

## **ABSTRACT**

Glen Gordon Burnette III, NONTRADITIONAL PATHWAYS TO THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENCY: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CONTEMPORARY CHANCELLORS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM (Under the direction of Dr. Crystal Chambers). Department of Educational Leadership, July 2019.

Over the last decade, American higher education has been negatively impacted by crisis after crisis. Events such as The Great Recession of 2008 have forced institutions of higher education to do more with less. Due to these impacts, the expertise and decision-making strategies of higher education leaders have come under question, leading an increased number of institutions to view candidates coming from nontraditional backgrounds, in areas such as business, politics, and law, as viable candidates to serve as president or chancellor of an institution. This study aims to explore the lived experiences of three chancellors in the UNC System that have nontraditional backgrounds between 2012-2018. The selected timeframe was used because of the nine chancellor vacancies in The University of North Carolina (UNC) System during the time, three were filled with candidates that have nontraditional backgrounds. The researcher will conduct a qualitative study under the guidelines of a narrative design to interview the three nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System to explore their lived experiences since taking office. The researcher will also conduct interviews with two UNC System administrators to explore their perceptions of nontraditional leadership within the UNC System. These interviews will then be coded and analyzed to identify expected emerging themes of the lived experiences of the nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System.



NONTRADITIONAL PATHWAYS TO THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENCY: THE LIVED  
EXPERIENCES OF CONTEMPORARY CHANCELLORS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership

East Carolina University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

by

Glen Gordon Burnette III

July, 2019

©Copyright 2019  
Glen Gordon Burnette III

NONTRADITIONAL PATHWAYS TO THE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENCY: THE LIVED  
EXPERIENCES OF CONTEMPORARY CHANCELLORS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

by

Glen Gordon Burnette III

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF DISSERTATION: \_\_\_\_\_  
Crystal Chambers, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
David Siegel, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
William Rouse, Jr., EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: \_\_\_\_\_  
Travis Lewis, EdD

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Marjorie Ringler, EdD

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Gemperline, PhD

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE.....	i
COPYRIGHT.....	ii
SIGNATURE.....	iii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	2
Historical Path to the Presidency.....	2
Changing Roles and Responsibilities of the Presidency.....	3
Problems Influencing Presidential Search and Selection Processes.....	6
The Graying of College Presidents.....	8
Faculty Opposition to Nontraditional Presidents.....	9
The UNC System.....	10
Problem Statement.....	10
Purpose of the Study.....	11
Research Questions.....	12
Significance of the Study.....	14
Research Design.....	14
Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations.....	14
Assumptions.....	15
Limitations.....	16
Delimitations.....	17
Definitions of Terms Used.....	18

Organization of Study.....	19
Summary.....	20
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	21
The Personal and Professional Characteristics of College and University Presidents.....	22
Roles and Responsibilities of the Presidency.....	26
Nontraditional Pathways and Presidents.....	31
The 21 <sup>st</sup> Century President.....	34
Contemporary Challenges.....	42
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	46
Rationale for Qualitative Study.....	46
A Narrative Study Design.....	48
Interview Participant Selection Process.....	49
Data Collection.....	51
Interviews.....	52
Observations.....	53
Documents.....	53
Ethical Considerations.....	54
Validation of Data.....	55
Summary.....	57
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS.....	58
Nontraditional Chancellor Interviews.....	59
Chancellor Robin Cummings.....	59
Chancellor Zito Sartarelli.....	60

Chancellor Cecil Staton.....	60
Theme One: Previous Professional Experience Valuable.....	61
Theme Two: Shared Governance and the Decision-Making Process.....	67
Theme Three: Team Building and Developing Relationships.....	71
Theme Four: Impact on Personal Life.....	75
Theme Five: Critical Areas of Concern for Higher Education.....	77
Faculty Member Interviews.....	81
Dr. Jeffrey Popke.....	81
Dr. John Stiller.....	81
Dr. Richard Vela.....	81
Theme One: The Importance of Shared Governance.....	83
Theme Two: Higher education is Not a Business and Should Not be Operated as One.....	86
Theme Three: The Role of the Chancellor has Changed in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century.....	89
Chancellor Search Committee Member Interviews.....	91
Theme One: Previous Experience of Nontraditional Candidate could Alleviate Critical Areas of Concern at Institution.....	92
Theme Two: A Nontraditional Candidate is Nothing to be Threatened By.....	95
Theme Three: Criticism of the Search Process.....	97
Overarching Themes.....	100
Theme One: The Previous Experiences of Nontraditional Chancellors is Valuable.....	100
Theme Two: Understanding and Respecting Shared Governance is Critical.....	102



Theme Three: Nontraditional Chancellors may Face Challenges, but Can Overcome Them.....	103
Theme Four: Nontraditional Chancellors Must Develop a Strong Leadership Team.....	104
Theme Five: Higher Education is not a Business.....	106
Summary.....	110
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	112
Overall Summary.....	112
The Purpose of the Study.....	112
Research Questions.....	113
Research Question One.....	113
Research Question Two.....	117
Research Question Three.....	120
Limitations.....	126
Practical Applications.....	127
Opportunities for Future Research.....	129
Conclusion.....	130
REFERENCES.....	134
APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL.....	145
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR UNC SYSTEM CHANCELLORS	146
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR UNC SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS.....	147
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANCELLOR SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS.....	148
APPENDIX E: LETTER OF SOLITITATION FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION FOR CHANCELLORS.....	149

APPENDIX F: LETTER OF SOLICITATION FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION FOR UNC SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS..... 150

APPENDIX G: LETTER OF SOLICITATION FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEW PARTIICIPATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANCELLOR SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS..... 151

APPENDIX H: RESEARCH STUDY PARTIICPANT CONSENT FORM..... 152

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Historically, university presidents were the first among equals, the leader of faculty, and face of the institution (Birnbaum, 1992). While the majority of university presidential candidates hail from this traditional academic background, it seems to be the case that a turbulent economic climate, along with other factors, have contributed to an increase in nontraditional candidates being selected as president of institutions (Ivory, 2017).

While scholars have observed a decline in power, effectiveness, and influence of the position (Bornstein, 2003), it appears most individuals still view the president as, both literally and symbolically, the leader of the institution (Zwell, 1999). Presidents undertake responsibilities related to the governance and stewardship of the institution and are expected to use its resources in a proper and transparent manner (Boyce, 2004). In an uncertain economic climate, and as higher education faces numerous challenges, the role of the president calls for an individual who is experienced in many arenas. As college and university presidents are faced with an ever-growing list of new demands, the operational environment of institutions is increasingly being impacted by external group influences that impact their day-to-day operations (Ault, 2017). According to Selingo, Chheng, and Clark (2017), presidents face challenges of varied demographics among student populations (race, age, and financial status), governmental financial constraints, and the onset of technology revolutionizing the academic world.

