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Understanding the Relationship Between Economic and Institutional Trends and  
Public University Presidential Turnover

by

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

Seton Hall University  
2020

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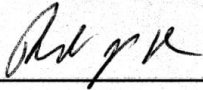

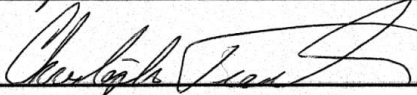


COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES  
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

**APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE**

**Jeffrey P. Levine** has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ph.D. during this **Spring Semester 2020**.

**DISSERTATION COMMITTEE**  
(please sign and date beside your name)

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The mentor and any other committee members who wish to review revisions will sign and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate's file and submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.

## Abstract

Presidents are leaving public colleges and universities at higher rates than they previously were over the last several decades. Previous studies on college and university presidential departure primarily have focused on internal institutional factors to offer explanations of understanding of why they leave office. Public university presidents earn less than private ones, and have to add successful (or unsuccessful) navigation of state politics to their skill sets. This study focused on both internal institutional factors and external environmental factors specifically within each state the public college or university is located. These include both external economic and political factors.

These external factors include income level in the state, percent in poverty in each state, and age ranges of the population by state. In addition, the study examined changes to factors affecting presidential turnover before and after the recent housing crisis in the United States, a significant economic event. There was increased turnover after recessions.

The outcomes of both logistic and OLS regressions, with both a one- and two- year lag, yielded the same results across both models and found variables that were important included enrollment, adjusted state appropriations, democratic control of the state legislature, percentage of the population in the state aged 18 to 24 years. Enrollment had a negative relationship, state appropriations had a strong positive relationship. Democratic control of the legislature, and percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 years had weak negative relationships.

Student retention rate had a weak positive relationship, state appropriations a strong positive relationship, and percentage of the population in each state aged 18 to 24 years had a strong negative significant relationship when dividing out the data before the housing crisis. Only the internal institutional factor of admit rate was significant and was weak and negative when dividing after the housing crisis.

*Keywords:* Public college president turnover, departure, state higher education, leadership, tenure

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To my exceptional father, Harold Herbert Levine, CPA/MBA (1950-2018),  
who unexpectedly passed away, during this process.

You never got to meet my beautiful wife, watch me get married, meet your brand new first granddaughter, or get to see me complete this dissertation.

You inspired me by teaching me to be my own person, be creative, and showed me how to lead by example.

You taught me the difference in doing something good and doing something great is just a bit more effort.

You are a true champion of education, for all, and stressed it so much that both of your children will have now earned Ph.D's and both work in higher education.

Dad, I cherish the time we spent together and I love you very much.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The position of the public university or college president, the top of each public higher education institution, is vital to the campuses they lead (Birnbaum, 1992). Among the many roles of public college presidents include aiding strategic planning processes, public relations, growing external research funding, creating relationships with community, boards, students, faculty, staff, and alumni. This includes serving as the public face of the institution of higher learning to the greater community (Evans, 2014). Periods of success or growth are often defined by the timeframe the public university president served in office (Duderstadt, 2009). Public university presidents also seek to leave legacies whether through initiatives, physical buildings on campus, strategic plan implementation, relationships with state politicians, and even through presiding during times of successful annual and capital fundraising campaigns (Nicholson, 2007).

It is important to study public college presidents for two reasons—one is that public colleges and universities educate the most students and the other is that they have a turnover problem relative to private colleges. Public universities enroll 73.5% of students enrolled at degree-granting universities according to data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. These public colleges and universities collectively enrolled 14,582,972 students. In 2015-16, 1,921,000 bachelor's degrees were awarded. This represents the largest sector available to study leadership that makes choices that matters to the largest number of constituents (IPEDS, 2016).

Leading public universities come with challenges, state environments are part of the context, and public college presidents are leaving more frequently than ever before and their turnover levels are greater than those of private university presidents. Padilla and Ghosh (2002)

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found private university presidents' average tenure is 8.8 years versus 5.7 years for public university presidents. Monks (2012) found public university presidents are 56% more likely to leave office than their private university counterparts. According to the recent 2017 American Council of Education (ACE) Presidential survey, tenure for the current set of all presidents dropped to six and a half years from seven years in 2011 and 8.5 in 2006. The study also found public university presidents at bachelor's colleges left after 4.9 years, master's 6.2 years, and doctorate-granting 6.2 years, all well under the overall 6.6 average (ACE, 2017).

Turnover at the top is a problem because presidential searches are expensive and take a lot of time (Erdley, 2016). One of the reasons to examine why presidents leave universities is the ability to aid those involved in the presidential search processes to make the best choice possible with maximization of precious college or university resources (ACE, 2017; Howells, 2011; Trachtenberg, 2013). The goal is to see why presidents leave to see if these factors can be addressed.

### **The Presidential Search Process**

Usually, boards hire an external presidential search firm and form an internal committee of stakeholders to lead the search process. The search firms then conduct in-depth research on the university to determine characteristics for best fit, create a publicly posted leadership profile, and seek nominations for individuals from their networks and greater community to find a stable of candidates to vet. The better the committee communicates and is transparent about the process to the college or university community, the better they create a sense of legitimacy and confidence in external stakeholders, in the selection process, and ultimately, the concluding result (Watkins-Hayes, 2015).

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Candidacy is kept confidential, at this stage, and the search firm and committee conduct more in-depth initial interviews with candidates, who support their candidacies by providing updated curriculum vitae and cover letters relating their qualifications to the specific search-firm designed leadership profiles. Often, the board or hiring committee will conduct airport interviews in conjunction with the search firm. All candidates are flown to a nearby metropolitan airport, in order to meet, answer questions, and maintain confidentiality. This process yields a whittled candidate pool, usually to one to three finalists. Often, their candidacy becomes public through public relations and communications methods posted on the university website and provided to external community press. Open forums are held.

During these forums, candidates present to the search committee, students, faculty, alumni, and administration through one or two days of a full schedule. These events are designed for stakeholders to connect with candidates and provide evaluative feedback to the committee as part of the college or university shared governance process. The search culminates with the announcement of success or failure. Success is the naming of a new leader and announcement of their investiture as president on campus. Failure is often described as a failed search, a non-transparent process, or displeasure with the finalists in the search by factions or in aggregate by the board, committee, or campus community (Leondar & Neff, 1992; McLaughlin & Riesman, 1990). Ultimately, these may not be actual failures if additional searches, more time, or better candidates emerged that subsequently allowed the college to select the appropriate leader to effectively chart their course forward for future academic years.

While there are not specific numbers of failed presidential searches, they are publicized. In 2018, Boise State failed a presidential search, after engaging the search firm AGB. The board voted not to offer the presidency to any of the three finalists after the local search committee was

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given 53 applications (Clark, 2018). Many involved in the search said AGB did not bring in the caliber of candidates to succeed a strong president who was in office 15 years. Community leaders also wanted candidates from the business sector (Doland, 2018). Ultimately, a new search began, after considerable expenses for both searches, a new leader was recently chosen, in the 2019 search, Dr. Marlene Tromp, who previously served as the Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

A recent example of a controversial search was at the University of South Carolina in 2019. Governor McMaster placed pressure on the board to select his preferred presidential candidate, a retired Lieutenant General, Robert L. Caslen, who had served as Superintendent at West Point. He was seen as a very conservative candidate and the faculty and students voiced concern over the lack of female and diverse candidates in the pool. The governor waited until students were out of town, forced the board to vote on the matter, and the board voted his candidate in 11-8, with one trustee abstaining (Daprile, 2019).

### **Executive Leadership Turnover in Higher Education**

Strong, consistent, and dynamic leaders at the top of organizations from business to non-profit to higher education contribute to institutional success (Kim, 1996; Allison, 2002). Higher education institutional executive leadership can impact state funding, as the relationships between executives and state leadership could possibly influence decisions on allocations of resources (McClendon & Hearn, 2006, Mitchell, Palacios, & Leachman, 2016), and presidential changes impact institutional success (Nehls, 2008). Public university presidents are the key implementers of strategic plans, are responsible for fundraising, and bringing in money that positively impacts the university's annual budget. When constant public university presidential turnover happens, it creates an environment of uncertainty to the larger community, tensions

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between board members who want their candidate to remain in office, and uncertainty from students and faculty who want to make sure their wants and needs are addressed by top leadership (Nehls, 2008).

Relevant research in this field has primarily focused on small sample sets, case studies, and internal institutional factors. Specifically, small sample sets do not provide an accurate portrayal of what is really happening but can be a good snapshot of individual cases to understand internal challenges. Internal challenges only provide a partial picture to understanding the environments in which presidents operate, as well as how political and economic environments externally potentially impact leadership. This study differs from previous research because it directly turns to public, four-year universities, as a unique subset of all presidential turnover. Little has been examined about this subset in previous studies, including the external contexts of individual states in which they function, and of economic environments and how those factors, in distinct state political environments within the United States, over time, contribute to turnover at public universities.

### **Why Presidents Leave**

Potential factors affecting public university presidential tenure include human resource and economic factors. Public university presidents leave either with positive completion of their time at the helm or unfavorable ending of service. Favorable completions include after capital campaign completion, strategic plan completion, growing net tuition, fund-raising, and auxiliary revue, positive relationships with the community, and completion of several years of presidential service. The unfavorable completions, which happens, include forced resignation by the board, and termination of university employment. If a president leaves for a new job it may be unfavorable to the campus community. Some reasons that public university presidents move on

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include the tough nature of the job, high-profile sexual abuse scandals and other controversies on campus, financial problems, governing board contentions, and campus politics (Busta, 2018).

Relationships between governing boards and the university president can be different in public higher education because board members are often appointed by governors who seek to compose boards to aid the carrying out of their political agenda (Lowry, 2001).

