help me to keep

going.” These small moments of acknowledging and giving credit seemed to have a very clear impact.

*Work supportive of them as women*

When asked if they felt that their work environment was supportive of them as women, there were two responses: “yes” and “sort-of.” Most of those asked specifically about feeling supported in their positions reported that they did. They identified feeling supported by (a) encouragement to complete degree programs, (b) promotions, (c) attendance to professional development opportunities, (d) participation in national organizations, and (e) having a flexible schedule for traveling, studying and family. Those at University C and D expressed the strongest level of support for them as women in their positions, while those in other schools expressed less support.

One participant, Pam, explained that the way in which her boss interacts with her at University C specifically makes her feel appreciated and supported in her job. She explains, “He asks about my family, and he wants to know what’s going on in my life. He cares about what’s going on in the organization, but he starts every meeting [by asking] how I am doing. So I definitely feel very supported.”

At two institutions in particular, University C and D there appeared to be a very strong culture supporting women. As Celia explained about University C, “I think there is a lot of support for a woman’s way of knowing. There is a lot of support for connection and empathy and warmth.” Other participants at these two institutions talked about having flat organizations and support for feminist ways of thinking and

organization. Participants at these schools were able to speak about support coming from both men and women.

Several participants strongly stated that not only did they feel supported, but that they did not ever feel disadvantaged. Further, that they had never picked up on differences associated with gender in their job. Nancy, who works at University C, explains that she feels this is specific to the Pacific Northwest,

They've been very open – very encouraging. I've never felt looked down-to or not valued or respected. If anything, I think people have been very open to helping me get better at what I do. I know there's parts of the country that, especially in athletics, [where] that's not the case – where it's still seen as, either a token position, or somehow women's leadership styles aren't tough enough or aren't as valued as males are. And I just have never felt that in the PAC – 10 on the west coast.

While additional participants explained that they just had never noticed a difference because of their gender and had always felt supported.

Of those who responded with a “sort-of” response, there were mixed reactions to this question. Several participants declared that they felt supported in their individual departments or units but felt less supported when they were out around campus. Moreover, participants reported feeling left out in meetings, because of a “language of exclusion” specifically related to sports.

Others mentioned how the specifics of who they are and the position they hold create some dynamics that can be uncomfortable. As Celia explained about her position at University C, “There is something about this position that I'm in that feels kind of traditional, secretary-ish. I'm not totally clear how to box that notion. It's not very comfortable to me, but I don't know how to address it head on.” Another participant

spoke about how she perceived her age, gender, and physical size to sometimes play a role in how she is perceived and therefore supported.

There was also a handful of women who said both, yes and no at the same time.

For instance Bessy was able to explain in her position at University C,

For me, personally, as a woman, for me the university has been supportive and good. I've had lots of opportunities, and good people to work with. [I] have not felt barriers, necessarily, in being a woman. That doesn't mean there haven't been times that I've thought, 'This situation would be different if I were a male, or 'This interaction is different because I'm the only woman at the table.'

Other participants reported feeling supported. However, they knew they made less money than their counterparts, or they were aware that their words did not always carry the same weight as their male colleagues.

#### What else do women have to say?

At the end of each interview the women were asked if they had anything else to share or important information relevant to the research topic. Almost all of the women had additional items to share and several actually shared more during this section than during the formal question and answer part of the interview. When answering these questions, many of the women shifted the tone and focus of how they shared information. Often, they began speaking directly to the researcher and related more personal experiences. Key areas that they discussed in this portion of the interview included their thoughts about difficulties they faced in being a leader, ways that they get

help in their leadership activities, the differences they had observed between genders, additional personal attributes and the topic of family in relation to working.

*What is hard about being a leader?*

The most common message heard from participants regarding the difficulty of begin a leader was the fact that it was often a hard and lonely experience. As Cathy relates,

There isn't very much straightforward [information] about what is horrible about being a leader. The society wants people to aspire to those roles and wants the very best people to aspire to those roles and it is right to want that. And one of the secrets is that you don't tell people how bad it is sometimes. You are watched all the time, everybody is trying to figure out who you are, whether they can count on you, how are going to screw up, what are the ways that they disagree with and what are the ways in which you have feet of clay... etc. And that that kind of focus, while it can be kind of exciting, is also very wearing.

Other women referred to how socially isolating a leadership role can be. They also related that they felt a great deal of responsibility and that this combination can be overwhelming.

