



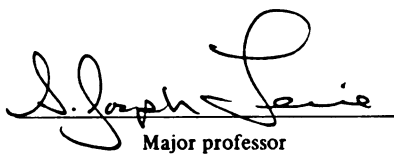
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A Descriptive Study of  
Michigan Community College Presidents'  
Approaches to Learning

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**A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF  
MICHIGAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS'  
APPROACHES TO LEARNING**

**By**

**Kathleen Eaton Guy**

**A THESIS**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

**MASTER OF SCIENCE**

**Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Education  
and Communications Systems**

**2002**

## **ABSTRACT**

### **A Descriptive Study of Michigan Community College Presidents' Approaches to Learning**

**By**

**Kathleen Eaton Guy**

The study and practice of leadership in community colleges has evolved with the growth and prominence of the colleges themselves. Each new generation of community college leaders has faced a different set of challenges, from start-up in the 1960s and 1970s to building community in the 1980s and issues of technology and distance learning in the 1990s. College presidents are expected to navigate their colleges through unsettled political, economic, technological and demographic environments.

The body of knowledge is ever-changing and the value of continuous learning to the president is its importance to the vitality of the institution. An analysis of Michigan community college presidents was conducted to determine what and how presidents continue to learn on the job and whether characteristics of the presidents or their institutions affect what and how they choose to learn.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **The Context**

The study and practice of leadership in community colleges has evolved with the growth and prominence of the colleges themselves. Each new generation of community college leaders has faced a different set of challenges. In the 1960s and 1970s community colleges were created as higher education institutions of access and opportunity. For a time during this period, new colleges were being developed at the rate of one per week (Young, 1996).

In the 1980s community colleges were called upon to “build community” and respond to workforce development needs to help reinvigorate a sagging economy. In the 1990s many community colleges experienced funding challenges as traditional sources of revenue declined. Today community colleges are confronted with the implications of information technology, distance education and a dramatically more competitive and demanding marketplace.

For nearly 50 years, community colleges have demonstrated a remarkable ability to respond and adapt. They have evolved multiple roles and created expectations as “can do” institutions. Responding to community needs and adapting programs and services is more challenging than ever before. College presidents are expected to navigate their colleges through unsettled political, economic, technological and demographic environments.

This period of turbulence is further complicated by unprecedented expectations for accountability, more responsive and flexible “any place/any time” education, consolidation to “flatten” the organization, greater emphasis on teaching and less on administration, shared decision making, mass retirements due to an aging faculty, and the need to vigorously pursue alternative forms of funding and collaboration.

The literature suggests that there are defined job objectives and tasks that comprise community college presidents’ information and work profile. One of the most recent efforts to define this profile was undertaken by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education Leader Project (Campbell and Leverty, 1997) to compile a list of eight job objectives and tasks for community college presidents. Listed in order of importance, they are: Planning, Motivating, Assessing/Evaluating, Implementing/Coordinating, Learning/Researching, Public Relations (PR)/Developing Relationships, Problem Solving/Designing, and Deciding. These objectives and tasks, which can be used in leadership development and selection, were identified as priorities by a group of presidents, trustees, faculty, chief instructional officers and business officers who participated in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education Leader Project.

Campbell and Leverty’s objectives and tasks are typical of the literature that describes the prescriptive nature of skills and abilities needed by community college presidents. This is further illustrated in Roe and Baker’s (1989) roles and competencies of community college CEOs and the North Carolina Community College System’s Executive Management Leadership Institute modules (1992).

The job objectives and tasks prescribed are suggested by the environment in which the president operates. Each area suggests catalysts in the internal or external

college environment that could act upon the institution. For example, Assessing/ Evaluating is important in demonstrating the college's accountability to accrediting bodies, funding agencies and consumers (students and employers).

There are two areas not explicitly included in Campbell and Leverty's job objectives and tasks but typical of the expectations of today's presidents: Teamwork and Scholarship. Bensimon and Newmann (1993) and Baker (1995) have studied teamwork and its value to the higher education enterprise. Templin (1991); Cross (1990); and Rouche, Baker and Rose (1989) have documented the value of scholarship to the president in terms of gaining credibility, creating institutional climate and fostering presidential renewal. For the purposes of this study, Teamwork and Scholarship have been added to the list of eight job objectives and tasks developed by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education Leader Project to comprise the ten-item Key Areas of Knowledge list.

The body of knowledge is ever-changing, and the value of formal and non-formal learning to the president is its importance to the institution's continued vitality and ability to adapt to changes in the environment.

### The Problem

We do not know enough about community college presidents in regard to the factors that relate to their competence, success and role fulfillment. The purpose of this study is to:

- (1) determine the extent to which presidents take Affirmative Steps to Learn about Key Areas of Knowledge,
- (2) determine presidents' level of personal commitment to learning through professional development,
- (3) identify the factors that positively or negatively affect presidents' engaging in professional development and
- (4) identify the personal and professional characteristics of presidents that positively or negatively affect engaging in professional development.

Within the scope of this descriptive research approach, there are not specific hypotheses. The intent is to allow for the potential to develop additional insights and learn more about the amount and intensity of presidential effort in areas relating to their learning through professional development.

### Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions apply.

The study will investigate the degree to which presidents take Affirmative Steps to Learn about Key Areas of Knowledge. These ***Key Areas of Knowledge*** are defined as Planning, Motivating, Assessing/Evaluating, Implementing, Learning/Researching, Public Relations (PR)/Developing Relationships, Problem Solving/Designing, Deciding, Team Building and Scholarship.

The ***personal characteristics of presidents*** are defined as age, sex, length of time in office, formal educational preparation and previous presidential position(s).

The term ***professional development*** is defined as any method of learning that is not directly related to or a part of formal degree-based learning. Examples include Membership in Professional Organizations; Attendance at Workshops, Symposia or Seminars; and Using the World Wide Web to learn about new approaches, methods and best practices in leading institutions.

### Assumptions

The assumptions for this study are:

1. The extent of professional development engaged in by community college presidents is measurable.
2. The Key Areas of Knowledge are an appropriate set of classifications within which to measure presidents' professional development.
3. The examples of Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn, as described in the questionnaire, are recognizable by presidents without further definition.

### Limitations

The results of this study of Michigan community college presidents may not be readily generalized to the population of presidents of community and technical colleges nationwide. The Key Areas of Knowledge defined may limit the responses by presidents who have undertaken learning activities for Key Areas of Knowledge not specifically defined in this study. Further limitations are the willingness of the respondents to participate and the integrity of the respondents.

### Significance of the Study

The study will provide Michigan community college presidents with a sample profile of professional development that could serve as a source of information about how their peers seek learning through professional development. The data analysis will create a profile of Michigan community colleges' and their presidents' patterns of learning by topic, method and resources expended.

The data analysis explored relationships that may exist between circumstances in the internal or external environments and the pursuit of professional development. The study investigated relationships that might exist between characteristics of the presidents and the pursuit of professional development.