What is currently understood about the length of time a public university president is in office and why they leave from limited survey responses does not take into account economics, fundraising, state funding for higher education, and campus politics, and university market competition after the United States housing crisis. One of the studies most similar to what I am doing is by Harris & Ellis (2018) who examined NCAA Division 1 institutions, counted the number of turnovers and used categories that included financial controversy, loss of board confidence, poor judgement, athletics controversy, loss of faculty confidence, poor fit, and loss of system confidence after examining each individual turnover and categorizing them by themes. These variables are theoretically important because they include both internal and external macro and micro variables to better examine complex research questions. These are important categories for presidential search firms to go over with boards and search committees to find the best leader that will stay in office and lead the college to success, these can save time and institutional resources and can be a catalyst for lengthy effective university leadership. Some of the gaps in this study include creating categories to fit the data as well as having to rely on external newspapers and online information in determining the categories. This information could be in the public realm but may not be the actual internal reason for departure. Also, this study is limited to NCAA Division 1 member institutions and athletic category may not be indicative of trends in aggregate as a subset of the larger population. In addition, small private

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institutions in NCAA Division 1 like St. Peter's and Tulsa may not reflect similar presidential changes at large institutions in the same category as West Virginia and University of Florida because they have less dependence on state governments to develop operating budgets.

Public university presidents face human resource challenges, as outlined above, while also encountering economic challenges. During their tenure, they confront hurdles in leading their institutions due to the states that their campuses happen to be located. This includes both internal and external economic and political pressures (Tekniepe, 2014). Internal pressures could come from the faculty, students, boards, the need to upgrade academic programs and campus infrastructure to compete, as well as after state appropriations. External pressures could include priorities the political party in the state desire that may be different than the president. For example, in Texas, Republican Governor Rick Perry called for a \$10,000 bachelor's degree that was at odds with presidents of the state's flagship institutions (Kelderman, 2013). In Mississippi, disputes over the new medical school being built by Ole Miss led to the president being offered a contract extension for only a small amount of years (Levine, 2016). These factors have the ability to move college market position, leading to potential changes in institutional indicators, which ultimately can affect the length of the public university president's term in office. External pressures can also come from the amount of income earned by individuals in each state, percent of poverty in the state, political party in control of the state legislature, as well as the needs of different age groups within their unique state borders.

Understanding presidential turnover has been the focus of previous studies of both internal and external challenges to university presidents in higher education. Harris and Ellis (2018) created categories focused on internal factors including problems with interpersonal relationships, failure to meet business objectives, inability to build and lead a team, and inability



to develop or adapt and found that no one factor was most commonly found over another - university presidents leave for all sorts of reasons. Some possible moves that public university presidents could make are economic, parlaying their public university presidential experience into a better job, seeking further employment in different sectors. Others have sufficient resources to transition out of the public eye and into relaxing retirement. Some return to faculty positions.

### **Length of Time in Office**

In order to determine length in office, previous studies have examined the quality of the institution to determine if it affects presidential turnover. To examine institutional selectivity, Monks (2007), as a factor in his study, examined *US News and World Report* college rankings, and public versus private university presidents to see how long presidents remain in office. Earnings and rankings were both correlated with time in office. This is important because these findings indicated college financial resources and quality of the institution mattered when understanding why presidents leave.

Previous studies found discrepancies in private versus public president pay. Monks (2009) found using data from the 2001 ACE survey, public presidents were paid 20% less than their peers at private institutions and in 2006 it rose to a 23% difference in public versus private university presidential pay. Monks (2012) found public universities are subject to state funding appropriations, governance, and public university presidents get paid less. Presidential pay matters because public university presidents may leave for higher paying jobs and the job is demanding; private university presidents may stick around longer because of the compensation package and less funding cuts to annual budgets specifically tied to state funding. On the other

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hand, private colleges and universities are extremely reliant on tuition while publics can have another source, state appropriations.

Research conducted in the business world on reasons why leaders leave provides examples that may aid understanding of presidential turnover within higher education institutions. Wiersema (2002) started with the Fortune 500 CEOs in 1990 and examined succession events between 1990 and 1994. She found in companies that had CEO departures, 108 firms made shifts in their strategic plans and business operations, while 61 firms kept operations the same without business diversification. Bigley (2002), for example, discussed negative CEO replacement with the case of Toys R Us whose business maneuvers were intended to increase profitability without really addressing the fact that the chain was losing market share to technology. University leadership changes should thoughtfully address the needs of higher education, in a way that Toys R Us did not in their market position. An example of a recent higher education leadership change specifically addressing the need for innovation is when Daniel Greenstein was appointed as Chancellor of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE). Chancellor Greenstein came to his current role after he served, most recently, as senior advisor to the President, US Programs – Education at the forward-thinking and technologically savvy Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Hancock, Allen, Bosco, McDaniel, and Pierce (2013) reviewed employee turnover (but not CEO turnover) as a predictor of firm performance, in a meta-analysis of private firms. To review firms in this context, several variables were reviewed: total turnover rate, location, industry, organization size, job level, productivity, financial performance, customer outcomes, and safety and quality outcomes. They found a negative relationship between turnover rates and organizational performance (Hancock et al., 2013).

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In addition to the business world, why CEO's leave in the non-profit world also can be due to challenges in strategy implementation and board stewardship to get their goals accomplished with limited resources. Non-profits deal with many of the same issues as higher education (Renz, 2016). Departure of the Chief Executive Officer of a non-profit means that once a new leader is put in place, they need time to learn the organization and to effectively implement the strategic plan, raise money, receive information, and create personal relationships with boards, potential donors, and the community. It takes time to develop these key performance competencies, and turnover stalls the effective work of the organization while putting pressure on existing boards and professional employees left to continue the progress of the non-profit. In higher education, dealing with boards and donors in public versus private higher education is a bit different because often times the board is composed of individuals places onto the board by governors with political motivation. Also, courting donors in public higher education, colleges and universities have to stay within state guidelines whereas there may not be restrictions on spending of funds at private institutions.

### **Previous Studies Were Narrow in Focus**

My study is necessary because previous higher education presidential studies were more survey-based and received more limited responses. IPEDS requires responses from all institutions receiving Title IV funds, which include direct subsidized and unsubsidized loans through the federal government as well as grants, which yields more complete hard data for processing. These studies focused on smaller segments of institutions, based on earlier time periods, and did not really investigate any economic factors. Previous studies on presidential turnover have utilized ACE and *Chronicle of Higher Education* survey data and this study utilizes a different, more comprehensive data set from IPEDS. In the 2017 ACE survey, the

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population that was sent invitations was 3,615 university presidents, with 1,546 responding.

Responses only included 332 public university presidents. IPEDS data includes a more comprehensive data set for all public universities that provide Title IV funds (those where their students receive federal financial aid) and included 491 public universities in the sample. In addition, this study has longitudinal data, which is a contribution to the literature.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine internal and external factors, through the inclusive lens of economic, political, and human resource reasons for leaving to determine significance of public university presidential departure.

In the United States, according to Harris & Ellis (2018) after 2008, university presidential turnover is occurring more frequently than from 1998 to 2008, is expensive, time consuming, and takes away from periods of dynamic, engaging, qualified, and competent chief executives at higher education institutions leading their unique, public, state-supported shared governance processes. Presidents are often evaluated by boards on internal student outcomes-based institutional measures, although they are outside of many of their daily duties (Basinger, 1999).

By using IPEDS data, results more accurately reflect the landscape of higher education over the course of years studied. In addition, ACE surveys were published in 2001, 2006, 2011, and 2016 and IPEDS data is readily available for each year over the same period of time in order to denote annual public university presidential changes and incorporate internal annual university trends into the study.

In looking at data from 2003 to 2016, including all four-year public universities, some changes to institutional characteristics can quantitatively be measured over time. This study does

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this by reviewing public university variables in IPEDS over a period, searching for increases to key performance and success indicators. For example, if public university endowment value increases over five years, board members may utilize positive financial prosperity as a favorable tool when evaluating the job being accomplished by the current president. In addition to previous studies, this study will examine economic data, state funding data, and public university presidential turnover in each state – to identify if departure is more prevalent with states with more dramatic funding cuts and greater negative state economic trends.

### **Research Questions**

This study examined the research questions:

**RQ1 :** To what extent are institutional and external factors associated with public college presidents’ departure?”

**RQ2:** Do the influence of the factors differ before and after the housing crisis?

### **Significance of This Study**

In recent years, over time, the United States economy has shifted to create a decreasing middle class (Blanchard & Willman, 2016), high debt (Nau, Dwyer, & Hodson, 2015), decreasing state-funding levels for higher education (Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2016), and the shelf life of university presidents has been decreasing (ACE, 2017). These factors are important because public colleges cost more for students and for states compared to private colleges with large endowments and generous donors (Archibald and Feldman, 2018).

In addition to the domestic context public university presidents operate within, they are often are evaluated by the amount of money the university raises. The president’s job is getting

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more difficult due to rising student debt burdens making fundraising difficult, and it makes attracting students increasingly difficult and some have to raise tuition. The survey of consumer finances found that in 2013, education debt, for individuals under 40, represented 38.8% of their total debt, and in 2016, it increased to 43.3% (Bricker et al., 2017). This recently increased young working professional debt presented difficult contexts in which colleges and universities had to fundraise. The financial health of the institution, within their external context, could affect the length the president served during this time.

From an organization and governance lens, it looks like the stakes have increased and the expectations are higher for public university chief executives. Is this the case and is it quantifiable? The benefits of this study include understanding public university leadership challenges over time that lead to departures, public university leadership changes over time during a significant point in United States economic history (after the housing market crashed), and as American manufacturing jobs continue to erode. This study can aid from a historical perspective by telling what happened, can aid future generations of boards and public university presidents by letting them know what they are getting into, and can aid higher education as public university leadership proactively evolves in a data-assisted context to meet the needs of future generations (ACE, 2017).

### **Conclusion**

This chapter focused on making the case for studying why public university presidents leave. Chapter two will focus on defining presidential departure and turnover based on prior studies, including literature in both the business and non-profit worlds to provide a deeper

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understanding of executive departure, and provides the theoretical framework of why leaders leave their public colleges and universities. Chapter three focuses on the publicly available data sources methodology of how the study is to be conducted. Chapter four focuses on results, analysis, and chapter five provides conclusions, directions for future research, and implications for policy and practice.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

Described in the following literature review are studies of presidential departure from colleges and universities in the United States. Utilizing Google Scholar, criteria for inclusion of literature include studies that include different data sets used to determine presidential turnover, both quantitative and qualitative studies, and studies that identified at least one internal or external categories or factors that were found to be significant. The research articles are organized into four sections. The first section is an overview of presidential search practices. The second section is a chronological review of recent quantitative contributions to the literature related to factors affecting presidential departure. This research covers quantitative and qualitative approaches to this topic, and include examples of institutional and external variables, from studies that have previously delved into this topic.