One of the most recent challenges presidents of higher education institutions are currently facing is how to properly handle the increasing amount of student activism occurring on college campuses nationwide. Few institutions are exempt from the public demonstrations, occupations, sit-ins, and sit-outs of millennial and post-millennial generations of students skilled at exploiting social media to invigorate action to support their concerns (Selingo et al., 2017). In the world of

higher education today, millennial students, and their parents, are skeptical about the rising cost of college attendance, high student debt, and limited job prospects, increasing the tendency to view themselves as paying customers of colleges and universities (Selingo et al., 2017).

Institutions are experiencing problems with retention rates, increased competition, and increased expenses in acquiring new students, resulting in an enhanced focus on institutional marketing efforts (Guilbault, 2018). As the price of attending an institution of higher education continues to climb with every passing academic year, the students and parents footing the bill to attend these institutions seem to believe they are always right and every demand they have should be met by the institution. As higher education is being impacted by an increasing “consumer-oriented” student body, it remains unknown if presidents are adequately prepared to manage this new generation of college students (Selingo et al., 2017). These are just a sampling of challenges forcing presidents to become multidimensional leaders who can successfully direct fundraising campaigns, implement academic programs that meet societal needs of today’s world, and create partnerships outside of academia.

## **Background**

### **Historical Path to the Presidency**

Until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most college presidents traditionally climbed the academic ladder (Cohen & March, 1974). Historically, those who were selected to lead an institution of higher education, or those who were deemed qualified for a university or college presidency, were those who rose through the academic ranks to a senior academic officer position, with the majority holding the position of provost, before taking the role of president (Cohen & March, 1974). The individuals first earned a doctorate, then rose through the academic ranks as tenured faculty, department chair, dean, and eventually provost or chief academic

officer (Toppo, 2018). Those taking the traditional pathway also have a strong academic record as well as demonstrated funded research (Kiley, 2012). Many in academia believe that presidents coming from traditional academic paths are essential to lead under a model of shared governance that is favored among American higher education institutions (Bornstein, 2003).

### **Changing Roles and Responsibilities of the Presidency**

While the traditional pathway continues to be the norm for many presidents and chancellors, over the past decade, institutions of higher education have seen an increase in the shift of professional backgrounds and leadership styles of college presidents and chancellors. A 2018 study conducted by three Virginia Commonwealth University scholars examined the career histories for 215 sitting presidents and chancellors, with the majority of those being at the helm of public land-grant universities (Toppo, 2018). Study leader and sociologist Dr. Tressie Cottom, stated the investigators found that 46% of participating university presidents and chancellors began their careers in a non-tenure-track position and many followed nontraditional pathways (Toppo, 2018).

An enhanced focus has risen that aligns with organizational business practices and less from the traditional academic perspective (Ivory, 2017). In some instances, the desired hiring credentials have also shifted; no longer is a terminal degree a strict requirement for the college presidency (Ivory, 2017). Candidates with experience in overseeing major change initiatives and those within the private sector who have increased their organization's profit margin and have grown the organization are now being seriously considered during college and university presidential searches (Ivory, 2017). While research has indicated that the leaders on each campus are tasked with duties and responsibilities, such as student success, Terrance MacTaggart (2017) argues that the role of the university president is becoming increasingly "outwardly focused".

Institutions of higher education are no longer divided from surrounding communities and it is now the expectation that college and university presidents develop collaborative relationships within these communities (Gavazzi, Fox, & Martin, 2014). MacTaggart (2017) asserts this by stating that the primary focus of university presidents today is establishing and maintaining clear lines of communication with the university's board of trustees, donors, the public, alumni, and legislators, while leaving the provost to oversee internal academic operations. Rita Bornstein (2002) supports this view, stating that it is essential for the president to develop a relationship within the community in which the campus resides, champion regional economic development, and serve as a civic leader.

Experts state that university governing boards are increasingly open to hiring outside the academic ranks, mainly because the position is becoming more externally focused as fundraising and legislative relations are now key responsibilities of the presidency (Bowman, 2011). Dowdall (2000) attributes increasing nontraditional candidate selection to skill-sets these candidates possess that may be needed to meet certain goals at an institution. Pierce (2011) states that the role of the college president has shifted from being primarily academic to one that focuses on fundraising and developing relationships with external constituents. The 2018 Virginia Commonwealth University study on the career histories of 215 presidents and chancellors supports this viewpoint (Cottom, Hunnicut, & Johnson, 2018). The investigators found that 40.5% of the university presidents and chancellors had no experience serving in a tenured or tenure-track position in academe (Cottom et al., 2018). This is a 7.5% increase from a 2017 study that put the number of nontraditional presidents at 33% in a sample size of 248 (Cottom et al., 2018).

The decreasing amount of public financial support continues to plague institutions of higher education across the nation (Lambert, 2015). State governments historically provided a significant amount of funding to public colleges and universities (Desrochers & Wellman, 2011). However, state governments are providing an increased amount of funding to state department of corrections and programs, such as Medicaid, which has led to a decrease in state financial resources provided to higher education.

Academe is experiencing a time of profound change as institutions are being forced to restructure themselves due to a combination of financial woes, political discourse, demographic changes, and technological innovations (Selingo, 2013). Nontraditional presidential candidates are arriving from professional backgrounds in nonacademic settings such as finance, government, military, and business (Fischer, 2005). As higher education faces crisis after crisis and the role and responsibilities of the president increase, the attractiveness of professionally proven nontraditional candidates, with experience in substantial change, has risen (Fischer, 2005). The turbulent economic climate in the United States has put increased financial constraints on institutions of higher education. Due to this, nontraditional individuals with successful demonstrated experience in the oversight and management of major budgets or working with state and federal constituents to secure financial resources continue to be viewed as viable candidates for the presidency (Beardsley, 2017).

According to the American Council on Education (ACE), the immediate prior position held by approximately 15% of all college and university presidents in 2016 was outside of higher education, compared to 13.1% in 2006 (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Morgan, 2017, p. 4). The ACE survey also reported that approximately 58% of all presidents have experience working outside of higher education (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 4). It is also of importance to note that 18%

of presidents of private institutions had worked outside of higher education in their immediate prior role compared to 15% of presidents at public institutions (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 11). These figures have the potential to be higher if one considers specialized focus institutions such as business, law, religion, and chiropractic schools, where presidents coming from outside higher education were 20% for public institutions and 22.3% for private non-profit institutions during 2016 (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 17).

### **Problems Influencing Presidential Search and Selection Processes**

Selecting the right president is perhaps the most important task undertaken by boards of trustees and search committees (Brown, 2011). Further, Brown (2011) argues that sometimes boards of trustees believe finding the “perfect” fit for the president of their institution will result in the immediate turnaround of problem areas that negatively impact the institution. The alleviation of problems that impact institutions takes strategic planning and time, and in some cases, may not be possible (Hoyle, 2009). As the selection of nontraditional presidents of institutions increases, it is the responsibility of the board of trustees and search committees to be transparent about the severity of problems areas within the institution.