The results of this study could offer an institutional profile for Michigan community colleges that suggests factors relating to professional development decisions by presidents as they evaluate needs for resource allocation, staffing and time for personal and institutional learning.

For professional organizations, the data from this study may be helpful in focusing on topics and defining target markets for their publications, meetings and seminars. Vendors offering legitimate professional development experiences may find the data from this study useful as a way to make their programs and services available to the most receptive audiences.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

The purpose of this chapter is to review research and literature that relates to the expected skills and information required of community college presidents and the nature of formal and non-formal learning on the job.

#### **The Need for Learning**

The rapid development of community and technical colleges throughout the United States has occurred in the last 40 to 50 years. In the early 1960s the need became apparent for community college presidents who could operate successfully in a complex higher education environment characterized by functions broadened to accommodate an increasingly heterogeneous enrollment. "The emerging public two-year colleges required of administrators a mentality and set of skills different than those of either public school or university administrators" (Young, 1996).

To accommodate the demand for community college presidents, the number of university higher education programs expanded. The number of universities and colleges offering professional graduate work in higher education expanded from 27 in 1945 to 87 in 1962-63, according to Ewing and Stickler (cited in Young, 1996). Philanthropic foundations like the W.K. Kellogg Foundation played a major role in the expansion of higher education programs that specialized in community college education and leadership.

By the end of the 1960s most community college governing boards were requiring a doctorate as the minimum educational criterion for individuals seeking administrative positions (Young, 1996). Advice given to those applying for community college presidencies today includes the need to earn a doctoral degree (Vaughn, 1989).

As community and technical colleges have evolved and matured since the burgeoning growth of the 1960s, presidents have experienced changes in technology, politics and legislation, demographics, the economy, competition and the marketplace that significantly impact their institutions. “The problem of preparing for and keeping up with the real world is not unique to the field of community college education. However, it is of immediate import to two-year college educators, who must respond to continual changes in the social, demographic, and economic conditions of their local service districts. Just as the lights in the classroom building shine for our students at all hours of the day and night, those who administer programs in these buildings require regular rejuvenation or enlightenment” (Hankin, 1996).

Many formal programs in higher education leadership exist in universities throughout the U.S. today. While these programs have their own distinctive curriculum sequences, their courses can be classified in one or more of the following conceptual areas: introductory/foundation, theory, application, clinical/internship experiences, synthesis, research skills, dissertation research, continuing professional and lifelong learning (Fife, 1991).

The challenge of leading community and technical colleges today is more complex than ever before; “...the task of preparing administrative leadership cannot be



accomplished once and for all with a one-shot infusion of funds and attention (Young, 1996).

Implicit in a review of community college publications (Community College Times, AACC Journal, Community College Week, NCOE Workplace, CRD Dispatch) is that community colleges are heterogeneous. “While they share a commitment to open access, comprehensiveness and responsiveness to local needs, community colleges are a diverse group of institutions” (Katsinas 1996). This diversity is reflected in geography, demography, governance, size and economic environment. The community colleges’ diversity of culture, demography and environment affect the roles played by community college presidents and impact their ability to serve successfully in those roles. Katsinas (1996) speaks to the need to educate community college leaders in areas related to heterogeneity: variations in governance and administration; finance, physical plant and economic development; student characteristics; and teaching and learning issues.

Successful community college leaders today must not only possess the formal academic preparation expected by their governing boards, but also develop a means to continue learning on the job. Roe and Baker urge presidents to assess themselves as leaders and identify and provide for the training of future leaders through planned mentoring and professional development (1989). Senge advocates building operating environments for learning through attention to learning infrastructure. CEOs “...will increasingly come to realize that in a world of rapid change and increasing interdependence, learning is too important to be left to chance” (Senge, 1998). By extension, this also applies to the college presidents themselves. Societal forces are impinging on higher education institutions, and the institutions must respond effectively

to them. Typical of these societal forces are the rising expectations of customer service and convenience by students, the imposition of accountability measures by funding and accrediting agencies, and the implications of embracing technology as a teaching and learning tool.

Leadership skills are necessary for presidents who direct these institutions today and in the future. To survive in this period of rapid change, higher education leaders “...should understand and appreciate their own capacity for personal growth and acknowledge the importance of life cycle stages in academic and administrative life” (Murrell and Davis, 1991).

### Skills and Information Required

Kubala's (1999) study of 52 U. S. community college presidents appointed to their positions between 1995 and 1997 indicates a self-reported need to understand modern governance and transformation topics. Quality and team building (Baker, 1995) and leadership and “followership” (Roe and Baker, 1989) are continuing themes in the community college culture. Weisman and Vaughan (1997) speak to the importance of board-president relationships in effective leadership of the community college. Multiculturalism, technology and distance education, learning communities, learning organizations and learning colleges are also issues to which community college leaders must relate (Gallego, Green, O'Banion, Lever-Duffy and Lemke, 1996).

What does the current thinking suggest that current presidents should be knowledgeable about? The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership Project undertaken in 1995 by the Institute of Higher Education at the University of Florida (Campbell and Leverty, 1997)

reflects a broad range of opinion. Further, it brings together in one place much of the thinking of other contemporary writers and academics.

The purpose of the project was to identify the attributes of 21<sup>st</sup> century community college leaders, providing a work profile for community college presidents. A panel of community college experts including trustees, presidents, chief instructional officers, chief financial officers and faculty constructed a work profile of the community college leader at the dawn of the new millennium. Les Krieger, a consultant with Saville and Holdsworth, Ltd., worked with the panel to construct the job objectives and tasks which were segmented into specific general activities. Participants then ranked the job objectives and tasks by the proportionate amount of time presidents should spend on each activity.

The eight job objectives and tasks developed by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education Leader Project are defined in the Definitions section of this document (Chapter 1). The job objectives and tasks are confirmed within the sequence of modules developed by the Kentucky Leadership Academy Model (Edwards, 1992), the North Carolina Community College System's Executive Management Leadership Institute (1992) and the Profile of Kansas Community College Presidents (Parker and Parker, 1983).

Further, for the purposes of this questionnaire design, two Areas of Knowledge were added to Campbell and Leverty's list of job objectives and tasks. Teamwork and Scholarship were not explicitly included in Campbell and Leverty's list of job objectives and tasks but are typical of the expectations of today's presidents. Much has been written about teamwork (Bensimon and Newmann, 1993; Baker, 1995) and its value to the higher education enterprise. Presidents need to learn how to find and bring together

diverse minds and perspectives to contribute to problem solving and decision making. Likewise, the value of scholarship to the president is well documented (Templin, 1991; Cross, 1990; Silber, 1988; Rouche, Baker and Rose, 1989) in gaining credibility, creating institutional climate, focusing on core institutional values, and fostering presidential renewal and revitalization.

For the purposes of this study, Teamwork and Scholarship have been added to the list of eight job objectives and tasks developed by the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Education Leader Project as the list of skills and information required by community college presidents.

