

# Perspectives

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Community College Leadership for the 21st Century

*Changing access to the leadership pipeline and the traditional ways leaders have been identified and developed provides a critical step in fostering racial equity in community college leadership.*

- Pamela L. Eddy

*In order for women and minorities to move into senior leadership ranks and ultimately into the CEO role [it] will require a holistic approach including a combination of focused approaches, continuous development, and accountability.*

- Robinette Kelley

## Reflections on Today's Leadership Dynamic: Opening the Community College Leadership Pipeline to Women and Leaders of Color

**Judy C. Miner, EdD**

Chancellor  
Foothill-De Anza Community College District  
Los Altos Hills, California

It is a genuine honor to have the opportunity of sharing perspectives on opening the community college leadership pipeline to women and leaders of color. When I became a community college administrator in 1979 at City College of San Francisco, I was a brash 27-year-old who thought she was highly capable of managing after two years administrative experience at Catholic institutions and graduating summa cum laude. I had even been valedictorian of my high school graduating class.

Fast forward to 2020 and I am a grateful 67-year-old who recognizes that any accomplishments attributed to me are inextricably tied to visionary and dedicated colleagues, persistent and inspiring students, and loving and supportive friends and family. The nearly 41-year journey has taught me a great deal and I'd like to offer some advice to those aspiring to increasingly responsible positions and some asks of those who make the hiring decisions for those increasingly responsible positions.

### Top Ten Thoughts For Those Wishing To Advance

Over the years, my top ten list has been influenced by observation of community college leaders throughout the country in addition to the usual attendance at conferences and review of the literature. I am incredibly fortunate to have numerous friends who are sources of wisdom whenever I confront a thorny problem. Everything shared here, I have observed in the men and women I admire most.

**1. The Equity Lens: It's About the Students.** The farther our jobs take us from direct service to students, the easier it is to lose track of student equity as our *raison d'être*. We need to make commitments to each other throughout our institutions to ask ourselves if our policies, procedures, and programs advance student equity. Such self-assessment can be painful if it reveals that our way of doing business has persisted over the years because it addressed someone else's convenience or because we never stopped to ask why.

**2. Go for the Vision, Not the Position.** Very capable educators have damaged their reputations by appearing to chase a presidency more for the title than for an authentic commitment to the college's students. One of my favorite questions to ask both faculty and administrator candidates is: What would be your legacy to our college? While not necessarily a fatal flaw if candidates have not thought deeply about long-term contributions, they are likely to increase their competitiveness if they demonstrate more than a cursory knowledge of the institution and can articulate distinguishing aspects of their education and experience that inspire confidence in their potential to be successful leaders.

**3. It's Not About You, It's About the Position.** People often ask how administrators can endure the criticism and even attacks that result from unpopular decision making. With practice, we can remind ourselves that the positions we hold are not the same as who we are. Viewing our positions and/or official actions as the target of hurtful behavior can help mitigate the sting that is only natural to feel.

**4. Weddings Are Optional, Funerals Are Mandatory.** An additional perspective related to the differentiation of ourselves from our positions has to do with the importance of our roles in institutional representation. A friend who is very modest was reluctant to introduce herself as the college president to the family of a colleague whose funeral she attended. She overcame her awkward feelings that it was somehow boastful and was immensely gratified that the family felt both honored and comforted that the president took the time to represent the entire college community at their loved one's service. They made a point of introducing her to other attendees and thanking her for sharing her own fond memories of the faculty member's impact on student lives.

**5. Must Be Present to Win.** Since time is a most precious commodity, it is truly challenging to be present at the many events that occur both on and off campus. The previous section illustrates the particular importance of being present at times of loss, but it is equally important to attend celebrations, civic gatherings, fundraising events, networking opportunities, think tanks, etc., because you never know what connections or relationships will result that later impact your life's work. A California community college chancellor accepted an invitation from an east coast foundation to join a number of other community college leaders from around the country for a day-long discussion that had a rather vague agenda. She was glad she attended because her district was one of only two that received multi-million-dollar grants. She could not have anticipated that the discussion was actually a selection process for inviting grant proposals.