Analysis of this research demonstrates a key void in studies that have a large sample size and that turn to economic data, by state, to examine public university presidential turnover, after the recent United States housing crisis. The housing crisis represented a period of recession in the United States that challenged states' abilities to fund programs to support their citizens in many ways, and higher education may have been prioritized lower on the scale under other needs, depending on the state.

### **Defining Presidential Turnover**

Previous studies define presidential tenure as the length of time presidents begin their time in their current position and ends on their last day in office. This length of time is defined in the number of years in office as a unit of measurement (Padilla & Ghosh, 2000;



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Monks, 2004, 2012; McNaughton, 2016). Recently, the literature has shifted from tenure to turnover. Harris & Ellis (2018) looked specifically at the turnovers per year. Turnover is more appropriate to use when examining the end of the presidency as opposed to of length of time in office.

### **Trends in College President Demographics**

In order to understand why presidents leave and the contexts in the environments in which they operate, it is important to understand characteristics of United States college presidents and how could these factors potentially affect turnover. When looking at gender, in 2001, 21% of college presidents were female, and that number has gradually increased to represent 30% of college presidents in 2016. When examining college president race, the number of white college presidents has decreased from 87% in 2001 to 83% in 2016. African American college presidents represented 6% of those surveyed in 2001, 2006, and 2011 and are 8% in 2016. Latino presidents have consistently been at 4% of the sample in each of the four surveys. The religion of the college president has changed from 57% Protestant in 2001 to 48% Protestant in 2016. The age of the college president has increased over the 16 years of the survey, with 57% being between 51-60 years of age in 2001 to only 33% in 2016. Presidents between 61-70 years of age have increased from 28% in 2001 to 47% in 2016. Presidents 71 years and older increased from 2% in 2001 to 11% in 2016 (ACE 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016). Growth in the age of presidents means more will be transitioning out of the role in the next ten years.

Public university presidents at the bachelor's, master's, and doctorate-granting institutions that responded the ACE 2017 Presidents survey all, on average, had shorter times in office than their private university peers. For doctorate-granting institutions, 6.2 years in office

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versus private 7.4 years, for master's 5.7 years versus 7.8 years, and for bachelor's 4.9 versus 6.0 years for private colleges (ACE, 2017).

Table 1: ACE 2017 President Survey Respondent's Years in Office

<i>Type of Institution</i>	<i>Public President 2016</i>	<i>Private President 2016</i>
Doctorate-granting	6.2 years in office	7.4 years in office
Master's	5.7 years in office	7.8 years in office
Bachelor's	4.9 years in office	6.0 years in office

Source: ACE 2017 president survey

State legislatures are funding public four-year universities less than in the past (Tandberg & Laderman, 2018). Pell Grants are not growing with tuition changes in the last decade, and the first-generation low-income student population requires additional funding and resources (Protopsaltis & Parrott, 2017). With today's shrinking middle class, these funding sources are vital to close the knowledge and education gap. These funding sources include local government, state government, federal government, tuition and fees, private gifts, grants, and contracts, endowment income. The most recent ACE president survey in 2016 asked presidents their views on future funding sources. In the 2016 ACE survey, 41% of presidents surveyed expected state governments to decrease funding, and 28% expected decreased federal funding. Among the major trends in income presidents expect to increase include 75% expected tuition and fees to increase, 85% expect private gifts, grants, and contracts to increase, and 64% expect endowment income to increase. The implications of these trends are they may lead to more turnover in the future.

Public university presidents have been evaluated on items they do not directly encounter on a day to day basis when running their higher education institutions. When asked about the legitimacy of performance metrics on an index of 1 to 10 with 10 being the greatest: 2016

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college presidents listed the following metrics in order of most important to least important retention rates (8.1), graduation rates (7.9), minority student outcomes (7.5), bachelor's degree completion (7.1), faculty diversity (6.7), class size (6), student achievement on national learning exams (6), student diversity (5.3), tuition and fee costs for in state students (4.7), competitive/external research grant awards (4.0), and US News rankings (2.5) (ACE 2016). This is important to include because presidential job expectations need to be aligned between presidents and boards evaluating their annual performance to minimize departure. These presidential respondent-identified, ranked metrics can potentially be significant factors affecting presidential turnover.

When asked about their views on the current state of their state political climate, 2016 ACE president survey respondents reported 41% a level of hostility, 9% were neutral, and 50% reported some level of support (ACE, 2016). If 41% reported a level of hostility, this could be inclusive of where the majority of the recorded presidential turnover occurred during any given year or set of surrounding years. An example of this is the public political saga between former University of Texas regent Wallace Hall, appointed by then Republican Governor Rick Perry, and then president Bill Powers. Hall was censured and Powers was allowed to exit his presidency on his own terms (Levine, 2016).

### **Previous Quantitative Studies on Factors Affecting Presidential Tenure**

Previous quantitative studies have examined presidential departure. These researchers primarily used surveys and created a foundation for examining presidents within their own institutions. Categories reviewed include institutional, economic, and political factors that are found to be important.

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Alton (1971) utilized additional variables to review presidential departure that included highest degree awarded, earned degrees of the president by major area, position held prior to the presidency, and position held succeeding presidency. He found that the major problem of the college presidency is the unclear definition of their role. Alton (1971) concluded presidential tenure should be viewed in terms of relatively short periods of time within the context of organizational development units, provided a framework for understanding of the knowledge, and argued for a shorter period of time because at some point the leader may no longer be as effective (Alton, 1971).

Monks (2012) found salary is a factor affecting presidential turnover. Research on factors affecting salary include Tang (1996) who reviewed institutional expenditures, institutional type (research, doctorate-granting, liberal arts [market driven]), reputation, ranking, number of national merit scholars, as well as midpoint SAT score ranking. The point of this study was to examine college selectivity and market position and presidential pay. This study found, using multiple regression analysis that how much a president makes is tied to the university ranking (Tang, 1996). Some college presidents, like in the 2007 contract of Michael Crow of Arizona State, received incentivized pay with positive university movement up the *US News* rankings (Jaschik, 2007).

Padilla and Ghosh (2000) conducted survival analysis, beginning in the 1950's, which included a small, random sample of 166 presidents. They found private university presidents served an average of 8.8 years and 5.7 years, was the sample average, for public university presidents. They also listed their observations, not based on survey results, of factors that make the presidency increasingly more difficult to operate, including government controls, the legal system, student and parent influence, larger number of university-wide goals, board involvement

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at micro levels, staff bureaucracy, influence of experts, declining acceptance of US institutions in general and at colleges as a subset, and increases in presidential pay. Padilla & Ghosh included presidential pay as a control because they concluded the higher the salary the more expectations and pressures the president faced.

Neumann and Neumann (2000) originally surveyed 279 college presidents for their expert opinion on challenges facing their presidency, and found in a second follow-up survey five years later only 157 of the original presidents were in office by comparing presidents' names from the first study to the next to look for changes. Variables examined include enrollment, resource generation from endowment and enrollment yield, and quality of academic programs. Presidents were asked to self-identify with one of the following leadership styles: integrator (high integrating, high implementing, high focus), net caster (high integrating, high implementing, low focus), focused visionary (high in visioning and focus but low implementation), focused performer (high ability to focus and implement once a vision is chosen), prioritizer (low vision and implementing, high focus), dreamer (vision, no focus or implementing), implementer (low vision, low focus, high implementing), or maintainer (low vision, low focus, low maintaining). These self-identifications were held up against the variables of enrollment, resources, and quality improvement (Neumann & Neumann, 2000).

Survey results demonstrated that strategic leadership style was associated with bottom line. Maintainers, the keepers of the status quo, were most likely to be associated with negative outcomes, and most likely to be associated with presidential departure. Integrators, visionaries, and net casters were most commonly found to be running successful colleges. Instead of looking at tenure, presidential fit was examined in the context of their institutions. This is significant because institutional level variables were utilized to address success and departure to aid

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presidential search committees in identifying the appropriate candidates for university president positions (Neumann & Neumann, 2000).

Reed (2002) studied the tenure and turnover of 151 incoming presidents of public institutions, 121 private institutions, between 1987 and 1990. Reed utilized ACE survey data, and then mailed a survey. Reed found average presidential tenure of the 151 presidents was 8.54 years. This study was significant because it utilized institutional level variables of enrollment, institution type, wealth (measured in total expenditures and general expenses per FTE student), the president's reporting line, gender, and race/ethnicity (Reed, 2002). This was significant because with these variables, Reed found no difference in the length of service and turnover in women and minority presidents. This is a positive contribution to the literature and the changing demographics of the modern-day university president because it specifically looks at women and minority turnover. This may just be due to the small sample size and uneven numbers of universities used by classification. This study paints a better picture for public university presidents than Monks (2004) and the range public university presidents stay in office is from six to 11 years. Future studies should take a second look to see if percentages of women and minority presidential tenure and turnover have changed since 1990, compared with aggregate tenure and turnover.

Monks (2004) used the *Chronicle of Higher Education* database to identify presidential compensation at 166 public and private Carnegie classified doctoral research extensive universities. Monks (2004) found public university presidents earned 50% less than private presidents, and larger institutions paid their presidents more than universities with fewer enrolled students. Monks (2004) sought to examine whether public university presidents may leave at a faster rate than private university presidents because of lower salary with the same leadership

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expectations for their role(s), and found that private university presidents earn more the longer they are in office, but public presidential pay is flatter. After running regressions with both individual characteristics of presidents and institutional characteristics, he found institutional characteristics matter. He found significantly positive relationships with institutional size (total enrollment), quality (US News reputation score), and control of colleges when examining presidential pay. He found higher revenue per student is associated with higher presidential salary. Monks concludes the implications of these findings indicate it is difficult for public college and universities to attract the best talent, retain the best talent, and that this decline leads to less quality of the institution.