Of particular interest is not only *what* presidents learn about but, more pointedly, *how much* they invest (time, effort, and resources) in learning and whether there are characteristics of the institutions or the presidents themselves which relate to these investments in learning.

## **Chapter III**

### **Method**

This chapter describes the survey procedures and research methods used in this study. The following specific topics are described: (a) population, (b) design, (c) instrumentation, (d) data collection and (e) data analysis.

### **Population**

The population studied was a census of Michigan public community college presidents (n=28) as identified by the Michigan Department of Education.

### **Research Design**

The variables of interest in this descriptive study were characteristics of the institutions and characteristics of the presidents that might relate to their taking Affirmative Steps to Learn while on the job. These characteristics included enrollment size and general fund budget as well as the age, gender and length of service of the presidents. These variables—characteristics of the institutions and their presidents—were examined to determine whether there was any relationship between the characteristics and the presidents' pursuit of learning on the job. Through the questionnaire, respondents were provided an opportunity to quantify the amount of time and financial resources devoted to learning.

### Instrument Development

The questionnaire was developed to include the Key Areas of Knowledge, circumstances in the internal and external environment and characteristics of the presidents using a combination of checklists and closed-ended and open-ended questions (see Appendix A). The survey questionnaire included a matrix with the Key Areas of Knowledge and the Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn (methods of learning through professional development) identified. Participants were asked to check each Key Area of Knowledge they had pursued in the past year and by what Affirmative Steps they had pursued them. Respondents were also asked to quantify the amount of time (in days) spent learning.

The questionnaire was field tested with six Michigan community college administrators to test for face validity. Each administrator was asked to complete the questionnaire and identify any areas that required clarification or further definition (e.g., questionnaire instructions, terms used) and to report the amount of time it took to complete the questionnaire. Results of the field test were used to refine and finalize the questionnaire.

### Data Collection

The questionnaire mailing included a cover letter, the questionnaire and a stamped return envelope. Ten days after the initial mailing a postcard was sent to non-respondents to encourage them to complete and return the questionnaire. A second follow-up was sent 21 days after the initial mailing. This included a cover letter, another copy of the questionnaire and a stamped return envelope.

### Data Analysis

The investment of time and resources in learning by presidents was totaled in terms of days per year spent engaged in Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn and total dollars spent. The Key Areas of Knowledge and Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn were analyzed to determine in what areas presidents actively pursued learning and by what methods. Cross-tabulations were performed between the Key Areas of Knowledge, Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn and the variables of interest—characteristics of the president and characteristics of the institution—to determine the relationships between them. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

Based on the amount of time spent, money spent, academic enrollment, years served as president, age of president, and highest degree earned, respondents were organized into three groups for the purpose of analysis of each of these characteristics. For example, time-spent responses were organized by respondents who spent more than 24 days, respondents who spent 13-24 days and respondents who spent fewer than 13 days taking Affirmative Steps to Learn. Money-spent responses were organized by respondents who spent more than \$7,000 per year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn, respondents who spent from \$4,001 to \$7,000 per year and respondents who spent under \$4,000 per year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn.

The chi square was used to describe where important differences existed with regard to what and how the Michigan community college presidents chose to learn when compared to their institutional characteristics (e.g., enrollment size and budget size), their personal characteristics (sex, years served and highest degree earned), time spent learning

and money spent learning. Since the chi square test is a measure of statistical significance when the sample is randomly selected and the population in this study was a census of all Michigan community college presidents (not randomly selected), the chi square test results were described in terms of important differences rather than statistically significant differences.



## Chapter IV

### Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the analysis of data from the Michigan community college presidents' questionnaire. Tables 1a-5 present information about the demographics of the presidents and their institutions. Tables 6-13 show the significant associations (at or below the .05 level), those that did not occur by chance, when Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn were compared with Key Areas of Knowledge in terms of the characteristics of the presidents and the characteristics of their institutions. The percentages shown in Tables 6-13 represent the affirmative responses by category of respondent for each characteristic.

Questionnaires were sent to a total of 28 public community college presidents in the State of Michigan. This represents all of the public community college presidents currently serving. Of this group, a total of 22 (73 percent) responded. It is this group of 22 that was used for the analyses presented in this chapter.

Tables 1a-1c show the survey participant demographics in terms of years served as president, age of presidents and sex of presidents.

		<b>Years Served</b>	<b>Age</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>N</b>	21.0000	21.00
<b>Missing</b>		1.0000	1.00
	<b>Mean</b>	7.8786	58.76
	<b>Median</b>	5.5000	60.00
	<b>Mode</b>	1.0000	58.00

**Table 1a: Participant Demographics—Years Served and Age (Mean, Median, Mode)**

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	48	1	4.5
	49	1	4.5
	52	1	4.5
	55	1	4.5
	56	1	4.5
	58	4	18.2
	59	1	4.5
	60	2	9.1
	61	4	18.2
	62	1	4.5
	64	3	13.6
	65	1	4.5
<b>Total Valid</b>		21	95.5
<b>Missing</b>		1	4.5
<b>Total</b>	22	22	100.0

**Table 1b: Participant Demographics—Ages of Presidents**

As shown in Table 1a, respondents' mean years of service as president is 7.87 years. Years of service range from 2 months to 21 years. Mean age is 58.76 years.

As illustrated in Table 1b, the youngest president is 48 years old and the oldest is 65 years old.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Female</b>	4	18.2
<b>Male</b>	18	81.8
<b>Total</b>	22	100.0

**Table 1c: Participant Demographics—Sex**

More than three-quarters (81.8 percent) of all Michigan public community college are male and 18.2 percent are female.

Table 2 shows the highest formal degree earned of all Michigan public community college presidents.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>M.A./M.S.</b>	4	18.2
<b>Ed.D.</b>	5	22.7
<b>Ph.D.</b>	13	59.1
<b>Total</b>	22	100.0

**Table 2: Participant Demographics—Highest Degree Earned**

As shown in Table 2, 81.8 percent of Michigan community college presidents held doctorate degrees (Ph.D., 59.1 percent; Ed.D., 22.7 percent) followed by 18.2 percent with M.A./M.S. degrees. No president held less than a master's degree.

Table 3 shows the number of Michigan community college presidents serving in their first presidency.

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	<b>Yes</b>	16	72.7
	<b>No</b>	5	22.7
<b>Missing</b>		1	4.5
<b>Total</b>		22	100.0

**Table 3: Participant Demographics—First Presidency**

Table 3 shows that the majority of Michigan community college presidents are first-time presidents. A total of 72.7 percent are serving in their first presidency.

Table 4 shows institutional demographic data of academic credit enrollment, non-credit enrollment and annual general fund budget.