*Very capable educators have damaged their reputations by appearing to chase a presidency more for the title than for an authentic commitment to the college's students.*

**6. The 4-Word Job Description: Get Resources, Remove Obstacles.** When asked what a chancellor does, I avoid bureaucratic descriptions of governance and regulatory requirements and respond that my job is: get resources, remove obstacles. While the scope of authority and access

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## EMERGING LEADER PERSPECTIVES

Community colleges today are striving to facilitate a campus culture that provides equal opportunities and equal access to all members of the organization, while valuing and promoting racial and gender equity. The face of the college presidency has evolved in recent years to something more representative of the face of colleges themselves, with women accounting for 30% of college and university presidencies, though women of color accounted for only 5 percent of college leaders. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

### QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

**How can we best expand the leadership pipeline in community colleges to women and leaders of color to foster racial and gender equity at the highest levels?**

#### Allison Fitzpatrick, MBA

Interim Dean of Regional Locations  
Brookdale Community College  
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Though representation of women and minority leaders has improved over time, the makeup of community college leadership still does not reflect the makeup of the student body. Women make up 56% of the community college population, but only 30% of community college presidents. Racial and ethnic minorities make up 34% of the community college student population, but only 17% of college presidents. Furthermore, only 5% of college presidents are women of color (American Council on Education, 2017). Though improvements have been made over time, there is still immense room for growth. With a large number of community college presidents nearing retirement age, it's more important than ever before to prime the pipeline that advances women into these leadership roles.

According to research of the American Association of University Women (2016), the pipeline of qualified women leaders has significantly expanded in the past fifty years. Women outperform men in attainment of all levels of college and university degrees. In addition, women hold the majority of faculty and administrative roles at institutions of higher education. The trouble, it seems, is advancing women into the higher-level positions at community colleges. What can community college leaders do to encourage women and leaders of color to advance at all levels?

**Examine biases in the hiring and promotion process.** Job requirements should be reviewed to ensure they are not more favorable to populations that have had opportunities to advance. Those doing the hiring must be aware of their own ingrained biases if they are to make fair decisions. Encourage use of the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT) as a component of anti-bias training.

**Dismantle preconceived gender characteristics in the workplace.** Because white men have held most leadership positions in society, the idea of leadership has been aligned with masculine traits. However, research has found that there are no gender differences in the effectiveness of leaders (American Association of University Women, 2019).

**Change the work environment to allow a focus on family and flexibility.** Mothers who work full-time bring home about 2/3 of what their male counterparts make. Gender norms contribute to employer expectations about a woman's work commitment due to conflicting commitments at home. By making a college more family friendly to all genders, men and women alike can take on caregiver responsibilities at home as needed.

**Support developing leaders through training and networking.** Current leaders must do everything possible to support rising leaders, especially women and leaders of color. There are several leadership institutes designed for upcoming leaders that will help refine their skills and grow their network. The American Association for Women in Community Colleges hosts an annual LEADERS Institute that caters to the needs of this specific population.



Allison Fitzpatrick, MBA, is the Interim Dean of Regional Locations at Brookdale Community College in New Jersey, where she oversees operations of four off campus sites. Throughout her career, Allison has worked closely with leadership development, by hosting the AAWCC LEADERS Institute from 2016-2018 and co-founding the NABCA Branch Campus Leadership Institute in 2018. Allison earned her MBA from Rutgers University and is currently enrolled in the FSU DCCL program.

#### Archie Thomas, MBA

Assistant Professor of Mathematics  
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As America's higher educational system continues to grapple with the barriers students encounter during their transition to college, it must also address the composition of senior administration in most

colleges and universities. According to the American Council on Education (ACE), white men continue to dominate senior leadership roles. This statistic is evidenced by numerous media articles announcing that the newly hired leader is "the first woman" or "the first African American" to hold this executive position. While some women are breaking the glass ceiling, there are still underlying barriers preventing many women from obtaining senior leadership roles; further, people of color and women are still the exception when it comes to college presidencies.

This situation has serious implications. Empowering women to undertake leadership roles in higher education goes beyond numbers. Instead female academic leaders influence the scope of research and knowledge that affects humankind. Female educators will pose different questions than their male counterparts due to their unique experiences. In addition, as women with exemplary leadership skills collaborate with students, faculty, staff, and other administrators, those individuals are likely to have different transformational experiences they could not have had under gender-homogenous leadership.