In addition to financial and political constraints impacting institutions of higher education and leadership effectiveness, research has highlighted other factors that have impacted the presidential search and selection process. Across the nation, sunshine laws require many institutions to have the presidential search and selection process open to the public (Ault, 2017). While this type of transparency may be viewed as a way to include the public and keep them informed, it has also been described as a barrier in attracting the most desired or qualified candidates to apply for the position (Ault, 2017). Many potential candidates fear that transparency could have an impact on their current employment, since it demonstrates they are



looking for other opportunities or a career change (Dowdall, 2012). Due to sunshine laws and other regulations that have deterred individuals from applying for a college or university presidency, the pool of qualified applicants has become limited (Wilkins, 2012). As many qualified individuals are increasingly choosing not to pursue the presidency, Die (1999), argues “there is a small percentage of individuals who enter academia with the goal of becoming a president of an institution of higher education” (p. 34). Die (1999) concludes by stating, “one can analyze historical trends in the pathway that leads to a presidency, but there is no key step that guarantees an individual entry into higher education’s elite position”.

One senior consultant at an academic search firm suggests that the most desirable potential applicants have become more selective, and often wait for a search committee to express interest in them before deciding to apply for the role of president (Fain, 2004). Other observers suggest that the increasing responsibilities of fund raising in presidential job descriptions may deter career academics from applying, while others argue the high cost of living in some locations or unpleasant past experiences with search committees attribute to a decline in interested applicants (Fain, 2004). As the pool of qualified candidates to serve as president continues to be limited, institutions of higher education are attempting to attract top candidates by offering substantial presidential compensation packages and benefits. Although, in efforts to reduce potential backlash from the public, many board members at public institutions are reluctant to provide exhaustive compensation details (Basinger, 2001).

Martin and Samuels (2004) stated that “as fewer and fewer candidates apply for the president position, as its power base becomes anemic, and as many new appointees are not lasting long enough to even complete one regional accreditation cycle, the pressures to leave often emerge with the first board agenda” (p. 7). The nationwide decrease in applicants for

presidential roles in higher education has led to an increase in institutions using search firms to aid in the search process (Fain, 2004). The use of a search firm can add structure to the search process and aid the institution in generating a qualified pool of candidates. The ACE survey reported that in 2016, 66.9% of presidential searches were conducted with the aid of a search firm (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 24). However, Provost James Brennan of Towson University, cautions aggressive associates of search firms may unintentionally misinform applicants, leading to applicants removing themselves from the candidate pool (Fain, 2004). As the pool of interested candidates continues to decrease and the high turnover rate associated with the role of president increases, many boards of trustees are viewing nontraditional presidential candidates as viable options (Alton & Dean, 2002).

### **The Graying of College Presidents**

Presidential retirements and presidential tenure length are other areas of concern to institutions of higher education. The 2017 American College President Study found that 58% of college and university presidents were older than sixty, and the number of presidents that were seventy-one and older more than doubled from 5% in 2011 to 11% in 2016 (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 7). In a trend coined as the graying of college and university presidents (Gagliardi et al., 2017), data suggests that, soon, institutions of higher education will experience a significant level of presidential turnover in the form of retirements and shorter tenures (Gagliardi et al., 2017). The average presidential tenure length slightly dropped from 8.5 years in 2006 to 6.5 years in 2016 (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 7). Soon, it is expected that 54% of current college and university presidents are expected to leave in five years or less (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

## **Faculty Opposition to Nontraditional Presidents**

In several cases, the selection of a nontraditional president has led to campus stakeholder opposition and initial questions of credibility (Bowman, 2011). The 2016 ACE survey reported that nearly 20% of college and university presidents has no experience being a faculty member (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 4), leading several stakeholders to argue that a leader from a nonacademic background could disregard key principles of higher education, such as shared governance and academic traditions (Bowman, 2011). Faculty members also point to increasing pressures to use technology to enhance teaching methods, and believe presidents should be well versed in cutting edge pedagogical research (Selingo, 2013). Larry Nielsen (2013) argues, “I’d be out of business in a week if I ran my business the way we run institutions of higher education.” Conversely, Nielsen (2013) theorizes, “if we ran the institutions of higher education in the same manner of a business, we would all be in jail within a week.”

While the operations of private businesses are mainly conducted behind closed doors, there is a public interest in university operations and it is the institution’s responsibility to be transparent to the public in its operations (Nielsen, 2013). However, Shelly Weiss Storbeck, managing partner of Storbeck/Pimental & Associates, defends the selection of nontraditional candidates for the role of president by colleges and universities. Storbeck argues that, simply because a candidate doesn’t hail from the traditional background of academe does not mean they do not have the intellectual capacity or cannot conform to the norms of the academy (Selingo, 2013). An increased number of colleges and universities have selected nontraditional candidates as presidents in hopes they serve as agents of change and lead the institution in a new direction (Ivory, 2017). Historically, faculty are often those who ground the institution in past traditions and operations that may not serve it well in preparation for the future (Brown, 2011).

## **The UNC System**

The University of North Carolina (UNC) System is composed of 16 institutions, with 14 universities, North Carolina School of the Arts, and North Carolina School of Science and Math. The UNC System has an enrollment of nearly 225,000 students (The University of North Carolina System, 2017). Within the past six years, the UNC System has had nine chancellor vacancies. Of the nine vacancies, three were filled with candidates from nontraditional backgrounds (The University of North Carolina System, 2017). The purpose of this study is to garner an understanding of the lived experiences of contemporary university presidents, using the setting of the UNC System as a site given the concentration of nontraditional chancellor appointments within a single state system in a six-year period.

## **Problem Statement**

To meet the increasing amount of demands within higher education, institutions must attempt to develop and implement strategic practices that will benefit all campus stakeholders. As a result, there are institutions are choosing to stray from the normative path of presidential selection to aid in this endeavor (Ivory, 2017). Immense responsibilities undertaken by a president of an institution of higher education increase and intensify with every passing academic year (Bornstein, 2003). As the world of higher education continues to evolve to combat significant threats, it is important to evaluate and gain a better understanding of who the individuals are who have been selected and trusted to lead these institutions. It is necessary to examine how they have both personally and professionally prepared themselves to handle the crucial role in which they play at their respective institutions, and within their community (Delabbio, 2006). An increase of studies revolving around the lived experiences of nontraditional presidents in higher education will allow for further exploration and analysis of the president's

characteristics, career pathway, motivations, and any challenges they may have faced since taking the role of president at their institution (Delabbio, 2006).

While both qualitative and quantitative studies have aided researchers in understanding literature that focuses on the traditional academic pathway to the college or university presidency, limited attention has been placed on understanding the journey of those who have taken the nontraditional pathway towards the president position (Davies, 2005). As higher education is experiencing increased momentum in the selection of presidents that hail from nontraditional backgrounds, it is pivotal to gain a better understanding of what attracted these individuals to enter academia and what previous professional experiences will allow them to be successful in the role of president at an institution. It is also significant to discover why governing boards and search committees are viewing these individuals as viable candidates, and to seek a deep contextual understanding of the campus conditions that support this trend.