Looking outside of the United States allows a comparison and a glimpse of the global reach of presidential turnover. Robeken (2007) examined 30 German universities. Variables in the study included tenure, organizational size, expenditures on teaching, expenditures on research, and reform pressures. This international study was significant because it found a decrease in presidential tenure and the existence of significant financial pressures. The factor he found with a strong significantly positive relationship was expenditures on teaching when correlated with presidential tenure. Robeken (2007) recommended fixed terms for presidents based on the ability to create more autonomy for leaders in traditional German terms that ranged from two to eight years. This recommendation of fixed terms hoped to mitigate the burden with legislation, negotiating new laws and external factors that come into play over the course of a presidential tenure. This conclusion is because universities were not adapting to their environments, what other universities were doing, or new learning modalities. Another significant finding in this study is the existence of the external economic pressures of reform on

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the institution and presidents. Many of the previous studies do not mention external environment and its impact on the college (Robeken, 2007).

Langbert (2012) delved into whether social matching, including if the president was an internal hire or involved in a turnaround, was significant. Langbert (2012) defined social matching as a president whose religion affiliated closely with that of the institution or was a graduate of that institution or one in the geographic vicinity. This study helps build understanding about president and institutional fit. Data was used from 1996 and 2006 *US News and World Report* of 200 presidents of private colleges and universities.

Variables in the study included institutional size, if they studied liberal arts or not, gender president's academic background, SAT score in base year, ratio of SAT score in 2006 to 1999, the difference between SAT score of the president's baccalaureate institution and current institution, if the president was an alumnus/ae, if the president was an internal hire, if the president has same religion as school, and if the president attended a public institution. Religious affiliation does not impact public university presidential tenure, but there is a 10% additional length of tenure in private universities where the president's religion matches that of their private college. The two most important factors were found to be, across Tobit and hazard function equations, internally hired presidents and presidents' involvement in a turnaround. This study was significant because it found the internal hire (positive directional relationship) and high performance (strong positive directional relationship) to be most significant when examining private college and university presidents (Langbert, 2012).

Monks (2012) examined presidential departure between 2001 and 2006. He merged American Council of Education President survey data from 2001 to 2006 with *Chronicle of Education* presidential salary data and drew a sample size of 787 unduplicated college and



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university presidents. The variables he reviewed included institution type, time in office, Baccalaureate college president, Master's university president; gender, race, and age of the president; if the president possessed an advanced degree; or if they had a background in the social sciences, business, science, math, medicine, law, humanities, or the arts. Monks (2012) found public university presidents were significantly (56% higher) more likely to leave office than presidents at private colleges or universities, conditional on sex, age, race, advanced degree, and field of specialization. Diving into which of these variables were found to be significant, the older the president's age and the president's having an advanced degree in social sciences or business were found to be statistically significant. This helps the field of study uncover the mystery of who would be a good fit for their institution when presidents are being hired and can be useful information for boards of trustees and search firms to utilize when making leadership hires of the highest level.

Tekniepe (2014) focused specifically on 101 community college presidents, from 34 states, that were members of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The study used logistic regression and classified involuntary turnover into four groups: political conflict between governing board and the college president, internal pressures from the professoriate and subunits within the organization, external pressures from community stakeholders, and fiscal stress. This mixed methods study focused on political, internal, external, and fiscal questions to find answers to independent variables that could impact community college presidential turnover.

The first category is faculty association and administrative interaction. Through logistic regression analysis, utilizing community college presidential survey Likert-scale responses when asked about both interactions during labor negotiations, and, if deans and community college

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administrators worked well together to presidents who worked together well with faculty associations, findings indicated community college administrations were 47% less likely to be pushed out of their positions. Presidents who indicated that deans and administrative groups worked well together were 86% less likely to experience a negative termination from their tenure as president (Tekniepe, 2014).

Presidents who found that community stakeholder pressures impacted decision making at their colleges were 97% more likely to have a negative end of their term as president. Fiscal stresses, such as increased operating costs, led to a 118% increase in the likelihood of a forced termination of a presidency. Specifically, he found poor cohesiveness and bad communication derailed relationships and ended presidencies (Tekniepe, 2014). This study is significant because it focused on internal and external environments of community college presidents and found all four involuntary factors had an impact on presidential departure, with a dramatic impact of fiscal stressors on ending presidential tenures at community colleges. Most of these factors would also likely affect public universities.

McNaughton (2016) focused on the fit of the president to determine tenure length. He used ACE CPS survey data from 2012 that was administered in 2011, analyzed 1,598 institutions, and merged the ACE CPS survey data and IPEDS data. He utilized negative binomial regression and Event History Analysis (EHA). Variables utilized in this study included age of president at appointment, sex, the field of study of the president, if the president is an underrepresented minority or not, the prior job of the president, institution type, institutional size, tuition as a proportion of revenue, donations and gifts as a proportion of revenue, research as a proportion of expenses, and instruction as a proportion of instruction (McNaughton, 2016). Factors found to be significant, when examining two- and four-year public and private colleges,

included tuition revenue increases led to tenure increases as well as with more funding spent on research, tenures increased. This study demonstrates that fiscally sound colleges and research-focused colleges keep their leaders. This is important because more selective colleges tend to fall into both of these categories (McNaughton, 2016).

### **Previous Qualitative Studies on Presidential Tenure with Factors Affecting Turnover**

Another qualitative study providing important context to findings, difficult to measure, includes one by Donnelly (1993) that interviewed 10 community college presidents who were in office 10 or more years. He found that successful presidents delegate more tasks and allow their staffs to succeed. This was concluded by multiple presidents interviewed responding they did not have time to get caught up in daily activities but could spend more time praising the work of others and advancing their strategic planning initiatives. Donnelly (1993) also found consensus-building presidents are more successful. This is an important contribution because it reviews an internal behavior of individual presidents in their employment context to show how decision-making can contribute to longevity (Donnelly, 1993).

Eddy (2005) performed a qualitative study by interviewing nine community college presidents, through nine face-to-face interviews, utilizing sense making as a theoretical framework. Eddy (2005) found three themes including presidents making mental maps of decision-making at their new colleges, the need for cognitive orientation of new presidents to adapt to leading in the context of their new environments, and the role of the college presidency is continually changing. He concluded presidents continually learned and adjusted their leadership in dynamic fashion, and applied knowledge from learning about previous interactions.

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In addition, findings show that some presidents completed presidential-focused professional development programs to aid their experience.

In addition to external pressures, internal context is important. Touzeau (2010) conducted a qualitative case study of four community colleges of presidents who left during the first five years of office, conducting a total of 16 interviews. Variables utilized in the study included student enrollment, geographic region, single or multiple campus, governance, and finance. After interviews, document analysis and observation were utilized to determine findings. This study found presidents who left had problems with interpersonal relationships, failure to adapt to institutional culture, difficulty working with key constituents, failure to communicate effectively, and a flawed selection process.

Smirek (2013) interviewed 18 presidents who has been appointed less than five years earlier. The sample represented three Carnegie classifications including research universities, Master's colleges, and Baccalaureate colleges. He found presidents often had to censor speech, use retrospect techniques on what they can do or should have done better, immerse themselves in as many campus events as possible, recognize the fast-paced nature and speed of the presidency, and understand perspective. This affects presidential turnover because presidents who do not readily utilize these skills leave. This study is significant because it empirically grounds concepts of sense making in educational institutions of new presidents and found "presidents use ethnographic methods to understand organizational culture" and that institution type matters (Smirek, 2013).

Recently, Harris and Ellis (2018) examined colleges and universities that were member institutions in NCAA Division I athletics as of 2013. This study, along with the 2017 ACE President's Study, showed larger numbers of presidents leaving after the recent United States

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housing crisis. Harris and Ellis (2018) then reviewed each case on the internet and determined if departure was classified as voluntary or involuntary. If information was not available online, they interviewed at least two members at the university and used professional judgement to classify the result. This was significant because it created a database of positive or negative turnovers with a unique data set based on a new classification metric of the NCAA classification that has not previously been utilized. This is relevant because presidents are under the microscope at National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institutions, the approximately 350 universities that have the highest level of intercollegiate athletics, as sanctioned by the NCAA. Presidents are under pressure to produce results and this study examines a new way of evaluating departure. Their findings include a significant increase in involuntary presidential turnovers after 2008, amounting to half of the turnovers in each turnover category. Their dataset was from 1998 to 2016. The involuntary departures were shown to be due to issues with athletics, financial, boards, faculty, system confidence, poor judgement, or a bad match. They concluded by suggesting further research can focus on external and internal factors that may lead to departure (Harris & Ellis, 2018). Their analysis started in 1998, and the large number of involuntary turnovers they found after 2008 was due to several factors and not any individual factor. After reviewing the foundational and most recent literature, there is a gap in the literature in specifically examining annual changes in public university presidential turnover, institutional level variables, and external political and economic variables, before and after a recent time period inclusive of negative economic change, to determine significant outcome variables.

Table 2: Summary of the review of the literature

Author	Purpose of Study	Key Findings	Major Gaps in the Literature
Alton, 1971	Focused on individual's pathways to the presidency	Found unclear definition of president's role; advocates for shorter tenures	Does not focus on the internal and external context of the college environment in which the president is leading.
Donnelly, 1993	Interviewed 10 community college presidents in office 10 or more years.	Found successful presidents delegate and consensus builders are more successful.	A larger sample size and different institution types would aid understanding in the field.
Tang, 1996	Examined institution reputation ranking, selectivity, market position, and presidential pay	Found how much a president earns is tied to university ranking.	Focused on earnings and does not include external political or economic factors.
Neumann & Neumann, 2000	Originally surveyed 279 presidents and then surveyed these presidents five years later. Found only 157 still in office. Examined enrollment, resource generation from endowment, enrollment yield, and quality of	Found presidents categorized as integrators, visionaries, and net casters were more successful.	Second survey data set was too small to understand significance.