Andy Brantley, president of CUPA-HR, is a proponent of creating internal institutional pipelines to advance women and leaders of color into senior leadership positions. In a recent post he challenges institutions to identify potential internal leaders by establishing a purposeful review process and performance planning (Brantley, 2019). He also encourages institutions to recess current and outmoded hiring practices for entry and mid-level professional positions. Most search committees concentrate on academic credentials or technical skills to close the gap left by a vacant position when instead, they should examine competencies and applied skills in former roles to position internal candidates for future upward career mobility.

An effective way for community colleges to open this pipeline of leadership is education. Boards of Trustees, faculty, and administrative search committees need new definitions of today's leaders and of exemplary leadership. Community college Boards often approve candidates by their fit within a male-dominated environment; this could change if more assertive women and minorities served as Board members. This could serve as a model for improving opportunities for diverse leadership at all levels.

Finally, community colleges might consider developing mentoring programs and encouraging individuals to take ownership of their career development by creating personalized professional development plans. By creating an internal focus on programs developing leadership skills and exposing participants to leadership institutes and seminars, a college will be enhancing and broadening its internal leadership pipeline while making a wise investment in its own future.



Archie Thomas, MBA, serves as an Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Ivy Tech Community College in Kokomo, Indiana. His passion is to design and implement student success initiatives that will aid in the empowerment of under-resourced students. He received his Master's in Business Administration from Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana, and is currently pursuing his doctorate degree in the Ferris State University Doctorate in Community College Leadership program (DCCL).

## NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

Community colleges today are striving to facilitate a campus culture that provides equal opportunities and equal access to all members of the organization, while valuing and promoting racial and gender equity. The face of the college presidency has evolved in recent years to something more representative of the face of colleges themselves, with women accounting for 30% of college and university presidencies, though women of color accounted for only 5 percent of college leaders. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders. Their answers appear below.

### A Seat at the Table: Expanding the Pipeline for Women of Color Leaders in Higher Ed

**Ashley L. Gray, MEd**  
Research Analyst, ACE Research  
American Council on Education  
Washington, DC

At a time in which trust in higher education is being questioned more than ever before, it is imperative that we as leaders within the field remain intentional in our efforts to show the value in education. One way to engage the conversation on public trust is to consider the future of leadership as much as we consider the changing student demographic. Asking intentional questions about the racial and gender diversity of campus leaders continues to prove important. Who does your campus serve? Who does your campus promote? Do faculty/staff demographics mirror your student population?

While some sectors of higher education have managed to begin bridging the gap between staff and students, there is still much work to do as it pertains to women of color in higher ed administration. While leadership extends far beyond the ranks of president, it's an important factor to consider in examining the pitfalls in the pipeline. Representation of women presidents is growing steadily according to the *American College Presidents Study (2017)*, yet there is still much work to do as it pertains to the ascension for women of color. In 2016, women accounted for 30% of all college presidents across all institutional types. 25% of those women presidents identified as White, while the other 5% represented all women of color regardless of race/ethnicity. In 2016, community colleges led with 37% of the leaders identifying as women. In order to sustain and grow this population, there are some considerations below for community colleges to recruit and retain women of color.

**Listen and Learn.** One size fits all approaches to advancing women leaves women of color silenced. To be intentional about their needs one must consider how critically missing they are in the literature. It is also imperative to understand that the needs of all women of color are not the same. While this umbrella term covers all who identify as non-white, it can lead to some erasure of the unique needs and experiences of the women living within these identities. Exploration of the literature of intersectionality is essential for understanding the complex needs and experiences of women of color. Intersectionality, as coined by *Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989)*, is an intentional exploration of the structural and systemic implications of the overlapping of race, gender, class, and other identities. The most important tool is to listen to women of color who are empirical experts of their own experiences and create opportunities for this group to be involved in policy and decision making.

**Be intentional.** Much of the research on the pathway to the presidency begins at faculty and academic administrative positions. Campuses must explore critical junctures along the pipeline that exclude women of color (implicitly or explicitly), including women graduate students. Community colleges can select and develop women of color through a few approaches:

a. The most common pathway for women to the college presidency remains through academic affairs – 46%, increasing to 49% for women of color (*ACPS, 2017*). Nontraditional pathways, often from the business and legal sectors, are becoming increasingly popular, whereas less is known about how to bridge the gap between high-level student affairs leaders and the presidency. According to *Focus on Student Affairs (2018)*, 56% of all the top student affairs officers are women.

b. Consider rotational leadership opportunities. In *Voices for the Field: Women of Color College Presidents (2018)*, we learned that Rosalyn Clark

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Artis, among other presidents, engages her cabinet members in intentional development through rotating projects and roles. This helps with capacity building for leaders and presidential aspirants.

c. Create early talent development programs for women of color leadership aspirants such as internships, training, and/or shadowing opportunities for women students and early career professionals.

d. Consider supplemental courses and/or training for graduate students interested in academic administration. While many universities have centers for teaching and pedagogical practice and for research, many graduate programs lack coursework related to praxis for academic administrators.