		<b>Academic Enrollment</b>	<b>Non-credit Enrollment</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<b>Valid</b>		20	20	21
<b>Missing</b>		2	2	1
	<b>Mean</b>	7,878.1	5,999.8	34,757,142.86
	<b>Median</b>	4,100.0	2,250.0	24,000,000.00
	<b>Mode</b>	1,200.0	1,500.0	10,000,000.00
	<b>Minimum</b>	1,200.0	150.0	7,000,000.00
	<b>Maximum</b>	25,000.0	35,000.0	120,000,000.00

**Table 4a: Institutional Demographics—Academic Credit Enrollment, Non-credit Enrollment and Annual General Fund Budget**

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Valid</b>	1,200–3,600	8	36.4
	3,601–8,800	5	22.7
	8,801–25,000	7	31.8
	Total	20	90.9
<b>Missing</b>		2	9.1
<b>Total</b>		22	100.0

**Table 4b: Institutional Demographics—Academic Credit Enrollment by Category**

The mean academic credit enrollment at respondents' colleges in the past year was 7,878 students. Academic credit enrollment ranged from 1,200 students in academic credit courses to 25,000 students in academic credit courses. Thirty-six and four-tenths percent of the responding presidents represented institutions with 3,600 and fewer students, 22.7 percent reported enrollment of 3,601-8,800 students and 31.8 percent reported enrollments above 8,800. The mean non-credit enrollment at respondents' colleges was nearly 6,000 students. Non-credit enrollment ranged from 150 to 35,000 students.

The mean annual general fund budget is \$34,757,000. General fund budgets ranged from \$7 million to \$120 million. A total of 52.4 percent of the colleges reported their annual general fund budgets as \$24 million or less.

Table 5 shows time spent taking Affirmative Steps to Learn and money spent taking Affirmative Steps to Learn.

		<b>Time Spent (Days)</b>	<b>Money Spent</b>
<b>N</b>	Valid	19	20
	Missing	3	2
<b>Mean</b>		21.58	\$9,150
<b>Median</b>		20.00	\$5,000
<b>Mode</b>		20.00	\$5,000
<b>Minimum</b>		6.00	\$2,500
<b>Maximum</b>		67.00	\$35,000
<b>Percentiles</b>	25	11.00	\$4,250
	50	20.00	\$5,000
	75	25.00	\$10,750

**Table 5: Time Spent and Money Spent Taking Affirmative Steps to Learn**

The mean time spent taking Affirmative Steps to Learn was 21.58 days. Time spent taking Affirmative Steps to Learn while on the job in the past year varied from a low of 6 days to a high of 67 days. Three-quarters of presidents spent 6-25 days per year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn.

The mean money spent taking Affirmative Steps to Learn while on the job was \$9,150. Money spent taking Affirmative Steps to Learn while on the job in the past year varied from a low of \$2,500 to a high of \$35,000. Half of the respondents spent \$2,500-5,000 and half spent over \$5,000.

Presidents were asked which Key Areas of Knowledge and which Affirmative Steps were taken to learn during the past year. They were asked to indicate *all* Key Areas of Knowledge and Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn that applied. For example, a president could indicate that Planning was a Key Area of Knowledge that he learned

about and Affirmative Steps were taken to learn by Attending Workshops, Talking with Other Presidents and Using the World Wide Web.

When applying the chi square analysis to the data sets for this question, several areas were found to show important differences with regard to Key Areas of Knowledge and Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn when considering the variables of time spent, money spent, college academic enrollment, years served as president, first presidency, age, sex and highest degree earned. For clarity of presentation only those cells that showed important differences are presented. Percentages shown in the cells represent the total number of affirmative responses for each response sub-category; therefore the percentages shown will not equal 100.

Table 6 shows the important differences when Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn are compared with Key Areas of Knowledge in terms of time spent. The important differences as related to time spent occurred between Assessing/Evaluating and Talking with Other Presidents; between Scholarship and using the World Wide Web; and between Scholarship and Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia and Workshops.

Key Areas of Knowledge	Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn										
	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web	
Planning—strategic planning, setting priorities for resources											
Motivating—encouraging cooperation, creating team spirit, understanding needs/motives											
Assessing/Evaluating—logical evaluation of new ideas, alternatives, or recommendations							>24 13-24 <13	100% 68% 29%			
Implementing—allocating duties to others, allocating resources, ensuring coordination											
Learning/Researching—keeping abreast of developments, new systems or methods											
PR/Developing Relationships—public speaking, fundraising											
Problem Solving/Designing—new solutions to problems, improving efficiency											
Deciding—decision-making processes											
Team Building—bringing together diverse perspectives and talents to facilitate collective work											
Scholarship—writing for publication, major presentations in an area of continuing expertise, or classroom teaching		>24 13-24 <13	83% 0% 14%							>24 13-24 <13	67% 17% 0%

**Table 6—Time Spent as a Differentiating Factor When Compared to Learning Participation**

As seen in Table 6, presidents who spent more than 24 days in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn were more inclined to Attend Meetings, Conferences and Symposia; to Talk with Other Presidents; and to Use the World Wide Web than those who spent fewer than 24 days in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn.

Table 7 shows the important differences that exist when Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn are compared with Key Areas of Knowledge in terms of money spent. The important differences as related to money spent occurred between Motivating and Using the World Wide Web; between Motivating and Attending Retreats; between Assessing/Evaluating and Talking with Other Presidents; between PR/Developing Relationships and Being Mentored; between Team Building and Attending Retreats; and between Team Building and Being Mentored.



Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn										
Key Areas of Knowledge	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web
	Planning—strategic planning, setting priorities for resources									
	Motivating—encouraging cooperation, creating team spirit, understanding needs/motives				>\$7000 86% \$4001-7000 25% <\$4000 0%					>\$7000 57% \$4001-7000 13% <\$4000 0%
	Assessing/Evaluating—logical evaluation of new ideas, alternatives, or recommendations						>\$7000 86% \$4001-7000 75% <\$4000 20%			
	Implementing—allocating duties to others, allocating resources, ensuring coordination									
Learning/Researching—keeping abreast of developments, new systems or methods										
PR/Developing Relationships—public speaking, fundraising						>\$7000 86% \$4001-7000 75% <\$4000 20%				

Table 7—Money Spent as a Differentiating Factor When Compared to Learning Participation

Table 7 (cont'd).

Key Areas of Knowledge	Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn								
	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV
Using the World Wide Web									
Problem Solving/Designing—new solutions to problems, improving efficiency									
Deciding—decision-making processes									
Team Building—bringing together diverse perspectives and talents to facilitate collective work									
Scholarship—writing for publication, major presentations in an area of continuing expertise, or classroom teaching									

As seen in Table 7, presidents who spent more than \$7,000 in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn about Motivating were more inclined to attend retreats and Use the World Wide Web than presidents who spent less than \$7,000 in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn about Motivating.

Presidents who spent \$4,001-\$7,000 and presidents who spent more than \$7,000 in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn about Assessing/Evaluating were more inclined to talk with other presidents than presidents who spent less than \$4,000 in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn about Assessing/Evaluating.

Presidents who spent more than \$7,000 in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn about PR/Developing Relationships were more inclined to Be Mentored than presidents who spent less than \$7,000 in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn about PR/Developing Relationships.