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	academic programs.		
Padilla & Ghosh, 2000	Used survival analysis on a random sample of 166 presidents	Found private university presidents served 8.8 years and 5.7 years for public university counterparts.	Survival analysis over such a long period of time does not help us understand changing environments.
Reed, 2002	Combined ACE survey data with own survey responses of 151 public and 121 private presidents using enrollment, total and general expenditures per FTE, and individual characteristics of the president.	Found average tenure is 8.54 years.	The sample size is too small to understand population characteristics.
Monks, 2004	Examined 166 public and private Carnegie classified doctoral research extensive institutions.	Found public university presidents earn 50% less. Found institutional characteristics of enrollment and quality were significant.	Only focuses on doctoral institutions. Is a limited window into what occurred.
Eddy, 2005	Interviewed nine community college presidents.	Found presidents made mental maps for decision-making, there is a need for presidents to adapt to their contexts, and the role of the president is continually changing.	Sample size is small, and only looks at community colleges.

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Robken, 2007	Sample was 30 German universities; examined tenure, size, expenditures on teaching, expenditures on research, reform pressures.	Found expenditures on teaching significantly associated with presidential tenure.	The focus of comparative American universities may not be teaching. The German model may not apply due to different structures and leadership modalities.
Tonzeau, 2010	Conducted a case study of four community colleges who had presidents who left in the first five years; includes enrollment, geographic region, single or multiple campuses, governance, and finance.	Found presidents who left had problems with interpersonal relationships, failure to adapt to institutional culture, difficulty working with key constituents, failure to communicate effectively, and a flawed selection process.	Needs a larger sample of cases from different institution types from different states to aid understanding of environmental contexts.
Langbert, 2012	Focused on answering question whether or not president was an internal hire or involved in a turnaround. Used US News Data, size, type, president academic background, if president was an alum, religion of president aligned with the institution.	Found significance between internal hires and high performance.	Externally hired presidents can also make great leaders. Limiting research to internal hires and transformative leaders may not help the field understand why unsuccessful presidents leave.
Monks, 2012	Examined 787	Found public	ACE



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	presidents using ACE and <i>Chronicle</i> salary data; used type, time in office, gender, race, age of president, if they had an advanced degree, type of academic subject matter of the president's background.	university presidents are 56% more likely to leave than their private counterparts.	presidential data is not annual, so it is hard to understand trends over time.
Smirek, 2013	Interviewed 18 presidents appointed five years earlier from research universities, Master's Colleges, and Bachelor's Colleges.	Found presidents use ethnographic methods to understand organizational culture.	It is a small sample size and it is very difficult to understand presidential adaptation across limited examples of different types of institutions.
Tekniepe, 2014	Studied 101 community college presidents from 34 states; focused on political, internal, external, and fiscal questions	Presidents who experience community pressure were more likely to have a negative ending; presidents who work well with academic side of the house are less likely to experience a negative end to the presidency. Fiscal stress meant more likely a negative ending to a presidency	Study was limited to community colleges and needs to be expanded to other institution types.
McNaughton,	Focused on fit of	Found tuition	Study focused

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2016	the president, merged ACE and IPEDS data, used background characteristics, prior job, size, tuition as a proportion of revenue, donations and gifts as a proportion of revenue, research as a proportion of expenses, and instruction as a proportion of instruction.	revenue and research expenditure increases led to increases to presidential tenure.	on presidential fit and not external environmental fit.
Harris & Ellis, 2018	Created and coded a database of NCAA Division 1 College president turnover based on internet searches of why they left.	Found that there was a significant increase in presidential turnover in 2008, from their data that was from the ten years prior.	Study was limited to NCAA Division 1 institutions.

Previous studies, within the last ten years focused on different theoretical frameworks from the point of view of presidents matching with the institution, including the work of Langbert (2012) who used a theoretical framework of social matching, Tekniepe (2014) who focused on push-pull motivation theory, and McNaughton (2016) who focused on internal presidential fit. This study, seeked to build on these previous frameworks based on utilizing relationships at the microeconomic level, decision-making and effective utilization of resources to lead the university at the macroeconomic level, in a unique public institutional environment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study is through the lens of both relationship theory and economics. This includes social exchange and economic rational choice framework. The framework focuses on distinct interpersonal relationships between the university president and several internal and external stakeholders over the course of their time in office. The framework is within the context of interactions among a president and various stakeholders and, economically, will both make choices and decisions that both seek to maximize their interests for the best outcomes possible.

For the purposes of this study, the research examines the decision-making by university presidents, and internal actors through the lens of family relationships. This includes important lifecycle events like similar competing interests in determining the length of a marriage between two partners (Haveman & Wolfe, 1994; Lewis & Spainer, 1979; Patterson & Reid, 1970; Rennick, Blumberg, & Markman, 1992).

This includes the cost of the presidential search process that is like going out on a few dates, spending time getting to know each other, then ultimately spending money on engagement rings, flowers, and a wedding. In the case of the university president, this is hiring expenditures, contract negotiations, hiring, and spending money on a presidential investiture ceremony.

During a marriage, often external factors, including key stakeholders outside the marriage, have the ability to cause pressure on the marriage for outcomes. This could be parents' pressure to have grandchildren. This is like the relationship of the university president and the board of trustees or between the university president and the state government of the institution they lead (ACE, 2017).

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In marriages, parents seek to make choices for the best outcomes for their offspring. This can be looked at as the relationship between presidents and faculty, staff, administration, and students on campus (Patterson & Reid, 1970). Evidence presidents have the same loving attitude towards their employees can be examined through previous studies on college presidents' role in faculty satisfaction (Paxton & Thomas, 1977; Scott & Scott, 2016).

Paxton and Thomas (1977) performed factor analysis on 856 faculty member survey responses and determined "personal-public image" was most important in predicting faculty satisfaction with presidents except it was not significant for public universities. This is an important limitation. Paxton and Thomas (1977) found if the president is perceived as likeable and personable throughout their length of time in office there are fewer opportunities for conflict at two-year colleges and at private universities.

Scott and Scott (2016) conducted a mixed-methods study of 231 Canadian faculty members across different colleges in a university through a computer-based questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, and determined supportive faculty engagement policies and initiatives are required for success by a visionary leader. In their section on implications for practice, they advocated for a bottom up (not a top-down) structure where faculty ideas can be implemented in an inclusive, supportive environment, at the college level, and across the university (Scott & Scott, 2016).

An example of how this is shown is in ACE President's study about key institutional constituents where stakeholders, such as faculty members, are included (ACE, 2017). Bensimon (1991) analyzed four college presidents in a case study, in multiple visits during two academic years. She found faculty perception can drive faculty opinions if the presidents fail to motivate faculty within their current environment, presidents need to create shared values to identify with

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faculty, and presidents can encourage faculty to elevate their work to aid the university – collectively striving to enhance mission and vision.

In marriages, it is important to consider external choices in living in the environment their home is in, and being a good neighbor, making the best choices available in their context. At a university, this can be described as the relationship between the college president and their community. This includes friendly town/gown relations, working with local and state governments, responding to the needs of alumni, courting of donors, and connecting with the economy within the context of their institution (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). An example of how this is measured can be seen through ACE Presidents' survey results (ACE, 2017). They measured this by collecting college presidents' perceptions on who their internal and external constituents are and by dividing them by Carnegie classification and institution type.

In marriages, it is important to consider long-term planning for financial stability, effective asset allocation, and communication to discuss new expenses and programs with annual and multi-year costs. ACE Presidential data suggested current presidents identify budget/financial management as the top issue future leaders need to be prepared to address (ACE, 2017). This is budget planning, endowment planning, fund raising, and strategic plan implementation of the university president (White, 1963).

After several years of a successful marriage, one or more of the partners in the marriage may choose to retire from the relationship, leading to divorce. This is evaluated in the 2017 ACE President's study where current presidents are asked about future plans. Goals were met to ensure effective retirement planning, all parties are happy, and age may play a factor in the choice to retire. This can be translated to the relationship of a successful college presidency by becoming *President Emeritus*, and be held in high regard by their institution (Sprecher, 2001).

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Sometimes marriages do not last. Compatibility may not exist in the relationship. Partners' choices over time may not be on the same level, and contentions may arise for those who were once so happy and optimistic about the future. This can be viewed as the conflict that comes, both internal and external, facing the college president and micro and macro trends with the relationship they have with their institution. Before any of the previously named factors are present, multiple stakeholders and political climate changes can also cause involuntary changes in a particular university presidential term in office. This may yield either chaos or a mutually beneficial agreement between the two parties (Lewis & Spainer, 1979; Renick, Blumberg, & Markman, 1992).

Sometimes marriages do not work out and partners choose other partners. They can end in separation, divorce, or annulment. Similarly, a president may do a good job, but might leave to an often a more lucrative contract with another university, which is choosing a new partner (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). Career movement may be dictated by interest, opportunity, external or internal institutional factors, or even pay.

Relationships, like college presidencies, are complicated, have peaks and troughs, come with internal and external push and pull factors, and are determined as beneficial with each passing annual anniversary of evaluation, and ultimately legacy of the length of the effectiveness of the relationship over time (Haveman & Wolfe, 1994).

In addition to the relationship theory mentioned above, this study is also being looked at through the rational choice theory in economics. Rational choice theory is when several goals exist, one goal is chosen, and it had the largest benefit compared with the others (Coleman, 1992). Utilizing rational choice theory with examples from marriage, in marriages couples make individual and collective decisions based on the best data available. This could be purchasing a

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home or automobile. In the higher education context, it could be deciding to build a new building or renovate the gym based on the needs of several parties including faculty, students, staff, and to leave a legacy for future generations.