Several women commented that the visibility of leadership roles made them difficult to navigate. As Pam said, "I feel like I'm standing on a huge ledge with all of these people pushing at me demanding these things, and that just one final push and I'd flip over and everyone will see every mistake that I've made going forward. That was just really fearful for me, I mean, I had to get over this fear of this visibility of this leadership role." The vulnerability and sense of being exposed was expressed as a particularly difficult part of leadership roles.

### *Getting help*

The second most common response was a general acknowledgement about asking for and accepting help from others. As Nancy put it, “At the core, it’s really important to listen to those around you, and to not assume you have the answers because your office is a little bigger or you’ve been doing it a little bit longer, and that you empower people around you, and you’re not afraid to make mistakes or have people let you know you’ve made mistakes, and being open to feedback.” Being open to others was encouraged by actively seeking mentors and not waiting for them to show up. Showing up to work willing to be an active learner was also communicated as an important way of being open to others and accepting new ways of approaching situations.

Taking care of one’s self was also a common thread in these conversations. As Darcy said, “I think, personally, that if you can get between eight and nine hours of sleep every night, you can do anything. You can do anything! I see some of my colleagues that look so sleep deprived and so hammered that everything seems to be monumental.” She went on to say, “I think that if you take care of yourself, physically – and spiritually, you take care of yourself in that way too – if you take care of yourself, you can pretty much handle anything.” This focus on taking care of one’s self before being able to take care of others was common between many of the women.

### *Difference between genders*

There was general agreement that there is a difference in how men and women are treated in the work place. As Colleen stated, “We’re not gender neutral.” A number of participants recounted stories about how they had felt marginalized in the workplace by men. However, Celia stated,

I think I have discovered that women are harder on other women than sometimes men are, about the choice to take time off, or work part-time, or continue with school even while we’re about to have a baby. There are a number of choices that I made, that may or may not be the choices that other women would have made. I think we can sometimes sabotage it for each other.

There was recognition for the continued expansion of women in higher education careers and the acceptance of feminist ways of leading.

A few participants did not identify strongly with the gendered stereotypes associated with being a woman. As Heather explained, “As far as I was concerned, I was just like every other guy. I was a guy. It changed, as I got older and more aware, that what I was OK with may not be OK for everybody else. So it’s been interesting.” For Heather and several other participants, concerns associated with gender registered less than other aspects in their life such as cultural confidence, race, size, and age.

### *Personal attributes*

Being respectful of others and building positive relationships came up often in this section. Everything from not wasting time chit-chatting on the phone, to writing thank you notes, and honoring each individual and their contribution was brought up as ways to navigate work relationships from a place of respect and care. There were

several women who commented that their job was to hire the right people, and then step back and trust them to do the right thing.

And finally, acknowledging mistakes and being self-forgiving was discussed as a critical function of making it through higher education. As Odette put it she realizes the importance of "...being human. I have messed up a few things now and then." She goes on to discuss the importance of having the "...ability to be humble and have humility." Many participants pointed at being able to move past mistakes and not take everything personally as critical tools for being successful leaders.

#### *Other core issues*

Although no question explored the balance of family with work/life, most participants brought this up, with a few exceptions. Several participants, as discussed prior, made decisions about their career in higher education because of the stability it would afford them while raising a family. Several of them also discussed taking time away from career in order to raise children or looking for a flexible schedule so that they could prioritize their families while maintaining a career. Spending times with spouses or partners was also added into discussions about balancing time at work and at home.

Interestingly one woman described a flip in the standard perception. As Heather explains, "I probably follow a more normative, masculine behavior than female proclivities because I'm the worker all the time. My husband's the person at home, and very comfortable in that. And there's all this other tension, because the external world is surprised by that. You know? Not so much me working as [him] actually being at

home.” She went on to explain that this role reversal was helpful in allowing her to reach the level of her career that she was in, and engage to a high level in her job.

Additionally, while there were no demographic questions to look at the diversity of the women interviewed, this topic came up frequently from those who it affected. It was quite obvious that being female was not the only obstacle that many of these women faced. Those part of a minority population clearly expressed that these additional parts of who they are also took additional negotiations. As Karen clearly stated, “As a minority person, and growing up in areas where I was always a minority, I have never been in a majority situation ever, in my whole life. I am kind of acclimated to being in the minority.” Karen and several others took into full account how these other factors played into their perceptions as women and leaders at their schools. The women who shared these experiences stated that this made them more aware of how others perceived them. Being young, having a small stature, being a woman of color, aging, having a health situation, having children, having aging parents and other factors were all brought up as additional factors that these women dealt with while navigating their jobs.