Presidents who spent more than \$7,000 in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn about Team Building were more inclined to attend retreats and be mentored than presidents who spent less than \$7,000 in the past year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn about Team Building.

Table 8 shows where important differences existed with regard to Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn when compared to Key Areas of Knowledge in terms of academic enrollment size. The differences related to academic enrollment occurred between Planning and Participating in Satellite Teleconferences or Interactive TV; between Implementing and Talking with Other Presidents; between Problem Solving/Designing and Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops; between Problem Solving/Designing and Talking with Other Presidents; between Team Building and

**Participating in Satellite Teleconferences or Interactive TV; and between Scholarship and  
Attending meetings, Conferences, Symposia or Workshops.**

Key Areas of Knowledge	Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn									
	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web
<b>Planning</b> —strategic planning, setting priorities for resources									>8800 43% 3601-8800 0% <3601 0%	
<b>Motivating</b> —encouraging cooperation, creating team spirit, understanding needs/motives										
<b>Assessing/Evaluating</b> —logical evaluation of new ideas, alternatives, or recommendations										
<b>Implementing</b> —allocating duties to others, allocating resources, ensuring coordination							>8800 29% 3601-8800 100% <3601 50%			
<b>Learning/Researching</b> —keeping abreast of developments, new systems or methods										
<b>PR/Developing Relationships</b> —public speaking, fundraising										
<b>Problem Solving/Designing</b> —new solutions to problems, improving efficiency		>8800 29% 3601-8800 100% <3601 50%					>8800 29% 3601-8800 100% <3601 75%			
<b>Deciding</b> —decision-making processes										
<b>Team Building</b> —bringing together diverse perspectives and talents to facilitate collective work									>8800 0% 3601-8800 40% <3601 0%	
<b>Scholarship</b> —writing for publication, major presentations in an area of continuing expertise, or classroom teaching		>8800 0% 3601-8800 40% <3601 0%								

**Table 8—Academic Enrollment as a Differentiating Factor When Compared to Learning Participation**

As seen in Table 8, presidents of colleges with academic enrollments of over 8,800 students in the past year who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Planning were more inclined to Participate in Satellite Teleconferences or Interactive TV than presidents of colleges with academic enrollments below 8,800 students in the past year.

Presidents of colleges with academic enrollments of 3,601-8,800 in the past year who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Implementing were more inclined to Talk with Other Presidents than presidents of colleges with academic enrollments below 3,600 and academic enrollments above 8,800 students in the past year.

Presidents of colleges with academic enrollments of 3,601-8,800 in the past year who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Problem Solving/Designing were more inclined to Attend Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, or Workshops than presidents of colleges with academic enrollments below 3,600 and academic enrollments above 8,800 students in the past year.

Presidents of colleges with academic enrollments from 1,200-3,600 and academic enrollments from 3,601-8,800 in the past year who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Problem Solving/Designing were more inclined to talk with other presidents than those with academic enrollments above 8,800 in the past year.

Presidents of colleges with academic enrollments of 3,601-8,800 in the past year who took Affirmative Steps to Learn were more inclined to learn about Team Building by Participating in Satellite Teleconferences or Interactive TV than presidents of colleges with academic enrollments below 3,601 in the past year and presidents of colleges with academic enrollments above 8,800 students in the past year.

Presidents of colleges with academic enrollments of 3,601-8,800 in the past year who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Scholarship were more inclined to Attend Meetings, Conferences, Symposia or Workshops than presidents of colleges with academic enrollments below 3,601 in the past year and presidents of colleges with academic enrollments above 8,800 students in the past year.

Table 9 shows where important differences existed when Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn are compared with Key Areas of Knowledge with regard to years served as president. The important differences as related to years served as president occurred between Motivating and Being Mentored; between Planning and Being Mentored; between PR/Developing Relationships and Being a Member of a Professional Organization; between Deciding and Attending Retreats; between Team Building and Attending Retreats; and between Scholarship and Being a Member of a Professional Organization.

Key Areas of Knowledge	Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn									
	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web
Planning—strategic planning, setting priorities for resources						>8 0% 3.01-8 14% <3.01 57%				
Motivating—encouraging cooperation, creating team spirit, understanding needs/motives						>8 0% 3.01-8 14% <3.01 57%				
Assessing/Evaluating—logical evaluation of new ideas, alternatives, or recommendations										
Implementing—allocating duties to others, allocating resources, ensuring coordination										
Learning/Researching—keeping abreast of developments, new systems or methods										
PR/Developing Relationships—public speaking, fundraising	>8 14% 3.01-8 71% <3.01 14%									
Problem Solving/Designing—new solutions to problems, improving efficiency										
Deciding—decision-making processes					>8 0% 3.01-8 57% <3.01 71%					

Table 9—Years Served as a Differentiating Factor When Compared to Learning Participation



Table 9 (cont'd).

Key Areas of Knowledge	Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn									
	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web
Team Building—bringing together diverse perspectives and talents to facilitate collective work					>8 3.01-8 <3.01					
Scholarship—writing for publication, major presentations in an area of continuing expertise, or classroom teaching	>8 3.01-8 <3.01									
	14% 57% 0%									

As seen in Table 9, presidents who had the least number of years served as president, 0.2-3.0 years, and who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Motivating were more inclined to Be Mentored than those who had served from 3.01-8.00 years as president and those who had served more than 8 years as president. Presidents who had the least number of years served as president, 0.2-3.0 years, and who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Planning were also more inclined to Be Mentored than those who had served from 3.01-8.00 years as president and those who had served more than 8 years as president.

Also in Table 9, presidents who had served 3.01-8.00 years as president and who learned about PR/Developing Relationships were more inclined to Be Members of a Professional Organization than those who had served from 0.2-3.0 years as president and those who had served more than 8 years as president.

Presidents who had served from 0.2-3.0 years and 3.01-8.00 years as president and learned about Deciding were more inclined to Attend Retreats than those who had served more than 8 years as president.

Presidents who had served from 0.2-3.0 years and 3.01-8.00 years as president and learned about Team Building were more inclined to Attend Retreats than those who had served more than 8 years as president.

Presidents who had served 3.01-8.00 years as president and learned about Scholarship were more inclined to Be Members of a Professional Organization than those who had served from 0.2-3.0 years as president and those who had served more than 8 years as president.

Table 10 shows where important differences existed when Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn are compared with Key Areas of Knowledge with regard to first presidency. The important differences as related to first presidency occurred between Planning and Attending Retreats; between Planning and Using the World Wide Web; between Problem Solving/Designing and Talking with Other Presidents; and between Deciding and Attending Retreats.

Table 9 (cont'd).

	Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn									
	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web
<b>Key Areas of Knowledge</b>										
<b>Team Building</b> —bringing together diverse perspectives and talents to facilitate collective work					>8 3.01-8 <3.01					
<b>Scholarship</b> —writing for publication, major presentations in an area of continuing expertise, or classroom teaching	>8 3.01-8 <3.01				29% 86% 86%					
	14% 57% 0%									

As seen in Table 10, presidents serving in their first presidency who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Planning in the past year were more inclined to Attend Retreats than non-first-time presidents. Presidents serving in their first presidency who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Planning were also more inclined to Use the World Wide Web than non-first-time presidents.

Also as seen in Table 10, presidents serving in their first presidency who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Problem Solving/Designing in the past year were more inclined to Talk with Other Presidents than non-first-time presidents. Presidents serving in their first presidency who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Deciding in the past year were more inclined to Attend Retreats than non-first-time presidents.

Table 11 shows the important differences that occur when Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn are compared with Key Areas of Knowledge with regard to the president's highest degree earned. The important differences as related to highest degree earned occurred between Planning and Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops; between Planning and Being Mentored; between Motivating and Talking with Other Presidents; between Motivating and Being Mentored; between PR/Developing Relationships and Enrolling in a Non-credit Course; and between Deciding and Viewing Video/Audio Tapes.

Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn										
Key Areas of Knowledge	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web
		PhD 100% EdD 40% MAMS 100%					PhD 100% EdD 40% MAMS 100%			
						PhD 100% EdD 40% MAMS 100%	PhD 100% EdD 40% MAMS 100%			
				PhD 100% EdD 40% MAMS 100%						
Planning—strategic planning, setting priorities for resources										
Motivating—encouraging cooperation, creating team spirit, understanding needs/motives										
Assessing/Evaluating—logical evaluation of new ideas, alternatives, or recommendations										
Implementing—allocating duties to others, allocating resources, ensuring coordination										
Learning/Researching—keeping abreast of developments, new systems or methods										
PR/Developing Relationships—public speaking, fundraising				PhD 100% EdD 40% MAMS 100%						
Problem-solving/designing—new solutions to problems, improving efficiency										

Table 11—Highest Degree Earned as a Differentiating Factor When Compared to Learning Participation

Table 11 (cont'd).

Key Areas of Knowledge	Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn									
	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web
<b>Deciding</b> —decision-making processes								PhD 100% EdD 40% MAMS 100%		
<b>Team Building</b> —bringing together diverse perspectives and talents to facilitate collective work										
<b>Scholarship</b> —writing for publication, major presentations in an area of continuing expertise, or classroom teaching										

As seen in Table 11, presidents whose highest degree earned was a Ph.D. and who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Planning were more inclined to Attend Meetings, Conferences, Symposia and Workshops than presidents whose highest degree earned was an Ed.D. or M.A./M.S.

Presidents whose highest degree earned was an M.A./M.S. and who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Planning were more inclined to Be Mentored than those whose Highest Degree earned was an Ed.D. or Ph.D.

Presidents whose highest degree earned was a Ph.D. and who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Motivating were more inclined to Talk with Other Presidents than those whose highest degree earned is an Ed.D. or M.A./M.S.

Presidents whose highest degree earned was an M.A./M.S. and who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Motivating were more inclined to Be Mentored than those whose highest degree earned was an Ed.D. or Ph.D.

Presidents whose highest degree earned was an M.A./M.S. and who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about PR/Developing Relationships were more inclined to Enroll in a Non-credit Course than those whose highest degree earned was an Ed.D. or Ph.D.

Presidents whose highest degree earned was an M.A./M.S. and who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Deciding were more inclined to View Video/Audio Tapes than those whose highest degree earned was an Ed.D. or Ph.D.

Table 12 shows the important differences when Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn are compared with Key Areas of Knowledge with regard to president's age. The important differences as related to president's age occurred between



**Assessing/Evaluating and Being Mentored; between Implementing and Using the World Wide Web; between PR/Developing Relationships and Being Mentored; and between Team Building and Using the World Wide Web.**

Key Areas of Knowledge	Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn									
	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web
Planning—strategic planning, setting priorities for resources										
Motivating—encouraging cooperation, creating team spirit, understanding needs/motives										
Assessing/Evaluating—logical evaluation of new ideas, alternatives, or recommendations						>60 0% 57-60 0% <57 40%				
Implementing—allocating duties to others, allocating resources, ensuring coordination										>60 0% 57-60 14% <57 60%
Learning/Researching—keeping abreast of developments, new systems or methods										
PR/Developing Relationships—public speaking, fundraising						>60 0% 57-60 0% <57 40%				
Problem Solving/Designing—new solutions to problems, improving efficiency										
Deciding—decision-making processes										
Team Building—bringing together diverse perspectives and talents to facilitate collective work										>60 0% 57-60 0% <57 40%
Scholarship—writing for publication, major presentations in an area of continuing expertise, or classroom teaching										

Table 12—President's Age as a Differentiating Factor When Compared to Learning Participation

As seen in Table 12, the youngest presidents (those under age 57) who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Assessing/Evaluating in the past year were more inclined to Be Mentored than presidents age 57-60 and presidents age 61-65.

Presidents under age 57 who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Implementing in the past year were more inclined to Use the World Wide Web than presidents above age 57-60 and presidents age 61-65.

Presidents under age 57 who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about PR/Developing Relationships in the past year were more inclined to Be Mentored than presidents age 57-60 and presidents age 61-65.

Presidents under age 57 who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about Team Building in the past year were more inclined to Use the World Wide Web than presidents age 57-60 and presidents age 61-65.

Table 13 shows the important differences that exist when Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn are compared with Key Areas of Knowledge with regard to president's sex. The important difference as related to president's sex occurred between PR/Developing Relationships and Attending Retreats.

Key Areas of Knowledge	Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn									
	Being a Member of a Professional Organization	Attending Meetings, Conferences, Symposia, Workshops	Enrolling in a Credit Course	Enrolling in a Non-credit Course	Attending Retreats	Being Mentored	Talking with Other Presidents	Viewing Video/Audio Tapes	Participating in Satellite Teleconference, Interactive TV	Using the World Wide Web
	Planning—strategic planning, setting priorities for resources									
	Motivating—encouraging cooperation, creating team spirit, understanding needs/motives									
	Assessing/Evaluating—logical evaluation of new ideas, alternatives, or recommendations									
	Implementing—allocating duties to others, allocating resources, ensuring coordination									
	Learning/Researching—keeping abreast of developments, new systems or methods									
	PR/Developing Relationships—public speaking, fundraising				Male 6% Female 75%					
	Problem Solving/Designing—new solutions to problems, improving efficiency									
	Deciding—decision-making processes									
Team Building—bringing together diverse perspectives and talents to facilitate collective work										
Scholarship—writing for publication, major presentations in an area of continuing expertise, or classroom teaching										

Table 13—Sex as a Differentiating Factor When Compared to Learning Participation

As seen in Table 13, female presidents who took Affirmative Steps to Learn about PR/Developing Relationships in the past year were more inclined to Attend Retreats than male presidents.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions**

The data collected and analyzed in this study draw upon a broad range of elements that relate to Affirmative Steps taken by Michigan community college presidents to learn and pursue personal professional development. These data can be confusing. In order to bring the results of the study into sharper focus, the data and related analysis are queried from a series of distinct perspectives that are outlined below. Each distinct perspective is followed by conclusions and observations supported by the data and analysis.