### **Purpose of the Study**

As the role of the university president has become more “outwardly focused” (MacTaggart, 2017), those who have demonstrated ability in creating partnerships and establishing relationships within varied sectors have become increasingly more attractive as viable presidential candidates. Communication skills, political savvy, and financial management experience are viewed as quality characteristics for any candidate who desires to become a college or university president (Delabbio, 2006). MacTaggart (2017) states that as managing the operations of a university is increasingly becoming like that of running a corporation, institutions of higher education are viewing individuals from nontraditional backgrounds as strong candidates for the presidency.

Interviewing three current UNC System chancellors, all of whom arrived from nontraditional backgrounds, provided key insight about personal characteristics and previous professional experiences they believe have been instrumental in providing strong leadership for and lead to the overall success of the institution. Through the conduction of in-person interviews, I gained insight on the personal and professional struggles each nontraditional chancellor encountered since taking the presidency and their strategy for overcoming these struggles. I also discovered institutional and system wide deficiencies the three nontraditional chancellors identified and how they worked to alleviate these deficiencies. Information gained through the interviews will be of importance to those placed in charge of recruiting and selecting university presidents to view nontraditional individuals as viable candidates within the UNC System and nationwide.

As research has shown that interest levels of potential candidates for presidential positions have decreased, search committees and the governing boards of institutions may now have to consider those who have not followed the traditional academic pathway for the role of the president. Due to this decline, information collected from interviews can provide insight about valuable characteristics and professional experiences of nontraditional candidates that could benefit the needs of the institution. This may appeal to the institution and lead them to select a nontraditional candidate as president.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study is to provide contextual information on the lived experiences of nontraditional candidates being selected to the position of chancellor at institutions within the UNC System. Due to limited existing literature, there is a need that exists to explore the experiences of selected chancellors that have taken the nontraditional pathway (Davies, 2005).

Research questions were developed to serve as a bedrock in efforts to understand why these individuals elected to enter higher education, why they believe their career pathway has prepared them for the role of chancellor in the UNC System, their lived experiences serving as a nontraditional chancellor, and how serving as a nontraditional chancellor impacted them, both personally and professionally. Interview questions with members of the chancellor search committee at each institution also provided insight on why the UNC System is seeing an increase in the selection of nontraditional chancellors, why institutions are viewing them as viable candidates, and what are the challenges and opportunities these individuals have as leaders of their institution. The complete interview protocols for participating chancellors, UNC System administrators, and institutional chancellor search committee members can be found in appendices A, B, and C.

The following research questions were used to frame the study on the increase of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System:

1. How do participating nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System describe their pathway into higher education and what inspired them to take on the role of chancellor? How do the nontraditional chancellors believe this pathway has prepared them for the role of chancellor?
2. What is it like being a nontraditional chancellor in the UNC System? How has being selected as a nontraditional chancellor in the UNC System changed their lives?
3. How have the experiences of being a nontraditional chancellor in the UNC System shaped their leadership style? What did they learn the most? What expectations were met? What was most unexpected?

## **Significance of the Study**

This study was conducted in efforts to contribute to the scarce amount of literature and research on nontraditional pathways to the presidency at a college or university. The study also aimed to discover what inspired these individuals to desire to lead an institution of higher education, and what previous professional experiences they possess that the search committee believed will aid in their success as president. Further, the study discovered key themes through research to explain the increase of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System.

## **Research Design**

The research study was guided by a qualitative methods approach using a narrative design. The use of a narrative design allowed me to study the lives of individuals and ask the individuals to share stories describing their experiences (Creswell, 2014). Semi-structured interviews were conducted, using open-ended questions, with three UNC System Chancellors, who were appointed from a nontraditional background, and have served in the role for at least two years, about their lived experiences serving as a nontraditional chancellor. I also interviewed chancellor search committee members and faculty members from each institution that selected a nontraditional candidate as chancellor. The research study aimed to identify and understand the experiences of participating nontraditional chancellors, their backgrounds, their characteristics, and the institutions they serve after analyzing the interviews.

## **Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations**

“It is well to recognize explicitly that each president has individual strengths and weaknesses, and individual likes and dislikes that must be considered in deciding how to lead and manage” (Bowen, 2011, p. 3).



## **Assumptions**

This qualitative research study aimed to provide insight and a thorough understanding of the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors within the UNC System. The study was rooted in a framework of social constructivism. Social constructivism is grounded in the belief that individuals aim to develop an understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2014). Through social constructivism, Creswell (2014), argues “individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences” (p. 8). Under this paradigm, the individuals’ interpretation of meaning are varied and numerous (Ault, 2017). Due to this, this research study assumed that there is no one truth that is able to be observed and tested. Regarding social constructivism, Crotty (1998) identifies the assumption that “human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (p. 43). Thus, this study was conducted under the assumption that the participants, the audience, and myself can construct reality and meaning of the world in which we live. Creswell (2014) states, “the individuals’ subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically, and are formed through interaction with others and through historical and cultural norms that operate individual’s lives” (p. 8). I was able to collect data on how participants engage and make sense of their world through historical and social perspectives by interacting with participants in their own setting. Crotty (1998), argues that “the basic generation of meaning is always social, arising in and out of interactions with a human community” (p. 43). As it is the “researcher’s intent to make sense of the meaning others have about the world” (Creswell, 2014, p. 8), I was able to collect meaningful data on the experiences of nontraditional chancellors within the UNC System and the thoughts on nontraditional leadership by faculty and members of institutional search committees, through the conduction of in-person interviews. The study assumed all interview participants will answer

questions honestly by providing them a participant consent form and the participants they are free to withdraw from the study at any time they so choose.

### **Limitations**

Using a sample of stratification, all participating chancellors came from nontraditional backgrounds. However, the lived experiences of the participating nontraditional chancellors within the UNC System may not be applicable to the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors in other state university systems or over periods of time, as the higher education landscape is constantly changing. As the past professional backgrounds of the three participating nontraditional chancellors varied, the emergence of common themes in each chancellor's experience still arose.

As the study revolved around interviews with three chancellors, three faculty members, and a member from the chancellor search committee that selected a nontraditional chancellor, I understood that negotiating access and conducting interviews with individuals, who have extremely demanding schedules, may be difficult and could pose limitations.

Along with the differing geographical landscape of the areas in which each institution is located, the institutions are also faced with contrasting external societal and economic factors of their respective regions, as well as differences in the culture of their institutions. The research study also assumed that the probable external cultural differences and needs of each institution's region, along with varied internal institutional cultures, impacted the lived experiences of each nontraditional chancellor. While obtaining information on internal and external factors and the cultures of each institution produced valuable insight as to how each selected chancellor's nontraditional background aligns with the needs of their institution, it may limit the study's ability to make overall generalizations of institutional needs within the UNC System.