In marriages, the couple must decide on where to live and be neighborly in the context of where their home happens to be, after choosing their community. If they choose to vote for local or state issues and candidates, they have to navigate the field of choices and candidates and choose who to support after review information. In the higher education context, university presidents must navigate often complex state political environments and make the best choices possible, in collaboration with data, university needs, and board priorities. In marriages, couples use rational choice theory to effectively budget existing resources to take care of short-term needs like food, long term needs like retirement, and monthly needs like housekeeping. In the higher education context, the president has to effectively advocate for appropriate levels of state funding and then disperse the funding accordingly to aid daily operations, annual budgets, and strategic planning initiatives to implement the best, rational choice based on doing the best job possible to aid the mission and vision of the university. In marriages, divorce sometimes occurs between a couple, who despite making contextual, informed, rational decisions the relationship does not work out. Through a higher education lens a president may make the best decisions but political, economic, internal contextual environments now allow for longevity, effective assessment of success, and prosperity in the relationship (Coleman, 1992).

Specifically, this study seeks to evaluate, through the lens of the partnership of marriage, and through rational choice theory in economics, an abundance of relationships between public colleges and university presidents in the context of their campuses, communities and the

changing landscape of American higher education, with publicly available data over the past nearly 20 years.

### **Conclusion**

Creating a more recent study is paramount to the field in the area of accountability and in an era of funding challenges compared with previous studies, and newer and more comprehensive information will provide a clearer picture for the current trends in public university presidential tenure. The housing crisis was a major financial factor in the United States, so measuring the impact on public universities, through the lens of their presidencies, could show a trickle-down effect from federal, to state, to local funding, and could show the impact on local organizations, like universities. The crisis could have led to changes in institutional-level, measurable factors recorded in IPEDS, so examining before and after that time period could show if there were significant changes. Through the merging of data on internal and external factors from just before, during, and after that time period, significant impacts could be determined.

This has the potential to influence federal and state policy, state systems of higher education, governing boards, and presidential search committees going forward. Presidents continue to leave public college and university campuses, and previous literature has focused on collecting and interpreting data of presidents on the climate and in the context of their individual campuses, collected and shared on an annual (IPEDS) or less frequent basis (ACE President's Survey).

Previous studies do not look at internal and external factors before and after a major economic event in a quantitative manner. Along with internal variables, previous studies do not



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include political party, state appropriations, percent in poverty, and census data to provide a better understanding of political and economic climate. The factors found in the literature that are important to predicting the outcome include enrollment, selectivity, and political party of the governor.

This study attempts to highlight key factors and significant results appearing across this institutional data, over time, just prior and since the recession, for public colleges and universities. Additionally, this research will combine IPEDS data with data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census Bureau, and National Conference of State Legislatures, building upon previous studies by utilizing previously operationalized variables and external economic variables to create a meaningful, enlarged picture of the context in which individual public college and university presidents operate and the length of their time in office, specifically addressing this gap in the literature.

The theories that will be useful in guiding this line of study include social exchange and economic rational choice framework because interpersonal relationships and the ability of the stakeholders to utilize data available to make the best choices available based on the data presidents and universities have both internally and externally in their distinct contexts.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Methodology**

All aspects of the research methodology used in this study are reported in this chapter. This information is organized into the following sections: research questions, data, sample, and methods.

This study improves upon recent previous studies by Padilla and Ghosh (2000), McNaughton (2016), Monks (2004, 2012), Reed (2002), Robeken (2007), Langbert (2012) and Tekniepe (2014), older studies by Alton (1971), Donnelly (1993), Eddy (2005), Levin (1992), Neumann and Neumann (2000), Smirek (2013), and Touzeau (2000). This study uses panel regression to see changes over time and adds in the external environmental piece to study external economic factors in the United States, at the state and federal level, and internal institutional factors.

#### **Research Questions**

This study examined the research questions:

RQ1: To what extent are institutional and external factors associated with public college presidents' departure?"

RQ2: Do the factors differ before and after the housing crisis?

**Sample, Data, and Methods**

To explore the relationship of internal and external factors on presidential departure, before and after the housing crisis, I used thirteen years of data on public, four-year presidents and institutional, state, political, and economic data over the same time period.

Table 3: Sample of How Presidential Transitions Were Coded

<i>Name of Chief Executive Officer 2003</i>	<i>Name of Chief Executive Officer 2004</i>	<i>Is there a change? Yes = 1 No = 0</i>
Gordon Gee	Gordon Gee	0
Sharon Brehm	Ken Gros Louis	1

I began by pulling all four-year public colleges and universities in IPEDS, then deleted any cases missing data any year throughout the study, and any medical, tribal, or two year college I identified on the list by individually looking up each website and looking at the number of bachelor’s degrees annually awarded. If the number of associates degrees was higher than I deleted it from the sample. This was originally 685 and after I deleted missing data or colleges that did not fall into the institution type I was studying the list of changes was 565.

I then deleted any college or university who did not list the president or chancellor as the chief executive on IPEDS. In example, some listed the Provost or CFO. I then deleted Nebraska because they have a unicameral legislature. This is a common deletion reason in the higher education finance literature (Kelchen, 2016). The political party in control does not make a difference in Nebraska as to why public university presidents may leave. Some states were deleted because they did not appear reported in the dataset, including Delaware, and all Pennsylvania state universities because their appropriations were not reported or broken out when reported in the same manner as other public colleges and universities in the study. Penn

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State, in example, did not break down appropriations by each campus with different president names. This is also because they use FASB instead of GASB accounting standards. They are in IPEDS but shown differently and not broken out by individual campus. The sample then dwindled, to just under 500, at 491. A sample of how they were listed and coded appear in the table 3 above. After coding each transition and deleting cases that did not meet the criteria, the number of presidential transitions were added up to get the annual number of transitions. This can be seen in table 4.

Table 4: Number of Presidential Transitions by Year

Year	Number of Presidential Transitions
2003	Base Year
2004	74
2005	69
2006	69
2007	68
2008	90
2009	53
2010	64
2011	70
2012	89
2013	81
2014	92
2015	95
2016	91
Total	1,005

From 2003 to 2007, there are similar numbers of presidential transitions each year. In 2008, there was an increase of 22 presidential transitions from the prior year, and a sharp drop in presidential transitions in 2009. After 2009, transitions increase from 53 to the low to middle 90's in the last three years of the data set. It is also interesting to see a drop in transitions immediately during the Great Recession. It could be because colleges were less likely to buy out presidents, or it could be because presidents did not think they could move to a better job.

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### Data

I used data from 2003 to 2016 for the purposes of quantitative analysis. Presidents and changes in the name of the president from year to year were constructed by pulling public, four-year college and university name, Unit ID, and name of the Chief Executive from the Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS).

State appropriations were pulled from IPEDS and adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) in 2017 dollars. As a measure of institutional selectivity, admit rate was calculated by pulling the number of freshman applications each year and dividing by the number of annual freshmen admitted students from IPEDS. Undergraduate enrollment was pulled from IPEDS. An additional measure of institutional selectivity, yield rate was calculated by pulling freshman admitted student numbers and dividing them by the number of annually enrolling freshman students from IPEDS. Undergraduate retention rate percentages were pulled from IPEDS for each entering annual cohort.

Democratic and Republican control, or split control of each state legislature was pulled from the annual reports of state legislature control from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). In the years that there were no data, I used the previous year's data to fill in the current year data. Personal income by state was pulled from the Bureau of Economic Analysis website. Percentage of state population by age for each year of the study was pulled from Census data by each age and then grouped into age range categories: zero to seventeen years of age to represent early childhood through K-12 education, 18 to 24 years of age to represent the traditional college aged population, 25 to 54 to represent middle age and a growing

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population of adult learners in higher education, and 55 to 85 to represent senior citizens to include the aging geriatric population in each state.

Prior research suggests universities are turning to adult learning as an additional revenue stream due to the decrease in college age populations in states around the nation (Seltzer, 2018). These categories were constructed to quickly examine what populations are priorities in state appropriations and if greater percentages of non 18 to 24 students existed than state priorities may not be to fund higher education. The number of poor and poverty by state was pulled from the Census.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Data Source
<i>Internal</i>			
Adjusted state appropriations	9.04 million	0.112	IPEDS
Admit rate	0.695	0.173	IPEDS
Enrolled	2079.591	1794.446	IPEDS
Yield rate	0.337	0.122	IPEDS
Retention	0.757	10.151	IPEDS
<i>External</i>			
Democratic control of state legislature	0.201	0.401	National Conference of State Legislatures
Republican control of state legislature	0.619	0.486	National Conference of State Legislatures
Personal income by state	0.049	0.786	Bureau of Economic Analysis
Percentage of state population ages 0 to 17 years	0.174	0.262	Census
Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	0.094	0.005	Census
Percentage of state population ages 25 to 54 years	0.392	0.014	Census
Percentage of state population ages 55 to 85 years	0.284	0.025	Census
Poverty	0.127	0.028	Census

**Methodology**

Some variables, including state appropriations and enrolled students were logged to create a normal distribution for purposes of analysis. To answer the research questions, I merged all of the data into a single dataset in STATA. I then created different regressions to test for departure to answer the first research question. These included both logistic (to examine odds ratios) and OLS regression after a one-year lag in each variable. The logit model has fewer observations because it excludes colleges that never had a presidential change during the time period in this study.

I then created different regressions to test for departure to answer the first research question with a two-year lag, using both logistic and OLS regression.

The equation for a panel regression with fixed effects is:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{i(t-1)} + \alpha_i + \mu_t$$

Where:

$\beta_0$  = Intercept

$\beta_1$  = Coefficients on each of the control variables X

$\alpha$  = Institutional fixed effect

$\mu$  = Year fixed effect (Bartels, 2008).

To answer the first research question, I created both logistic (odds ratios) and OLS regressions from 2003 to 2016. To answer the second research question, I created separate regressions for 2003 to 2008 and 2009 to 2016.

### **Limitations**

This study does not address individual interpersonal relationships between board chairpersons and presidents, the president and faculty, presidents and donors, or between governors and public university presidents. This study does not also categorize each presidential departure into the same categories Harris and Ellis (2018) did by examining individual departures, nor does it look into each case and conduct interviews to understand if the presidential hire was a poor fit at the beginning of the relationship.

Furthermore, this study does not dive into the academic preparation of the president and does not use the type of their advanced degree that other studies have found statistically significant. There may be less variation for public four-year presidents than other sectors. This study focuses more on the issue from the state, campus, or trustee perspective to learn about what makes presidents leave. This study does not focus on internal hires, presidential perception of their environment, or presidential pay. Future studies should examine this issue from the public university presidential candidate's perspective on how they can adapt their leadership style to stay in office, or to lengthen their tenure during times of economic and political peaks, troughs, and during challenging and prosperous fiscal times.