#### **Learning on the Job: Characteristics That Relate to *What* and *How***

Analysis of the Michigan community college presidents' approaches to learning suggest that a number of relationships exist between personal and institutional characteristics and what and how presidents choose to learn on the job. Not surprisingly the data confirm that, even though presidents may hold advanced formal academic degrees, they continue to pursue additional learning on the job. Certain personal characteristics of the president—age, sex, length of time as president, first presidency and highest degree earned—appear to have a connection to what and how presidents choose to learn. Those who are serving in their first presidency are more inclined to Attend Retreats and Use the World Wide Web than are non-first-time presidents. Those who have the least number of years served as president are more inclined to Be Mentored than those who have served for more than 3.01 years as president.

Characteristics of the institution—enrollments and annual general fund budgets—also appear to have a connection to what and how presidents choose to learn. Presidents of colleges who enroll 3,601-8800 students are more inclined to talk with other presidents when learning about Implementing and Problem Solving/Designing. Presidents who spend more than \$7,001 annually on Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn are more inclined to Attend Retreats and Use the World Wide Web when learning about Motivating. Presidential investment, as measured by the amount of time engaged in learning and budget spent on learning, appears to have an important connection with how presidents choose to learn.

#### Learning on the Job: *What*

Using the Campbell and Levery taxonomy (1997), the top three Key Areas of Knowledge cited by Michigan community college presidents as topics they engaged in learning about in the past year were: Learning/Researching and keeping abreast of new systems or methods; Planning, strategic planning, setting priorities for resources; and Assessing/Evaluating new ideas, alternatives or recommendations.

#### Learning on the Job: *Why*

It is possible that interest in these three Key Areas of Knowledge—Learning/Researching, Planning, and Assessing/Evaluating—is a direct reflection of the pace of change in the external environment and the associated demands experienced by presidents. Increased competition, heightened expectations for accountability and limited financial resources have resulted in increased uncertainty for community colleges and

their leaders. It is not surprising that staying abreast of contemporary issues in higher education, management in the face of scarce resources and acquiring new tools for strategic planning are paramount in the minds of presidents.

### Michigan Community College Presidential Profile Versus the National Profile

When considering the usefulness of this study, it is interesting to note that the demographic profile of Michigan community college presidents is similar to college and university presidents nationwide (Ross and Green, 2000). First, presidents are primarily male with an average age in their late 50s. Further, Michigan community college presidents typically have a slightly longer tenure in their positions than their college and university peers. The mean is 8 years for Michigan community college presidents and 7 for U.S. college and university presidents. It appears that when Michigan community college presidents are appointed, they tend to stay. Michigan community college presidents hold doctoral degrees at about the same percentage as their U.S. college and university counterparts. Eighty-two percent of Michigan community college presidents hold Ph.D.s or Ed.D.s versus 81 percent of U.S. college and university presidents.

### Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn: World Wide Web

When examining the statistically significant associations among Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn, the following pattern emerges in relation to Using the World Wide Web. Presidents under age 60 are significantly more likely to Use the Web to learn. Likewise, first-time presidents are significantly more likely to Use the Web to learn. No



presidents over age 60 selected this method when identifying Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn.

### World Wide Web Use: *Why*

The under-age-60 and first-time presidents' use of the World Wide Web is an area for further investigation. Is there simply a generation gap or are there other, more important factors at work? This item offers food for thought. Many older computer users, those age 60 and above, are some of the most capable and committed Web surfers (Tapscott, 1998). Frequently, however, these reports on Web users focus on those who have retired and who use the Web to maintain an important "window on the world"—as opposed to fully engaged senior presidents at the height of their influence.

These preliminary findings may lead one to speculate that younger presidents are more computer literate or have more experience with searching and gleaning information from the Web than older presidents. Alternatively, it may be that older presidents do not consider the Web a reliable source of information and a resource for learning.

Surfing the Web can be a time-consuming experience and, according to this survey, those who spend more days per year learning are more likely to use the Web. Thus, it may be that younger presidents are more inclined, through enculturation and peer pressure, to invest time and effort in exploring and using the Web and/or are willing to spend more time on their learning.

Presidents who spend more money per year learning are more likely to use the Web. This could be a result of having more budget to spend on computer hardware, software and "anywhere/anytime" internet connectivity. These investments alone might

account for an increased tendency to use this method of learning. In summary, Web use and presidential on-the-job learning deserves further investigation.

### Personal Connections and Presidential Learning

Personal relationships, both peer and mentor, appear to play an important role in on-the-job learning for presidents. Cross-tabulation of questionnaire responses revealed the strong statistical significance of the categories Being Mentored and Talking with Other Presidents. Questions abound with regard to these learning strategies in which presidents rely on other presidents and mentors. This study suggests some preliminary answers.

First, what is the profile of a president who is more likely to seek the advice and counsel of other presidents when taking Affirmative Steps to Learn? Apparently, he—there are more male than female presidents—is a relatively younger president and a first-time president. As Marlene Ross, principal author of the report of the most recent (2000) American Council on Education survey of college and university presidents, notes, “People think that women and minorities are getting all the jobs, but the data do not support that.” Further, the study of Michigan community college presidents’ approaches to learning also suggests that these presidents typically spend more time and money learning and they lead institutions with enrollments of 3,600-8,800 students.

Second, what is the case with longer-tenured presidents? The assumption is that more experienced presidents are being called upon to share their insight and knowledge. Apparently their less experienced colleagues consider them important resources.

On the surface, this is not a surprise because there is a universal tradition of placing value on knowledge and wisdom gained through experience. However, according to the American Council on Education study of presidents (2000), most new presidents report that they believe they are well prepared for the position. Apparently this is not always true in practice.

Clearly, looking at the presidential chair and occupying the chair are different experiences. Colleagues frequently comment on the tendency of a new president to put off decisions or demonstrate a pattern of “protracted hesitancy” in decision-making. It is possible that the advice and counsel of seasoned presidents is both a comfort and a stimulus to new presidents as they chart their course.

Community colleges may be perceived as straightforward, even provincial, local institutions. The truth of the matter, however, is that they have evolved into dynamic, complex and, most importantly, extremely flat organizations. Presidents exercise little direct authority based on the model of the military chain of command. Instead most presidents must look elsewhere for leadership strategies. They must impart authority based on the more sophisticated exercise of manipulating myths and symbols or gaining positive influence through strategies derived from political science—coalition building, strategic positioning and successful negotiation with various stakeholders.

#### Profile of Presidents Who Seek Mentors for Learning

Presidents who seek mentors for learning are younger, have fewer than three years on the job, have less formal education and tend to spend more than \$7,000 annually on their learning. They seek advice and counsel from others who are presumably more

experienced and in whom they have confidence. These mentors are not necessarily other presidents and may not even be associated with higher education. A more detailed investigation of community college presidents' mentor/"mentee" relationships may be warranted.