To those who it affected both the topics of family and diversity were seen as core to their leadership and work. These critical pieces of identity were important for the women to bring up and discuss as being particularly important to their lives.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Women in leadership have received extensive attention and study. Although women continue to make significant progress into the workforce, many suggest that there is still progress to be made to overcome biases and systems of exclusion. Within the realms of higher education women administrators provide critical contributions to the operations, policy and culture of these institutions. This study looked at twenty women in higher education leadership positions and found a number of common experiences and approaches to leadership. The following summarizes the findings from this study, relating the findings to the literature reviewed in Chapter II, discusses possible directions for future research that could build on this work, and finally, describes implications of these results for policies that can support women in leadership roles in higher education.

#### Summary of study

A literature review was completed to provide the background for the topic of women and leadership. This study was conducted using qualitative methods to gather data about the common characteristics of women leaders in higher education administration. Data for this study were obtained from interviews with twenty women

working at four comprehensive universities in the Pacific Northwest. Each woman was asked a series of questions related to five major interest areas listed below:

1. How did women get to their positions?
2. How do women assess leadership?
3. How do women lead?
4. How do women perceive their work culture?
5. What other areas are of concern to women higher education administrators?

Data from the interviews were compiled and evaluated for areas of similarity and variance.

#### How the women got to their positions

The women in this study had primarily worked in higher education for their whole careers and occupied a variety of positions within each school. Working with a population of people engaged in learning and the ability to establish meaningful relationships were mentioned as some of the key reasons why women enjoyed their careers in higher education. Of the women who were at the highest levels in the study, there was a trend of having been placed in interim positions where they established themselves prior to moving into lead positions.

The women in this study owe much to those who have come before them, and those who have helped them along the way. Learning from and having a strong network of support was a shared experience among the women in this study. Participants explained that building this community of mentors can come from a variety of sources both inside and outside of higher education. However, due to school culture, the

availability of mentors and other factors many of the women in this study had difficulty finding and maintaining mentors.

### How do women assess leadership?

The women in this study most closely align with the transformational leadership framework based because they rely so heavily on building trusting, empowering relationships. However, women in this study also described themselves as servant leaders, inspirational leaders and interestingly, not leaders at all. Many expressed their surprise at their successes and the label “leader.”

Women in this study discussed the difference between successfully navigating change as well as maintaining stable organizations. Contrary to Kotter (2001) who indicates that people operate as either leaders *or* managers many of the women in this study identified that they switched back and forth between leading and managing. These transitions were based on the specific need and situation to which they were responding.

A budget shortfall situation occurred during the time these interviews were conducted and allowed for a perfect example to show how women were dealing with potential change. Maintaining people and keeping them “whole” was clearly identified as being the top priority. Sharing information and being transparent were shared as tools for dealing with this situation.

When asked how others perceived their leadership on their campus, one of the most striking responses was the statement “I think I am liked.” As found in the literature, being likable, or the flip side, being disliked, has significant impact on how

these women are seen and navigate through their world. In addition to being evaluated by others in both formal and informal ways, the women in this study also spoke clearly about their own methods of self evaluation. They also admitted to being their own worst critics and to constantly strive for high standards.

#### What do women do to lead?

When asked how they engaged others, or how they lead, the women in this study shared a variety of practices that made them successful. Building and maintaining successful relationships was seen by many as key to managing their careers as well as practicing effective leadership. Communicating and listening effectively were also stressed as critical for success. Working collaboratively across campus and within individual units was described as an essential extension to relationship building and information sharing. Modeling the way and inspiring a vision mirrored the values that were shared related to working for the bigger picture.

When dealing with conflict the women in this study shared that they took time to gather and assess information from all parties involved. Listening and making sure that people felt heard was a key part of how the women in this study helped to navigate conflicts while maintaining relationships. Many of the women also pointed out that they made a conscious effort to be self-aware and separate from emotional conflicts. They made an effort to be calm and non-biased in their approach to negotiating solutions for others engaged in conflicts.