## **Delimitations**

The sample size of the study was purposely limited to three public institutions of higher education in the UNC System. While the sample size may seem small, this allowed for a more in-depth study of the nontraditional chancellor's lived experiences. Further, I believe the small sample size allowed for more detailed interviews with nontraditional chancellors, giving them the opportunity to be transparent on their lived experiences, why they were drawn to the position, how their past professional experiences outside of higher education prepared them for their role, and how their past professional experiences align with the needs of the institution they serve. The interviews with secondary participants were conducted to gain insight on perspectives concerning nontraditional chancellors with faculty members, as well as what institutional needs made a nontraditional candidate desirable by a chancellor search committee. Brink (1993), argues that the presence of a researcher, who was previously unknown to the participant, may make the participant uncomfortable and may lead participants to withhold information or give vague responses. As this would question the validity of data, Leininger (1992) states that the researcher must identify themselves to participants as trustworthy and detail the purpose of the study before it is possible to collect accurate and credible data. In efforts to ensure the accuracy and validity of data, as well as ensure the data is nothing more than a promotional brochure for the participant's institution, I clearly outlined the purpose and parameters of the study in the participant consent form. In order to increase transparency, participants were given the option to remain anonymous and pseudonyms would be used for participants and their institutions. The results of this study could be generalizable to chancellors who (a) entered higher education from a nontraditional background, (b) lead an institution within the UNC System. Or individuals who (a) want to understand experiences serving as a nontraditional chancellor within the UNC

System, (b) want to understand UNC System senior administrators views of nontraditional chancellors within the UNC System.

### **Definitions of Terms Used**

*Career Path* - A progressive sequence of positions with increasing responsibility that individuals assume as part of the career advancement process within a given industry.

*Chancellor* - The Chief Executive Officer of an institution of higher education. This term will be used when referring to the role within the UNC System.

*Climate* - The prevailing influence or environmental conditions characterizing a group or period (*Merriam-Webster dictionary*, 2018).

*College* - An institution of higher learning, especially one providing a general or liberal arts education with course offerings that lead to a bachelor's degree.

*Culture*- The set of attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize an institution or organization (*Merriam-Webster dictionary*, 2018).

*Nontraditional Pathway President/Chancellor* - Nontraditional Pathway President/Chancellor refers to a college or university leader whose prior career was primarily outside of the faculty ranks or scholarly activities. These leaders usually arrived from the fields of business, politics, or law. In this study, a career in senior administrative (non-academic) positions within higher education will also be considered a nontraditional pathway president/chancellor.

*President* - The Chief Executive Officer of an institution of higher education. At varying campuses, the title "chancellor" may be used in the place of "president."

*Traditional Pathway President/Chancellor* - Traditional Pathway President/Chancellor refers to the historically traditional route taken to the position of college president. This pathway

typically follows a progressive climb up the ladder of academic appointments displayed in the following: tenured faculty member, department chair, associate dean, dean, provost and then selected as president/chancellor.

*University* - An institution of higher learning that facilitates teaching and research, with undergraduate studies that award bachelor's degrees, along with graduate and professional schools that award master's degrees and doctorates (*Merriam-Webster dictionary*, 2018).

### **Organization of Study**

The study on the increase in nontraditional pathway candidates being selected as chancellors within the UNC System was organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of the study; gives background information, a problem statement, description of the purpose of the study, research questions used, significance of the study, research design, limitations, and definitions of relevant terms. Chapter Two of the research study provides an in-depth review of the literature focusing on: the pathways of traditional and nontraditional college and university presidents and chancellors, professional and personal characteristics and experiences of college and university presidents and chancellors, and the recruitment and selection process of presidents and chancellors by governing boards of institutions. Chapter Three outlines the methodology used to identify and support the findings of the research questions, described how study data was collected, analyzed, and reported, and what resources were used to identify and code data. Chapter Four contains the presentation of the findings of the study and an outline of key themes that emerged in the collected data. Chapter Five is a summary of the key ideas of all chapters and provides a conclusion and discusses implications of the findings for policy, practice and future research.

## Summary

The goal of this research study was to examine, explain, and identify key contributing factors in the increase of nontraditional candidates being selected as chancellor at institutions within the UNC System. To achieve this goal, I reviewed previous literature on nontraditional pathways to the academic presidency. Previous literature was used to frame interview questions with three current nontraditional chancellors, faculty members from the three institutions, and a chancellor search committee member from each institution that selected a nontraditional chancellor.

The research study aimed to gain a more in-depth understanding of why these individuals were inspired to enter the field of higher education, how their past personal and professional experiences will translate and prepare them for such an important role in higher education, and any challenges or obstacles they have had to overcome since taking the role of chancellor. Further, the research study aimed to identify attributing factors leading to governing boards and institutional chancellor search committees viewing nontraditional individuals as viable candidates for the role of chancellor, the increase of nontraditional chancellors being selected in the UNC System, and the specific needs of UNC System institutions, and the regions they are located, that have selected nontraditional leaders.

Given the lack of sufficient qualitative investigations that explore the motivating factors of nontraditional candidates desiring to enter higher education, the increased need for governing boards and search committees to search outside of those who have taken the traditional academic pathway to becoming president, and how the past professional experiences of nontraditional candidates align with the specific needs of institutions that selected them, additional research on the phenomenon is needed. I believe this study will be of growing importance, as the landscape of higher education is rapidly changing, and will provide a foundation for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As very little scholarly research has been done to examine the overall efficiency of nontraditional presidents or the issues they face in adjusting to academic culture (Heuvel, 2017), the purpose of this study was to gain insight and develop an understanding of the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors within the UNC System. Through the conduction of interviews, with participating nontraditional chancellors of institutions in the UNC System, I was able to obtain in-depth information about their lived experiences since taking the role of chancellor. Further, I was able to obtain information on individual characteristics and personalities, motivations to enter academia, how they believe their nontraditional path has prepared them for the role of chancellor, and how they have overcome any obstacles they may have encountered since becoming chancellor.

Historically, the normative path for a college or university president has distinctively been a career distinctively within the realms of academia (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001). These presidents, referred to as traditional, began their career in higher education as an assistant professor before earning tenure as faculty and would progressively move up the academic ladder to the role of provost (Cohen & March, 1974). These traditional presidents also usually have many academic achievements and have a record of securing a large amount of funding for research. As this path towards the role of president has long been considered the norm, over the past decade, higher education has witnessed an increase in the selection of presidents coming from outside of academia and considered nontraditional (Fischer, 2005). Nontraditional presidents are coming into academe from outside fields such as government, business, military, or law, and are thought to bring fresh and innovative perspectives to higher education and be effective leaders of fundraising as well as “friend-raising” (Heuvel, 2017). This chapter will

examine the college and university presidency from varied theoretical frameworks and perspectives and attempt to discover the reasons why higher education is seeing an increase in the selection of nontraditional presidents.