**Reimagining Campus: Inclusive Policy and Practice.** Campus policy and practices have major impacts on women of color as they sit at the intersection of race, gender, and class. Campuses interested in expanding the pipeline for women of color must be willing to consider the explicit and implicit implications of their policy and practice. Anti-racist and sexist policymaking is essential to creating an environment where women of color can thrive. Below are a few policy considerations for any campus seeking to expand the pipeline for women of color.

a. Non-penalty-based family policies: The *American College Presidents Study (2017)* revealed that 32% of women presidents had altered their careers to care for others, compared to 16% of male presidents. Campuses should consider reviewing family policies with an intentional access to childcare. According to the *Institute for Women's Policy Research (2019)*, student parents account for 42% of all students at community colleges. Therefore, women staff and faculty may be more attracted to the community college sector because of resources for parents at large. Consider policies on on-campus childcare facilities and the associated costs.

b. Tenure and Promotion Policy: While many Assistant professors are walking the tightrope of teaching, research, and service, many campuses narrowly define what fits in the categories. Redefining service for women of color faculty is important as many are engaging in unpaid and unrecognized labor. "Another discovery was that women of color in academia are often expected or required to do extra work, advocacy, and mentorship, and that much of this labor is uncompensated and not formally recognized" (*Duncan, 2014*).

c. Tuition remission: Women of color carry the bulk of student loan debt according to *Deeper In Debt: Women and Student Loans (2017)*. On average they borrow more and have a harder time with loan repayment. Black women, in particular, reported they had been unable to meet essential expenses within the past year due to student loan debt. When considering expansion of the pipeline for women of color we must make sense of the dollars and cents as an investment tool.

Ashley L. Gray is an emerging scholar activist with a passion for creating equity within higher education. Ashley's research focuses on the intersection of race and gender on women college presidents. She currently serves as a Research Analyst for the American Council of Education, working primarily with the ACE Women's Network and Moving the Needle Women in Higher Education Research Initiative. In this role, she creates initiatives and engages in research on women's pipeline to the presidency. Ashley's research on women of color presidents has led to an innovative research brief titled *Voices from the Field: Women of Color Presidents in Higher Education*. She earned her MEd from the University of Missouri-St. Louis and is a doctoral candidate at Howard University (D.C.), where her dissertation focuses on the pipeline experiences of Black women college presidents.



**QUICK TAKES**  
**Highlights**  
**from the Field**

**Women and Leadership in Higher Education: Special Issue Editorial**

by *Kate White and Paula Burkinshaw*

*This work focuses on women and leadership in higher education, with the editorial briefly reviewing the journey of women aspiring to and succeeding in leadership roles and explores what progress has been made since the new millennium. The authors review continuing barriers for women; how leaders are developed; and ongoing challenges, including the masculinist organizational culture and discussions around excellence. The article also introduces eight companion articles. Access this work here:*  
<https://bit.ly/38J2CcW>

**The Representation and Pay of Women and Minorities in Higher Education Administration: Institutions That Are Getting It Right**

by *CUPA-HR*

*CUPA-HR reviews diversity and equity in higher education relative to representation and pay equity for women and racial/ethnic minority administrators. This survey compares higher ed institutions' performance over 16 years and identifies 11 institutions that have had consistent success in terms of representation and pay equity for women and minority administrators. The data allow some conclusions to be drawn about the characteristics and practices of successful diversity and equity efforts. Access this work here:*  
<https://bit.ly/38Hza7b>

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**Reflections on Today's Leadership Dynamic** *(continued from page 1)*

varies according to one's position in an organization, framing work in that fashion and delivering on that commitment is reassuring to organizations that have been disappointed by eloquent and lofty promises that never improved the student experience or quality of life for employees. I was once excused from a task when I asked: How would my time commitment get us resources or remove obstacles?