While the women in this study were very clear in how they had been mentored by others, with few exceptions, they were less detailed in how they were mentoring others. As found in the literature, this gap may come as no surprise. As women advance in their careers, they are facing increasing demands for their time and attention. In addition, there are fewer women at the top of leadership structures available to mentor others, making their time an even greater commodity.

#### Work culture for women

One of the most striking parts of this study was the distinct differences between the culture of the four schools. At University D, all five of the women interviewed spoke of being supported and committed to the ideas of social justice. This contrasted with University B, where all five women spoke of being overworked and “alone” in the work they were doing. While not as extreme, Universities A and B also had striking similarities in how the women responded. University A was facing a change in leadership, and University C was caught up in the extremes of the budget situation occurring at the time of this study. These two separate situations caused tension and uncertainty on the respective campuses.

When asked if they were recognized and rewarded in their positions, there was a clear indication that some of the women in this study looked at more factors than simply rank, promotions, job titles or pay. This recognition often came in the form of thank you cards, recognition from supervisors and staff and long lasting positive relationships being built. Even among those who thought they were recognized and rewarded for their

work, there was sometimes a subtle backsliding to these statements. Recognizing that they had recently been passed over for promotion, that they made less than their male counterparts, or that they were not listened to in meetings all undercut their statements. Additionally, those in the most senior positions agreed that it is simply “lonely at the top” and that there were few people, and little time, to recognize the work that they were doing.

Context relative to location seemed to be important to this topic. The answers that were given did align with the culture of the schools. Additionally, many of the women indicated that they felt supported in their smaller units, but felt less supported in the university as a whole.

Interestingly, some women not only felt supported, but that they had been given extra advantage because they were women, Affirmative Action or other factors. These women indicated that they had experienced little or no gender discrimination in their careers.

#### Additional information

At the end of each interview, each woman was asked if she had anything else to share. While again not a comprehensive list, the following is a summary of the key themes that come up during these conversations.

Many of the women in this study were struggling to define their success and leadership as they advanced (or failed to advance) in their positions. Many were quite clear that this process is not always pleasant or natural and that leadership can be a

difficult process and a hard endeavor. Many talked about the level of responsibility, especially associated with the budget situation, they felt to their community.

Being female was not always the factor that the women in this study identified with the most, especially among the women from diverse backgrounds. Many of the women articulated that they struggled more with perceptions of their race or ethnicity than with their gender. For these women, it was very clear that they had more than gender to shape their identity. These women offered insight into the multi-faceted way in which they are perceived and how they respond to these perceptions on a daily basis. Other factors such as age, size, demeanor, and socioeconomic status were talked about as factors that also influenced how these women were perceived by others.

Finally, the women in this study commented on the struggles of balancing career and family. It is important to point out that family issues do not only include children in the context of this conversation. Spouses, partners, and aging parents were all mentioned as factors that women in this study had to balance with their job. Issues of time, energy, flexible work schedules and the perceptions of others all played into the challenge of keeping up both at home and work.

#### Areas of further study

As with any study, there are certain limitations that should be noted when assessing these findings. First, these interviews were done relatively quickly, in the time span of one hour, and covered basic information. Each of the five broad topics covered in this paper could have stood alone as the research question, making this paper lack in

depth and focus instead on breadth. Additionally, these women were nominated by a single individual at each institution, arguably creating a situation where one specific type of leader could be selected. Finally, it should be noted that while twenty interviews appear to cover a wide spectrum, these are only focused on four institutions located in a relatively close geographic area. These findings cannot, and should not, speak for other women leaders in higher education that exist beyond the scope of this paper.

There is a significant amount of literature relating to women leaders in academic positions and the position of school presidency. However, there is little devoted to the other administrative positions within higher education. Future research should look at the difference between men and women administrators in higher educations.

Additionally, minority populations and the unique struggles that they face should be evaluated and researched accordingly. Studying women in indirect leadership roles and those in non-traditional leadership roles would add to further understanding the diverse ways in which women lead in higher education. Further research would benefit from more in-depth interviews that revealed additional information about careers, mentors, leadership styles, school culture, reward, support, recognition and demographic information.

#### Policy and management implications

Finally, while advances continue to be made it is important to keep looking at the “what next” question. As was stated in the literature review "progress is not irreversible" and quite simply the goal not reached yet (Ireland, 2003, p. 193).