Chapter 4

Results

In order to answer the first research question, the first logistic regression was run with a one-year lag to determine significant variables. Enrolled students and adjusted state appropriations were found to be significant at the  $p < .05$  level. The regression results can be found in table 5. For logistic the logistic regressions, for odds ratios, it is interpreted as the distance from 1, so 1.1 means (1.1-1), or 10 percent more likely. So 0.9 means 10 percent less likely.

Table 5: Logistic regression with a one-year lag

Outcome: Presidential Change (0/1)

Number of observations: 4,827

73 groups and 718 observations dropped

Variables	Coeff. (Odds ratios)	SE	Significant? $p < .05$
Admit rate	0.589	0.264	N
Yield rate	1.222	0.662	N
Enrolled students	0.612	0.154	Y
Adjusted state appropriations	1.104	0.042	Y
Retention rate	0.991	0.011	N
Democratic control of state legislature	0.967	0.146	N
Republican control of state legislature	0.902	0.123	N
Personal income by state	0.992	0.031	N
Percentage of state population ages 0 to 17 years	0.001	0.022	N
Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	0.009	0.226	N
Percentage of state population ages 25 to	0.006	0.001	N

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54 years			
Poverty rate	1.024	0.031	N

One of the interesting points about the results of this regression is that both internal and external variables are found to be significant. How many students enroll, a measure of popularity, and a separate measure of and how much money a university gets allotted annually by the state legislature are both important. What is interesting is what political party is in control of the state legislature does not matter as well as internal measures of student retention and the age ranges of populations in each state. As enrollment decreases and state appropriations increase, after one-year, public college and university presidents are more likely to leave. The direction of the odds ratio for state appropriations is positive, at 1.104 and the enrolled coefficient is moderate and negative at 0.612. The coefficient indicates 38.8 percent less likely occur (-0.062-1). When looking at odds ratios, adjusted state appropriations have among the strongest relationships with presidential turnover.

Table 6: OLS regression with a one-year lag

Outcome: Presidential Change (0/1)

Number of observations: 5,545

Variables	Coeff.	SE	Significant? p<.05
Admit rate	-0.062	0.059	N
Yield rate	0.031	0.071	N
Enrolled students	-0.073	0.033	Y
Adjusted state appropriations	0.0118	0.004	Y
Retention rate	-0.001	0.001	N
Democratic control of state legislature	-0.006	0.020	N
Republican control of state legislature	-0.010	0.017	N
Personal income by state	-0.001	0.004	N

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Percentage of state population ages 0 to 17 years	-0.959	2.457	N
Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	-0.880	3.063	N
Percentage of state population ages 25 to 54 years	2.05	2.142	N
Poverty rate	0.003	0.004	N

As state appropriations increase, with a positive coefficient of weak magnitude, and as enrollment decreases, with a negative directional coefficient, with weak magnitude, after one-year, public university presidents are more likely to leave. These results are consistent across both logistic and OLS regression models. After examining results after a one-year lag, I ran both models for a two-year lag to determine if there was a difference.

Table 7: Logistic regression with a two-year lag

Outcome: Presidential Change (0/1)

Number of observations: 4,298

81 groups and 772 observations dropped

Variables	Coeff. (Odds ratios)	SE	Significant? p<.05
Admit rate	0.548	0.265	N
Yield rate	0.411	0.239	N
Enrolled students	1.050	0.279	N
Adjusted state appropriations	1.081	0.045	Y
Retention rate	0.992	0.010	N
Democratic control of state legislature	0.675	0.107	Y
Republican control of state legislature	0.828	0.114	N
Personal income by state	1.020	0.034	N
Percentage of state population ages 0 to 17	0.005	0.000	N

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years			
Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	0.005	1.300	N
Percentage of state population ages 25 to 54 years	0.003	0.006	N
Poverty rate	0.965	0.031	N

As state appropriations increase, looking at odds ratios, with a positive coefficient of correlation, and as the democratic party control with a negative relationship, after two years, public university presidents are more likely to leave. Comparing these findings to the one-year findings in table 5, adjusted state appropriations odds ratios were strong for both one- and two-year lags, and an external factor, and only external variables were found to be significant in the two-year model, as opposed to both internal and external in table 5.

Table 8: OLS regression with a two-year lag

After using a one-year lag, tests were conducted for a two-year lag which examined if variables were significant after a longer period of presidential departure. The regression looks at whether factors from two years prior were associated with whether a president left in a given year.

Outcome: Presidential Change (0/1)

Number of observations: 5,070

Variables	Coeff.	SE	Significant? p<.05
Admit rate	-0.079	0.064	N
Yield rate	-0.118	0.075	N
Enrolled students	-0.004	0.036	N
Adjusted state appropriations	0.008	0.005	Y
Retention rate	-0.001	0.001	N
Democratic control of state legislature	-0.057	0.021	Y

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Republican control of state legislature	-0.023	0.018	N
Personal income by state	0.003	0.004	N
Percentage of state population ages 0 to 17 years	-1.832	2.802	N
Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	2.085	3.403	N
Percentage of state population ages 25 to 54 years	2.004	2.528	N
Poverty rate	-0.005	0.004	N

As state appropriations increase, with a weak positive coefficient, and as the democratic party control in the state legislature decreases, with a weak negative coefficient, after two years, public university presidents are more likely to leave. These results are consistent across both logistic and OLS models with a two-year lag. And relative to the one-year lag, only adjusted state appropriations were consistent to this two-year OLS model.

In order to answer the second research question, specifically focusing on if there were changes to variables found to be significant before and after the housing crisis, two regressions were run. One model was, with a one-year lag, with all data before 2008, and the second was from 2009 to 2016.

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Table 9: Logistic regression with a one-year lag, if year is less than or equal to 2008

Outcome: Presidential Change (0/1)

Number of observations: 820

261 groups and 998 observations dropped

Variables	Coeff. (Odds ratios)	SE	Significant? p<.05
Admit rate	2.426	2.993	N
Yield rate	7.404	9.620	N
Enrolled students	0.461	0.326	N
Adjusted state appropriations	1.146	0.079	Y
Retention rate	0.931	0.027	Y
Democratic control of state legislature	0.768	0.511	N
Republican control of state legislature	0.824	0.397	N
Personal income by state	0.979	0.096	N
Percentage of state population ages 0 to 17 years	0.031	0.026	N
Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	0.012	0.013	Y
Percentage of state population ages 25 to 54 years	0.038	0.000	N
Poverty rate	1.085	0.905	N

After a one-year lag, as state appropriations were found to be significant. When looking at odds ratios, they have a very strong positive coefficient. When looking at odds ratios, student retention has a strong negative relationship just under one. As the percentage of traditional aged college students decrease, on campus, with a strong positive magnitude of the coefficient, then public university presidents are more likely to leave, prior to the housing crisis. This reflects an

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environment, after one year, increasingly dependent on net tuition revenue. The results are consistent across models.

Table 10: Logistic regression with a one-year lag if year is greater than or equal to 2009

Outcome: Presidential Change (0/1)

Number of observations: 2,887

116 groups and 840 observations dropped

Variables	Coeff. (Odds ratios)	SE	Significant? p<.05
Admit rate	0.236	0.139	Y
Yield rate	1.151	0.940	N
Enrolled students	0.635	0.216	N
Adjusted state appropriations	1.826	0.753	N
Retention rate	0.993	0.015	N
Democratic control of state legislature	0.940	0.171	N
Republican control of state legislature	0.949	0.166	N
Personal income by state	0.972	0.049	N
Percentage of state population ages 0 to 17 years	325718.9	0.010	N
Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	0.046	0.020	N
Percentage of state population ages 25 to 54 years	0.013	0.033	N
Poverty rate	1.021	0.038	N

Presidential turnover after a lag of one year, looking at admit rates shows a negative relationship (with a coefficient of 0.236), after the housing crisis, with an increase in admissions selectivity, public university presidents are more likely to leave. Presidents are more likely to leave because the college or university is performing poorly and needing to admit more students

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to reach enrollment goals, headcount, and or generate increased net tuition revenue. Comparing this to pre-2008 findings, where adjusted state income had a positive strong magnitude, when looking at odds ratios, and student retention had a negative relationship with high odds of occurring, after 2008, both internal and external factors, only admit rate had weak negative odds of occurring. In order to see if significant variables are present across models, after logistic regressions, I switched to OLS regressions.

Table 11: OLS regression with a one-year lag if the year is less than or equal to 2008

Outcome: Presidential Change (0/1)

Number of observations: 1,818

Variables	Coeff.	SE	Significant? p<.05
Admit rate	0.094	0.142	N
Yield rate	0.199	0.133	N
Enrolled students	-0.062	0.074	N
Adjusted state appropriations	0.016	0.006	Y
Retention rate	-0.003	0.002	N
Democratic control of state legislature	-0.019	0.099	N
Republican control of state legislature	-0.025	0.059	N
Personal income by state	-0.004	0.012	N
Percentage of state population ages 0 to 17 years	-11.456	10.081	N
Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	-21.754	9.444	Y
Percentage of state population ages 25 to 54 years	-0.503	10.495	N
Poverty rate	0.011	0.0102	N



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As state appropriations increase, with a one-year lag prior to the housing crisis, with a positive coefficient with a weak magnitude, public university presidents are more likely to leave. As the traditional college aged population decreases, with a very strong negative coefficient, one year later, public university presidents are more likely to leave. Fewer students in the state and less state funding contribute to challenging the traditional state university business model, create the need to recruit populations older than 24, and create the need for universities to generate new revenue streams to make up for decreases in state appropriations. Negative fluctuations in these key pressure areas contribute to presidents leaving even after only one year.