### Approaches Used by Presidents Who Take Affirmative Steps to Learn

What are the steps they take? From this study it is evident that presidents who spend more time to learn do so by electing to Use the World Wide Web, Attend Meetings and Conferences and Talk with Other Presidents. This information, while definitive only for Michigan community college presidents, suggests implications for those who want to encourage community college presidents to engage in professional development. There appears to be an emphasis on more self-directed learning (Using the Web, Talking with Other Presidents, Being Mentored) than on other-directed learning such as Attending Meetings and Conferences, Being a Member of a Professional Organization or Enrolling in a Course. This apparent emphasis on self-directed learning could be a result of presidents' desire to take responsibility for and manage their own learning, less-than-satisfactory formal learning experiences or issues of time and convenience. Further investigation of presidents' motivation toward self-directed learning may yield additional insights.

Consultants who provide facilitation services should note that Attending Retreats is a preferred method for learning among first-time presidents, female presidents, experienced presidents and those who spend more than \$7,000 per year on learning.

Despite the continued public-sector emphasis on satellite teleconferencing, interactive TV, video/audio production and other technologically mediated learning—with the exception of using the Web—few important differences are associated with Affirmative Steps Taken to Learn and Key Areas of Knowledge. It appears that those who choose to learn via technology are more likely to be Using the Web rather than Viewing Satellite TV or Video/Audio Tapes.

Based on this study of Michigan community college presidents and their preferences for learning, it is safe to say that these presidents are willing to take steps to learn on the job. They are self-directed, are learning about issues that extend beyond day-to-day events and tend to focus on the future of their colleges.

The fact that Michigan presidents rely on Talking with Other Presidents could be both a help and a hindrance. On the positive side, seasoned presidents represent the voice of the “tried and true,” an experienced perspective and an understanding of practical approaches to issues. On the negative side, the tendency to seek counsel from other presidents might offer a limited perspective—one circumscribed by past experience and events. The “tried and true” can inform but can also limit options and perspective. Again, it is clear that additional investigation is needed in order to speak with assurance about the nature and extent of counsel solicited and received by presidents.

### Summary Advice for Presidents

It is recommended that presidents establish a broad-based network of professional colleagues, including respected presidents and others in professional arenas. They should confer with trusted presidents regularly. They should attend conferences and professional

meetings in order to stay current with useful management strategies and contemporary issues affecting higher education and community colleges. They should get on the Web—seek referrals for useful Web sites, learn how to use the various search engines and stay up-to-date with access technology.

The results of this study suggest that opportunities for real-time interaction with other presidents, trusted advisors and other professionals could be a valuable enhancement for presidential learning. Although increased peer-to-peer interaction time may be beneficial, what do presidents talk about? Does Mentoring or Talking with Other Presidents include dialog in the areas of most concern or does it focus on areas of commonality? Are topics deep and fundamental or superficial and marginal? The Key Areas of Knowledge are subject to interpretation. Each could be pulled apart to determine the major issues suggested within Planning, Motivating, Deciding and so on. The substance and content of mentoring and presidential conversations is a topic of personal interest to this researcher and indicates an area for further study.

#### Summary Advice for those Attempting to Influence Presidents

The prevalence of self-directed learning preferences suggests increased customization of information and learning formats. Individual learning such as Using the Web, Being Mentored, Talking with Other Presidents and made-to-order group learning such as Attending Retreats appear to be preferred methods of learning by Michigan community college presidents. While generalizations to the population of community college presidents are not suggested, segmented marketing to target presidential audiences (i.e. those who have fewer than three years on the job, those who spend more

than \$7,000 per year taking Affirmative Steps to Learn) may be an effective way to encourage presidents to direct their professional development resources. In particular, this study provides insight into the importance of peer and mentor relationships to presidents—word of mouth and targeted written communication—and their potential as presidential communication tools.

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## A Study of Michigan Community College Presidents' Learning

1. The following is a listing of key areas of knowledge for community college CEOs and a listing of affirmative steps to learn on the job. Please indicate which key area of knowledge and which affirmative step(s) you have undertaken since July 1, 1999. Check all categories that apply. [If you have not engaged in professional development since July 1, 1999 please skip to question 4.]

Key Areas of Knowledge		Affirmative Steps to Learn									
		Membership in professional organization	Attendance at meetings, conferences, symposia, workshops	Enrollment in credit course	Enrollment in non-credit course	Retreats	Being mentored	Talking with other CEOs	Video/audio tapes	Satellite teleconference, interactive TV	World Wide Web
Planning											
Motivating											
Assessing/evaluation											
Implementing											
Learning/researching											
PR/developing relationships											
Problem solving/designing											
Deciding											
Team Building											
Scholarship											

**2. How much time have you spent engaged in any form of professional development within the past year (since July 1, 1999)?**

\_\_\_\_ 1-10 days

\_\_\_\_ 11-20 days

\_\_\_\_ 21+ days

**3. How much would you estimate that have you spent in institutional funds (including fees to attend, materials, travel, lodging, meals, consultant fees, etc.)?**

\_\_\_\_ \$1,000-\$4,999

\_\_\_\_ \$5,000-\$9,999

\_\_\_\_ \$10,000-\$19,999

\_\_\_\_ \$20,000-\$49,999

\_\_\_\_ \$50,000-\$75,000

\_\_\_\_ \$76,000+

**4. What periodicals do you read?**

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**5. Please indicate which circumstances have been present on your campus within the past year (since July 1, 1999). Check all that apply.**

- ☐ Staff reorganization
- ☐ Merging of campuses
- ☐ Adding a campus or satellite operation
- ☐ Increase or decrease in enrollment (5% or more)
- ☐ Change in CEO
- ☐ Change in board composition
- ☐ Change in board leadership
- ☐ Bond or millage election
- ☐ Faculty/staff retirements (10% or more of workforce)
- ☐ Technology implementation (administrative or instructional)

**6. Please indicate which circumstances have been present in your district or service area within the past year (since July 1, 1999). Check all that apply.**

- ☐ Increase or decrease in state aid or local property tax revenue (5% or more)
- ☐ Accreditation visit or report
- ☐ Unemployment of 10%+
- ☐ Population increase/decrease (5%+)
- ☐ Industry moving in/out

**7. Please indicate your length of time in your current role:**

- ☐ 0-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6-9 years
- ☐ 10+ years

**8. Is this your first presidency?**

☐ Yes      ☐ No

**9. Please indicate your highest earned degree:**

☐ M.A./M.S.      ☐ Ed.D.      ☐ Ph.D.      ☐ Other

**10. Please indicate your age category:**

☐ 30-40                      ☐ 46-50                      ☐ 51-55

☐ 56-60                      ☐ 60+

**11. What is your gender?**

☐ Female                      ☐ Male