Especially within higher education, a focus on institutionalizing systems that encourage and advance women is critical. Both policies and management strategies can be utilized to reach this goal.

### *Management strategies*

Awareness has been suggested as part of the solution. Especially within a system of education this could be seen as the “low fruit” or at least an attainable goal. While there is mixed information about the effectiveness of diversity training, employees should be informed about the systems of exclusion that exist (Eagly and Carli, 2007, Valian, 1999). As seen in the literature and in the findings of this study, both men and women should be included in these trainings so that a general culture of awareness can be created.

Creating systems that provide for adequate trainings and career development opportunities would also serve women. As was seen in the literature and from the experiences from the women in this study, having the right skills as well as knowing the right people helped smooth the way for promotions and opportunities (Barnes, 2007, Eagly and Carli, 2007). This may help form a culture where women are encouraged and expected to move up.

Institutionalizing mentoring programs for women within higher education would make time and resources available for those at the top levels and create opportunities for learning for those at entry or mid-level positions. As suggested by both the literature and the findings from this study, this is a critical part of career and social development for

women (Chin, 2007). Creating a system of information sharing, relationship building and raising awareness surrounding these issues could also put women in a position to change existing cultures and address bias.

### *Policy recommendations*

Policies associated with the fair, regular and un-biased evaluations of women in their positions could afford a number of outcomes. Giving women external feedback on job performance may further promote their development and education. Regular communication about expectations and goal setting may help level the playing field when it comes to understanding performance. Particularly when it involves the promotion and advancement of women, having a system that isolates how stereotypes and bias influence perception could be helpful (Eagly and Carli, 2007, Valian, 1999).

Looking closely at pay equity within the area of higher education administration is critical to undoing the disparities that still exist. As suggested in both the literature and the findings of this paper women do not always ask or identify the need for the same amount of pay as their male counterparts (Valian, 1999). Setting up systems that educate administrators to salary disparities and identifying areas where variance occurs could help further mitigate this situation. Specific policies that address hiring practices and hiring ranges could help identify these situations early in women's careers, rather than later.

When looking at higher education, it is important to set clear and public goals and policies related to the hiring and advancement of women. These goals and policies

should be prioritized in strategic planning, policy documents and assessment activities. Diversity programs that are focused on minority populations, including women, should be established and supported to help establish and oversee policy development and effectiveness (Barnes, 2007).

In closing, as seen from the women in this study, the field of higher education offers a wide variety of opportunities where women can offer their leadership and experience. However, as found in the literature, there are still obstacles to overcome in administrative leadership positions. Creating paths for women to enter and succeed requires education and appreciation for their unique contributions. It should be noted that policies and management objectives are just one step toward creating environments and organizations where women thrive and flourish.

## APPENDIX A

## EMAIL SCRIPT FOR UNION DIRECTORS

Jessi Steward  
October 1, 2008

Email:

Dear *(insert name)*,

Thank you for visiting with me earlier about my research project. As per our conversation my name is Jessi Steward from the University of Oregon, Planning, Public Policy and Management Department and I am writing to ask you to help participate in my graduate research. This is a study about the common characteristics of women leaders in higher education administration. I found your contact information from personal knowledge of your position *or* your university website (*depending on situation*).

I am asking you to nominate 7-10 women at the *(insert university here)* who exhibit strong leadership skills. I will be contacting the women who you nominate to ask them to participate in my thesis research. I will be notifying participants of my study of your nomination, unless you request otherwise.

Those women who decide to participate in this study will be part of a one hour interview at the *(insert university here)*. The information gathered will be used in my thesis project research on leadership in higher education.

If you are able to help me with the nomination of women from your school I would appreciate receiving this list via email by *(insert date here)*. As we discussed, if you have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me. Thank you in advance for your help.

Sincerely,  
Jessi Steward  
[steward@uoregon.edu](mailto:steward@uoregon.edu)  
541-346-4360

## APPENDIX B

## EMAIL SCRIPT FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

Jessi Steward  
October 1, 2008

Email:

Dear *(insert name)*,

I am inviting you to participate in a research study conducted by myself, Jessi Steward, from the University of Oregon Planning, Public Policy and Management Department. I hope to learn about the common characteristics of women leaders in higher education administration. The results of this study will contribute to my thesis project. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of a personal nomination from the Director of the Student Union, *(insert name here)* at *(insert university name)*.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one hour interview to collect information pertaining to your leadership experiences, style and characteristics. This interview will be conducted at a location of your choice, preferably a space that is quiet and comfortable for conversation. The interview will be audio recorded. A copy of the interview questions will be provided in a mailed memo.