*When asked what a chancellor does, I avoid bureaucratic descriptions of governance and regulatory requirements and respond that my job is: get resources, remove obstacles.*

**7. Disagree Without Being Disagreeable.** Opposing points of view and differences of opinion that are discussed in a respectful and courteous manner can lead to amicable resolution even after a prolonged period of conflict. Over the years, I have observed an administrator who consistently engages in debate with kindness and patience. While others in the room may become flustered and elevate emotions, she expresses her disagreement without being judgmental. While her view does not always prevail, there is no begrudging aftermath and she can even joke about her worthy opponents.

**8. It's Not Enough to Be Right.** It's likely that every administrator can recall a time of having confidence in the rightness of a decision that was based on rational thinking and data analysis. But because that decision did not flow from an inclusive process that considered ideas and perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders, criticism of the outcome actually masked criticism of the process. One colleague envisioned being praised for moving a student services program from a trailer at the edge of campus into a brand-new building in the center of campus but failed to ask the faculty and staff what they thought about relocating. The lack of opportunity to discuss the rationale for moving was viewed as disregard for their interests and ideas and created avoidable tension around what was ultimately deemed an improvement in their workspace.

**9. Fundraising Is Not About Asking for Money But Telling Student Stories.** I used to say that I did not want to be a college president because I did not like asking for money. When one of my mentors send that "fundraising is not about asking for money but telling student stories and you're good at that," I knew I could indeed be a president. I also learned that if there are fundraising events where students can tell their own stories, donors appreciate putting a face to the impact of their philanthropy. I had the great fortune of having a student accompany me to several gatherings and was delighted to see her grow in oral communication skills, self-confidence, and comfort level with meeting people for the first time.

**10. Navigate By a Moral Compass and a Kind Heart.** The leaders that I respect most are those who operate with great integrity, emotional intelligence, and inclusiveness. Difficult decisions such as budget cuts and program reductions are less hurtful to those affected when they know there was a truly fair and thoughtful process and they are valued as good people in bad circumstances. I have also observed that errors in judgment by leaders are more likely tolerated or forgiven by others if there is a demonstration of authentic emotional intelligence.

**Asks Of Those Who Hire**

The challenges for students that community college leaders

must address today have grown in variety and complexity in the past decade. Housing, hunger, mental health, textbook costs, transportation, childcare, living wages, and the future of work are frequent topics at conferences and in the media. For those of us who are privileged to hire administrators, we need to seriously assess how we determine who is best qualified to lead in these tumultuous times. Here are my asks of you:

**Search Committee Training.** Search committee members need to assess and mitigate their implicit biases prior to developing interview questions, reviewing applications, and interviewing candidates. Known candidates may have both supporters and detractors who will need extra help to evaluate all candidates fairly.

**Qualifications of Successful Leaders.** No applicant possesses every qualification that defines the perfect candidate, and this can lead to women and persons of color being ruled out based on what is not in their resume as opposed to what is there. Recognition of nontraditional preparation for managerial positions is paramount in expanding the leadership pipeline.

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**Champions and Mentors.** Many women and persons of color have been reluctant candidates (myself included) but were inspired to advance by influential leaders who championed and mentored them. We need to actively look for potential leaders and offer guidance and advice early in their careers.

In conclusion, I want to again express my thanks for the opportunity to share a myriad of reflections and ideas on how we might prepare, attract, and retain the next generation of community college leaders who will better reflect the diversity of the students we serve.

Since 2015, **Judy C. Miner** has been chancellor of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, which is headquartered in Los Altos Hills, CA. She has worked as a higher education administrator since 1977 and in the California Community Colleges since 1979. She has held numerous administrative positions in instruction, student services, and human resources at City College of San Francisco, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, De Anza College, and most recently Foothill College, where she served as president from 2007 to 2015. Nationally, she serves on the Board of Directors for Year Up, the Board of Directors for the League for Innovation in the Community College, and the College Board's Community College Advisory Panel. She has also served on a variety of state and regional initiatives. A tireless advocate for professional development and succession planning for higher education leaders, Miner serves on the faculty of the Executive Leadership Academy of the Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Leading Change Institute of the Council on Library and Information Resources. She earned her MA at Lone Mountain College in San Francisco and her Doctor of Education degree from the University of San Francisco.