### **The Personal and Professional Characteristics of College and University Presidents**

Studies revolving around those serving in a leadership capacity within various types of organizations are widespread and date back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As such, there have been many studies conducted to examine the career paths and academic training of presidents and leadership at colleges and universities. Kruse and Beck (1928) were some of the initial researchers of presidential leadership, conducting studies on presidents of state teachers colleges and state universities. Additional researchers would conduct studies after Kruse and Beck (1928), however, with the intention of validating previous data, findings were largely the same due to the consistency of the studies asking the same questions.

As earlier studies derived from data retrieved from quantitative sources, such as the Bureau of Education Statistical Circulars (Kruse & Beck, 1928), more contemporary studies were conducted by researchers who created surveys to collect data from participating institutions and individuals (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001). The use of surveys allowed for participants to be more thorough and give in-depth responses on their perspectives. One of the most well-regarded initial comprehensive studies on the career paths and educational backgrounds of college and university presidents was conducted by Cohen and March (1974). The Cohen and March (1974) study was the first to review and define the normative career path for presidents in higher education. With the development of the “six-rung ladder”, Cohen and March (1986) detail the progressive steps on the traditional pathway to the college or university presidency. The six steps are: student or teacher/minister, full professor, department chair, dean, provost or academic vice



president, and president (Cohen & March, 1974, p. 20). These exact titles have evolved in higher education and at some institutions, but still largely hold true for the traditional pathway.

Findings by previous researchers, such as Cohen and March (1974), highlighting career paths and the backgrounds of college and university presidents, attracted interest from others and would lead to studies from Wessel and Keim (1994), Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) and the Gagliardi et al. (2017), to name a few. While studies would vary by institutional type, classification, and geographic location, researchers were able to identify consistent themes in the data collected. Married, middle-aged white males, that had earned doctorate degrees, were found most likely to hold the role of college or university president (Salimbene, 1982). A study conducted by Corrigan (2002), found that the role of president at institutions of higher education was still significantly comprised of married, middle-aged white males, while females and minorities continue to be underrepresented in presidential roles.

Expanding on Cohen and March (1974) findings, Wessel and Keim (1994), used collected survey data from 270 sitting presidents of private four-year institutions to assert that not only is there an academic pathway towards being a college or university president, but there is also a less scholarly path through higher education administration. This pathway allows presidential candidates to gain experience in varied areas of higher education that are crucial to an institution's success (Beardsley, 2017).

As Wessel and Keim (1994) presented an alternative, less scholarly path to the presidency of a college or university, Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) constructed a framework for possible career paths to the presidency by examining the most recent positions candidates held prior to being selected as president. Using demographic data from previous American Council of Education (ACE) American College President Studies, Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) identified

two primary pathways taken by current presidents: traditional and nontraditional. Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) define a traditional president as a scholar that has progressed through the academic ranks, aligning with that of Cohen and March (1986) definition. In addition, Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) propose that individuals who have spent their entire professional career in higher education, but arrived at the presidency from administrative or dean roles, can also be considered as traditional pathway presidents and labeled as “stewards”. The nontraditional pathway was further divided by Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) into two subgroups labeled: “spanner” and stranger”. “Spanner” presidents are those whose pathway included experience in higher education, along with experience in other professions, and may or may not have experience as a faculty member (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001). “Strangers” are defined as presidents having no experience as a faculty member and have spent their entire professional career outside of higher education in fields such as business, politics or law (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001).

The American Council on Education (ACE) American College President Study has been conducted since 1986 and considers itself as the premiere source of demographic data on college and university presidents in American higher education (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 2). The ACE American College President Study quantitatively studied the immediate prior position of 1,546 current first-time college and university presidents (Gagliardi et al., 2017). The ACE President Study divides the president’s immediate prior role into four categories: President/CEO/ Interim President/System CEO, Provost/Chief Academic Officer/Other Senior Executive in Academic Affairs/ Dean, Other Senior Campus Executive, and Outside Higher Education (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 4). While the ACE President Study does not use the exact terms traditional and nontraditional, it specifies and refers to presidents that would be considered nontraditional as

those who came from outside of higher education (Gagliardi et al., 2017). According to Gagliardi et al. (2017), the traditional Provost or Chief Academic Officer is still the greatest pool from which college presidents are selected. The ACE President Study reported the following results of the immediate positions prior to an individual assuming the role of president:

President/CEO/Interim President/System CEO (23.9%); Provost/Chief Academic Officer/Other Senior Executive in Academic Affairs/Dean (42.7%); Other Senior Campus Executives (16.3%); Outside of Higher Education (15%) (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 4). The ACE President Study revealed the percentages of presidents coming from positions outside of higher education (nontraditional) by institution type: Doctorate Granting Institutions (13.9%); Masters Institutions (14.6%); Bachelors Colleges (14.3%); Associate Colleges (12.9%); Special Focus Institutions (Medicine 44%, Religion/Theology 21%, Fine Arts/Humanities 13%); and Minority Serving Institutions (14.5%) (Gagliardi et al., 2017, pp. 9-19). Further, the ACE President Study reported that 18% of presidents at private institutions came from outside of higher education, compared to 12% of presidents at public institutions (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 21). While the percentage of acting presidents from backgrounds outside of higher education (nontraditional) represent a small portion of presidents in the ACE President Study and vary from (15%) in 2016; (20.3%) in 2011; and (13.1%) in 2006, it is still important to consider the reasons why some institutions of higher education have entrusted nontraditional candidates to be the president (Gagliardi et al., 2017). The ACE President Study notes that:

Since the last iteration of this study, the higher education landscape has arguably grown more complex and competitive. Colleges and universities face more scrutiny from government, the private sector, and civic society about the value they provide for people, communities, and economies. Funding streams have become increasingly unstable. As a

result of the convergence of these forces, pressures to transform colleges and universities have grown, making the job of being a president harder. (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 59)

The ACE President Study asked participating presidents to consider the top areas or issues leaders need to be prepared to address at their institutions (Gagliardi et al., 2017). The presidents reported budget and financial management (68%) and fundraising (47%) as the largest areas of importance (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Sixty-one percent of participating college presidents stated their biggest frustration was never having the necessary funds to accomplish the goals they hoped to achieve. Enrollment management (38%) and assessment of student learning (30%) were also identified as current frustrations facing acting presidents (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 55).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Presidency**

The college and university presidency is well documented, with much of the research pertaining to the characteristics of the position, as well as the challenges of those selected as president face. In the earliest years of American higher education, institutions had extremely strong ties to Christianity and churches (Ivory, 2017). During this time, the president was normally a minister, who held responsibilities of conducting chapel services and teaching moral philosophy (Stoke, 1959). These presidents were obligated to live a life of Christian influence and to serve as a role model for the students (Stoke, 1959).