It is possible that this interview may create mild discomfort from describing and reflecting on personal ideas and beliefs about leadership and gender. You are encouraged, however, to tailor the information in our interview to avoid this discomfort. You will be provided the questions ahead of time for review. You can skip any question as well as indicate that you are uncomfortable, at which time the interview can be stopped or the topic changed. The benefits of this research include a greater understanding of the relationship of gender and leadership in higher education. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Subject identities will be kept confidential by coding the information collected at the interview. All information will be kept on a secure computer and will be destroyed after the publications and completion of the thesis project.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the (*insert university name*) or the University of Oregon. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have questions, feel free to contact me at the following:

Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management  
Attn: Jessi Steward  
1209 University of Oregon  
119 Hendricks Hall  
Eugene, OR 97403-1209

[steward@uoregon.edu](mailto:steward@uoregon.edu)  
541-346-4360

You may also contact my faculty advisor, Jean Stockard, at 541-346-5005. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Office for Protection of Human Subjects, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346- 2510. This Office oversees the review of the research to protect your rights and is not involved in this study.

If, after reading this additional information, you are still interested in participating please inform me. I will then send you a letter and consent form through standard mail. The consent form will need to be reviewed, signed and mailed back in a self-addressed stamped envelope that I will provide.

Thank you again for your time and consideration.

Best,  
Jessi Steward

## APPENDIX C

## MEMO MAILED TO PARTICIPANTS

Jessi Steward  
October 1, 2008

Memo:

Dear *(insert name here)*,

As indicated in our previous communications I am providing you with the following in this packet:

- A consent form for you to review and sign
- A self addressed stamped envelope for you to return the consent form to me

In preparation for our meeting you should be prepared to discuss questions that address the following topics:

- Your work history and career progression
- People who have helped during your career
- Your thoughts on leadership, including how you see yourself leading
- Your methods for evaluating your leadership
- Your work environment
- Your thoughts about feeling supported, recognized and rewarded
- Any additional information that is important to share

Please review the enclosed information and contact me if you have any questions or concerns. I will be working with you in the near future to setup a date, time and location for our interview to take place.

Thank you in advance for your help with my thesis project.

Sincerely,

Jessi Steward

## APPENDIX D

## CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

Jessi Steward  
October 1, 2008

## Consent:

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jessi Steward from the University of Oregon Planning, Public Policy and Management Department. I hope to learn about the common characteristics of women leaders in higher education administration. The results of this study will contribute to my thesis project. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because of a personal nomination from the Director of the Student Union, *(insert name here)* at *(insert university name)*.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one hour interview to collect information pertaining to your leadership experiences, style and characteristics. This interview will be conducted at a location of your choice, preferably a space that is quiet and comfortable for conversation.

It is possible that this interview may create mild discomfort from describing and reflecting on personal ideas and beliefs about leadership and gender. You are encouraged, however, to tailor the information in our interview to avoid this discomfort. You will be provided the questions ahead of time for review. You can skip any question as well as indicate that you are uncomfortable, at which time the interview can be stopped or the topic changed. The benefits of this research include a greater understanding of the relationship of gender and leadership in higher education. However, I cannot guarantee that you personally will receive any benefits from this research.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Subject identities will be kept confidential by coding the information collected at the interview. All information will be kept on a secure computer and will be destroyed after the publications and completion of the thesis project.

Your participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with the *(insert university name)* or the University of Oregon. If

you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have questions, feel free to contact me at the following:

Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management  
 Attn: Jessi Steward  
 1209 University of Oregon  
 119 Hendricks Hall  
 Eugene, OR 97403-1209

steward@uoregon.edu  
 541-346-4360

You may also contact my faculty advisor, Jean Stockard, at 541-346-5005. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact the Office for Protection of Human Subjects, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, (541) 346- 2510. This Office oversees the review of the research to protect your rights and is not involved in this study.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you have received a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent to be Audio Recorded**

Your signature below indicates that you agree to allow the interview to be audio recorded. Being audio recorded is optional; the interview can proceed with or without audio recording.

Yes, I consent to be audio recorded during the interview.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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