Table 12: OLS regression with a one-year lag if the year is greater than or equal to 2009

Outcome: Presidential Change (0/1)

Number of observations: 3,727

Variables	Coeff.	SE	Significant? p<.05
Admit rate	-0.186	0.081	Y
Yield rate	0.028	0.111	N
Enrolled students	-0.076	0.048	N
Adjusted state appropriations	0.026	0.018	N
Retention	-0.000	0.002	N
Democratic control of state legislature	-0.007	0.024	N
Republican control of state legislature	-0.004	0.023	N
Personal income by state	-0.004	0.006	N
Percentage of state population ages 0 to 17 years	2.131	3.992	N
Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	6.65	5.893	N
Percentage of state population ages 25 to 54 years	5.769	3.702	N
Poverty	0.002	0.005	N

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Admission rate, a measure of institutional selectivity, is found negatively related to presidential leaving. Admit rate was found to have a coefficient of  $-0.186$ , which is small. Presidents can choose to retire after key performance indicators are met as well as move to better jobs based on portfolios of successful outcomes. The results are consistent across both models when looking at the data just after the housing crisis. Other OLS models in this study have similar weak magnitudes of the coefficients.

**Chapter 5**

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine internal and external factors to determine whether they are associated with the departure of presidents of four-year public colleges and universities. While this study is unique and more comprehensive than previous studies, it built upon previous literature to also show increases in the number of presidents who departed after 2008, like Harris and Ellis (2018), and found internal factors were important to presidents leaving like Tekniepe (2014). This study also found that presidents who failed to adapt to changes were more likely to leave, building upon the work of Tonzeau (2010).

Summary of Results

RQ1: To what extent are institutional and external factors associated with public college presidents’ departure?”

Table 13: Summary of results for research question 1

Regression Type and Characteristics	Significant variables P<.05	Directions of the relationship
Logistic regression with a one-year lag	Enrolled, State appropriations	- +
OLS regression with a one-year lag	Enrolled, State appropriations	- +
Logistic regression with a two-year lag	State appropriations, Democratic Party Control of legislature	+ -
OLS regression with a two-year lag	State appropriations, Democratic Party Control of legislature	+ -

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Institutional and external factors are equally important when associated with public college presidents' departure. State appropriations were found to be significant, and positive, for each logistic or standard regression run with the entire data set from 2003-2016, with both a one- and two- year lag. Enrollment was significant, and negative, with a one-year lag. Democratic party control of the legislature was significant, and negative, after a two-year lag. As Democratic party control of the state legislature decreases, public university presidents are more likely to leave. This is an important finding because political party in control of the legislature in each state plays a role in the number of presidential transitions. Each public four-year college and university enrollment, state appropriations, and Democratic party control of the state legislature are all important factors when understanding presidential departure. This is important because both internal and external factors influenced presidential departure.

RQ2: Do the factors differ before and after the housing crisis?

Table 14: Summary of results for research question 2

Regression Type and Characteristics	Significant variables p>.05	Coefficients	Direction	Were factors different before and after?	Internal, External, or Both
Logistic regression with a one-year lag, if year is less than or equal to 2008	State appropriations, Retention, Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	1.146 0.932 0.001	+ - -	Yes	Both
Logistic regression with a one-year lag if year is greater than or equal to 2009	Admit Rate	0.236	-	Yes	Internal
OLS regression with a one-year lag if the year is less than or equal to 2008	State appropriations, Percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years	0.016 -21.754	+ -	Yes	Both
OLS regression with a one-year lag if the year is greater than or equal to 2009	Admit rate	-0.186	-	Yes	Internal

Yes, the factors differ before and after the housing crisis. Before the housing crisis, using logistic regression with a one-year lag, state appropriations odds ratios were positive with a strong magnitude, retention and percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years were found to

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be significant and negative, with the odds ratio much stronger for student retention and very weak for the traditional aged college population. These are both internal and external factors that influence presidential departure. OLS regression before the housing crisis yield similar results but only external factors of state appropriations, and percentage of state population ages 18 to 24 years were found to be significant. Before the housing crisis, external factors primarily influenced presidential turnover.

After the housing crisis, using both logistic and OLS regression, only the internal college and university variable of admit rate, with mostly positive directions of the coefficients in both regressions, influenced presidential turnover. The aftermath of the housing crisis that produced additional presidential turnovers, now up to the 90's from the 60's at the beginning of the data, before the housing crisis was primarily influenced by internal institutional factors. Some colleges and universities became more selective after the housing crisis, in a climate of increased accountability in higher education and a stronger lens into gainful employment, upward social mobility, and student learning outcomes. Many colleges that did well have leaders that are attractive to their competition because of the highly specialized skillset required of presidents. Colleges and universities were also faced with dwindling traditional aged college populations and the need to add auxiliary revenue streams that were combined with net tuition revenue based on enrollment and retention initiatives. By examining internal and external variables, presidents are leaving, with the most recent data available, at greater levels, after one year based on individual enrollment management strategy and results.

### **Implications for Practice**

After reviewing results of this study, there are implications for several parties for practice including states, public colleges and universities as a whole, board, presidential search firms, presidents or aspiring college presidents, and institutional enrollment management strategy and policy. Implications for partisan political control include the electorate needs to be knowledgeable about how elected state representatives, and their party could have implications for presidential turnover. The influence of ideology of political parties vary by state and that needs to be taken into account by voters. In example, a South Dakota state Republican party platform and a Californian state Republican party platform may share different state educational philosophies for funding public higher education.

Implications for states include decreases in the 18-24 age population in each state are important and need to be addressed in order to maintain presidential time in office and adapt to serve new communities to produce effective outcomes.

For public colleges and universities, state appropriations to individual public colleges and universities matter and can make a difference in your leadership a year later. New revenue streams need to continue to be identified and explored as changes and threats to the traditional public higher education model occur. The buck does not necessarily have to stop at the president but can help us have collaborative, constructive conversations about funding instead of creating environments where presidents leave for a better job, retire, or are asked to leave.

For boards, they need to understand the influences internal and external factors have on their campus environments and challenges in keeping presidents during economic contexts of growth, stagflation, or even after a recession. Boards need to hire and work with future presidents who can politically navigate internal and external environments in their states.

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For presidential search firms, implications for policy and practice, especially when searching for public university presidents, include helping their client understand the specific state level strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities to the environments within public university presidents operate within their state. They can also point out the percentage of 18-24 year-olds in the state (and future projections, retention, admit rate, and state appropriations are areas of concern when hiring the next president and keeping them on the job to implement strategic plans, motivate others, and raise money.

For current or aspiring college or university presidents, how much money the state gives you matters, who from the 18-24 age range within your state is attending the college or university you work at matters, admit rate matters, retention matters, and you need to pay attention to these factors and understand them in your strategic and daily work.

When shaping enrollment management strategy and policy, admit rate, the percentage of 18 to 24 aged students in your state (your core feeder population), and retention matter to the shelf life of your college and university president. Strategic enrollment management planning is tied to the college or university strategic plan, with the appropriate data to ensure shared governance and the opportunity to keep your president on campus and aiding the mission of the college or university to best serve students.

This study fits with prior literature because it utilizes a larger sample but applies both internal and external factors that influence presidential departure by Tekniepe (2014) because he included political, internal, external, and fiscal matters with just 34 community colleges and the lens has been expanded to include 491 public colleges and universities.

This study also builds upon the work of Tang (1996) who found selectivity and market position in the rankings contribute to presidential pay. As admit rate decreases after the housing



crisis, more presidents are likely to leave as their colleges become increasingly more selective. This could be because there are increased openings for presidents at an institution who did a good job to move to another institution due to increased openings and opportunity.

This study also builds upon the work of McNaughton (2016) who focused on presidential fit based on characteristics of presidents and found as tuition revenue increases and research expenditures increase, then presidents stay longer. The McNaughton study looked at fit from individual characteristics of presidents and this study builds upon that by looking at why presidents leave from the external context of their environment, political landscape in the state, and internal institutional factors.

### **Further Research**

Further research needs to be conducted in this area. There were no personal interviews with presidents. The data was limited to quantitative analysis. This study focused on a window of time that colleges and universities have operated and can be expanded to understand changes to why presidents leave in distinct decades. The study was limited to public university presidents. Future work should look at whether factors affecting turnover differ across these types of colleges.

After these results, a more in-depth dive is needed into individual institutional challenges. This includes examining internet searches and newspaper articles and conducting on campus interviews with individuals involved in the decision-making processes or presidents who left building upon the work of Trachtenberg (2013) and Harris and Ellis (2018).

Further research can be conducted on private college and university presidential tenure and internal and external factors. After a current highly publicized case of presidential departure, at Texas Southern University, research on HBCU-specific college and university presidential

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tenure and internal and external departure factors need to be explored (Whitford, 2020). This is particularly important to look at for HBCU's because they are generally smaller in enrollment, increasingly more dependent on state appropriations, net tuition revenue, and have smaller donor bases from which to raise funds. Further research needs to be conducted on how boards and search firms can translate challenges to college and university presidential success to educate presidential candidates, and the role they play in presidential tenure.

Can future presidents be trained on best implementing a toolkit of techniques to navigate threats to their leadership? Further research needs to be conducted on connecting boards, presidents, academic leadership, fund-raisers, enrollment officers, and state leaders in shared strategic planning processes to make sure goals are data-assisted, shared, can be measured, achieved, and assessed. In addition, the role fundraising plays after the housing crisis on university presidential tenure can easily be explored. This can build upon foundational work by Proper & Caboni (2013) and can be conducted through public data and personal interviews with campus-based chief fundraising officers. Future studies should also look at public presidential turnover as a result of Covid-19. This is because consideration of additional changes to variables to consider including increased budget hardships based on sudden new state budget allocations, lack of ability of colleges and universities to charge student fees in addition to tuition, changing market competition for students, more students living at homes due to residence hall closures, and campus-based instruction moving to distance learning formats potentially have implications to change public presidential time in office.

### **Conclusions**

When looking at keys to understanding reasons why public college and university presidents leave it is imperative to look at the internal and external environments in which they

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operate, and at different economic times. This study found both environments are significant and that after the housing crisis, when presidential departures reached their peak, only admit rate, a calculation of institutional selectivity, was important. This study is an important initial step in understanding the complex role of the public university president within the context of their individual states.

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