Historically, the institution was shaped by the president's personality, leadership influence, and personal successes achieved (Kauffman, 1982). As such, the president was regularly viewed as the face of the institution. As time progressed, colleges and universities began to stray away from religious affiliations and evolved into more secular institutions that enhanced their missions and expanded the available fields of study. Due to this, the role of the president would begin to evolve into an increased style of management (Stoke, 1959).

Rhodes (1998), former President of Cornell University, argues that the most essential responsibilities of a college or university president are to define and execute the mission, establish and achieve goals, recruit highly regarded faculty and staff, build a sense of campus community, and ensure campus resources are provided. Further, Rhodes (1998), argues the most difficult of these tasks are defining and executing the institution's mission and developing institutional goals. The successful establishment of the institutional mission and goals is a crucial accomplishment for the president because they are viewed as institutional values personified (Corrigan, 2002).

However, there is a disagreement as to how much power and influence a college or university president possesses. Cohen and March (1986) argue that because of the small portion of the campus community they interact with, presidents are more symbolic than significant. Birnbaum (1988) agrees with this viewpoint and states that internal constraints, such as shared governance and varied external impacts, can limit the actual power of the presidency. Thus making the role of a college or university president largely symbolic and ineffective as the leader of an institution. As campus communities continually emphasize the importance and need for institutional shared governance, some researchers believe this has lessened the importance and influence of the president's role (Beardsley, 2017). Fisher and Koch (1996) disagree with this notion and assert that there is substantial evidence pointing towards presidents' ability to be difference makers and positively impact their institution. Further, Fisher and Koch (1996) argue that the position of college or university president holds a distinctive authority that enables presidents to transform an institution of higher education, beginning with the board of trustees and moving downward throughout the institution.

Other researchers theorize that college and university presidents can legitimize their tenure by interacting and developing relationships with institutional stakeholders and the campus community (Birnbaum, 1992). Further, Bornstein (2003) states, “presidents must exhibit a leadership style that positively influences and is cohesive to the culture of the institution to gain legitimacy” (p. 25). It is no secret that campus climates and cultures vary from institution to institution. There is no overarching leadership style that is applicable to every institution of higher education and guarantees success. For a president to have a positive impact on the institution they must be keenly aware of the new environment they are now a part of (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). If a college or university president desires to legitimize their tenure, they must immerse themselves within the campus culture at their institution. Developing relationships with various stakeholders will aid presidents in identifying the needs of the campus community and the strengths and weaknesses of their respective institutions. Further, interacting and developing relationships with the campus community is of importance as the president serves as the champion of the institution to external constituents.

Although views on the assumed importance and amount of power a college or university president has differ, there is an overwhelming consensus on the expectation that presidents must play an active role in diverse arenas and attempt to alleviate challenges that are detrimental to the institution (Beardsley, 2017). Leadership in academia is convoluted by economic, social, and policy contexts that influence the overall operations of institutions (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002). When assuming the role of president, these leaders are met with stakeholder expectation that they are adept in recognizing and assessing student needs, conducting extensive program and services evaluations, have a thorough understanding of the institutional structure and operations, and carry out many forms of change in an intricate, shared governance environment (Blimling &

Whitt, 1999). Proficient skills in these areas are necessary regarding student success and providing students resources, as it allows presidents the ability to develop best practices to combat declining enrollments, budgetary restraints and deficits, and to understand technology innovations in education and teaching delivery platforms (Sandeem, 1991).

However, the roles and responsibilities of college and university presidents encompasses far more than the those strictly pertaining to student success. Presidents in today's world of higher education are now tasked to engage in varied arenas of institutional leadership. These responsibilities include developing and implementing a vision for the institution, recruiting and retaining top faculty, establishing clear lines of communication with the board of trustees and senior leadership team, enhancing alumni and external relations, balancing a complex budget that is susceptible to varying constraints, improving institutional rankings, representing the institutional on local, state, and national levels, and enhancing all components associated with fundraising and the cultivation of donors (Beardsley, 2017).

As the climate of higher education becomes increasingly more complex, the role of the college or university president has become more difficult, and demands that the appointed individual have substantial experience in a wide array of arenas to ensure the morale of the institution remains high in a turbulent economic and social climate (Trachtenberg, Kauver, & Bogue, 2013). As the roles and responsibilities of the president have increased in complexity, MacTaggart (2017), states that the role of presidents in higher education has become increasingly "outwardly focused". Managing the increased responsibilities surrounding the establishment of major fundraising campaigns, alumni and donor relations, and representing the institution in community relations and legislative affairs, have become the college or university president's

primary focus; leaving the provost to oversee internal academic operations of the institution (MacTaggart, 2017).

A turbulent economic climate and varying societal issues have continued to impact institutions of higher education and have caused many institutions to have financial woes. To increase efficiency and effectiveness, many institutions have adopted an operational focus that aligns with business organizational practices and less from the traditional academic perspective (Ivory, 2017). College and university presidents are now forced to prioritize relationships with external constituents in efforts to minimize their negative impacts on higher education. The increased demand for the external focus of presidents has widened the candidate pool for president jobs openings (Alton & Dean, 2002). Candidates with experience overseeing major change initiatives and those within the private sector, who have increased their organization's profit margin while simultaneously growing the infrastructure, are now being viewed as viable selections for the role of a college or university president (Ivory, 2017).

Those who followed the traditional academic pathway, with a background in scholarly endeavors, are now being viewed by search firms and search committees as not having the experience to meet the increased external demands now required of the presidency, leading to an increase in the selection of nontraditional pathway presidents, that possess demonstrated skills in business management and many other arenas (Delabbio, 2006). Donald Hess, who chaired the presidential search committee for Franklin & Marshall College in 2002, states it is not necessarily true that candidates from traditional academic backgrounds lack the ability to meet the increased realm of demands and responsibilities required of the college and university president (Beardsley, 2017). Rather, Hess states, "you have a large sum of essential activity that a true academic doesn't want to get his hands dirty with" (Beardsley, 2017, p. 56).



The increase in presidential roles and responsibilities revolving around business and organizational practices, fundraising and donor relations, and engaging with legislative constituents, has led to an increase in the selection of nontraditional candidates being selected as a college or university president. The next section of the literature review will examine nontraditional college and university presidents and the obstacles they may encounter.

### **Nontraditional Pathways and Presidents**

“A surprisingly large number of presidents did not move up the academic ladder at all: instead, they came from outside academe and climbed over the ivy walls” (Carbone, 1981, p. 7).

It has been determined as higher education has historically evolved, so have the roles and responsibilities of the college and university president. Today, institutions of higher education are complex multi-million dollar enterprises that influence the lives and regions in which they are located and beyond. The role of president at these institutions requires an individual to be multi-dimensional and well-versed in varied arenas. Gaining an understanding of these historical changes in higher education, and the roles and responsibilities of presidents, will highlight the emergence of nontraditional presidents in higher education (Kauffman, 1982). The nontraditional college president is not a new concept in the world of higher education. Perhaps the most historically noted nontraditional campus leader was Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower was the president of Columbia University from 1948-1953 and received high campus stakeholder satisfaction rates due to his personality and leadership style. Eisenhower would eventually leave Columbia University as he was elected the 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States (Kisslinger, 2004). Changes in the landscape of higher education, and the increased need for college and university presidents to become involved with external constituencies, suggested that the qualifications to

serve as president have also changed (Thelin, 2004). Political and economic impacts on higher education were some of the most influential external factors that expressed the need for leadership changes and enhanced the viability of nontraditional candidates being selected as a college or university president. The 2008 Great Depression was significant and caused businesses to take drastic financial losses, forcing many to close their doors and lay off employees. Thousands of individuals now found themselves unemployed and lacking skills that were transferrable in other occupations. Many these individuals turned to higher education to enhance their education and skill-set in hopes of increasing their attractive in a competitive job market. “The prospect of a degree as a buffer against hard times was essential for many who found themselves newly unemployed” (Shapiro, Dundar, Yuan, Harrell, & Wakhunga, 2014). A National Student Clearinghouse Research Center study found that, during the fall 2018 semester, the number of incoming, credit-seeking students grew to 2.7 million from 2.4 million; a 12% increase (Shapiro et al., 2014). Additionally, the number of first time students that were 21 years of age or older increased by 20% (Shapiro et al., 2014). However, industry employers could not wait the normal two to four years for potential applicants to obtain an education and the necessary skills-sets for available jobs. Due to this, higher education realized that the existing learning model needed to be enhanced and revolutionized to meet the demands of the present economic climate. As policy and procedure change in higher education is known to take an extended period, nontraditional candidates, who had demonstrated success and achievement in the private sector and experience in leading complex institutions during challenging times, were now increasingly being viewed as candidates for the presidency (Thelin, 2004). During 2006, 13% of colleges and universities selected a president from a nontraditional background (Gagliardi et al., 2017). As the 2008 Great Depression influenced the need for change in areas of

academic leadership, 20% of colleges and universities selected nontraditional candidates to serve as president in 2011 (Gagliardi et al., 2017). The increase of nontraditional college presidents being selected during this time is significant and alters the perception that presidential candidates that come from the traditional academic path are the ones best fit for higher education leadership.

As the needs of higher education institutions continue to evolve and change, Atwell and Wilson (2003) state it is not illogical to select nontraditional leaders, with demonstrated ability and skills within large organizations, to serve as president. The need for a president that has unique characteristics and traits is being recognized as an increasing number of colleges and universities desire to have an integral position within the global economy (Bowman, 2011). Further, Atwell and Wilson (2003), argue that if colleges and universities continue to primarily select traditional academic presidents, there will be an increasing divide between skills needed to lead institutions and the qualifications of their leaders.

A survey created by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (2016) examined stakeholder views of institutional shared governance and whether such institutions are prepared for present and future demands. In a time of serious challenges to higher education, the survey data led to suggesting that governing boards consider selecting presidents, from nontraditional backgrounds, to combat challenges instead of continued policy and practice reforms that have ultimately been viewed as ineffective (Association of Governing Boards, 2016). In a study examining presidents coming from areas of institutional advancement, Dorich (1991) maintains this view, arguing that he has become increasingly convinced that the problems stemming from traditional academic presidencies are rooted in the lack of management experience and skills by these scholars.

## **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century President**

To meet present and future challenges, American higher education is being forced to redefine and restructure the work of its presidents. It is evident that approaches of the twentieth-century leadership will no longer be sufficient in today's higher education climate. "The skepticism surrounding the value of a college degree, increasing institutional performance expectations, student discontent, enrollment and financial resource competition, and the unstable political climate propose significant challenges for higher education" (MacTaggart, 2017, p. 1). The ACE American College President Study data supports this, stating that when presidents were asked about their biggest challenges, the responses were: never enough money (60.8); faculty resistance to change (45%); lack of time to think (44.1%); and too many demands and not enough time (30.1%) (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 41). Attempting to alleviate these challenges takes a substantial amount of time and work. When the ACE American College President Study asked presidents what areas were the primary focus of their time, their responses included: Budget/financial management (64.9%); fundraising (58.1%); managing a senior-level team (42%); and governing board relations (33.2%) (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 42). Acknowledging the realities of current problems that impact the roles and responsibilities presidents of college and universities demonstrates that the required skills and talents of current presidents are different from those required in the past.

The current climate of higher education is more challenging, dynamic, and threatening than in the past, and has presented new challenges for current presidents to combat, along with those that have historically persisted in higher education. Enduring challenges, such as the lack of resources and partisan conflict, have now been joined by new challenges, including the major

influence of social media, contributing to problems facing the college and university presidency (MacTaggart, 2017).

To ensure the effectiveness, and in some cases, the survival, of an institution of higher education requires a leader who, “makes an honest assessment of their institution position compared to their peers in the market for higher education services, applies an entrepreneurial mindset to influence their work, and has the necessary skills and ability to propel the institution forward in an environment of adversity” (MacTaggart, 2017, p. 1). Institutional board of trustees’ members, especially those that are executives in business and healthcare, are aware of today’s dynamic leadership demands, and the need for new innovative approaches to leadership and governance. MacTaggart (2017) argues that if presidents desire to advance their institutions, despite the realities of the current climate in higher education, a new model of leadership referred to as enterprise leadership, is needed. Enterprise leadership is the “vehement exercise of authority in guiding an institution of higher education through an extensive modifying process that propels the institution forward, allowing it to thrive in a competitive, ever-changing environment” (MacTaggart, 2017, p. 17). It is assumed that effective enterprise leaders of institutions of higher education encourage faculty members to be active participants in the change process, partner with their governing boards to create strategies that invigorate the institutions financial capacity; academic quality and effectiveness; and the institutional brand, to students, stakeholders and society (MacTaggart, 2017). Enterprise leaders are defined as possessing these features:

- A clear-eyed recognition of the real challenges confronting institutions and anyone who attempts to change them;

- The ability to develop and articulate a practical and compelling vision that positions the institution for the future;
- The emotional intelligence to advance the enterprise in close collaboration with the governing body;
- The capacity to transform a legacy-oriented academic culture to one focused on today's realities and the potential of the future;
- Respect for academic values and shared governance, plus the strength to make unpopular decisions when shared governance fails to yield consensus;
- The skills to build a high-functioning administrative team in the key operational areas of enterprise;
- Personal qualities such as integrity, high energy, resilience, a positive demeanor, and the ability to sustain one's personal mental health in a complex environment (MacTaggart, 2017, pp. 4-6).

Unquestioning allegiance to the historical traditional patterns of education, organization, and governance do not have the capacity to be successful in today's higher education environment. Enterprise leaders are realistic and sensible in evaluating the challenges their institution faces, businesslike in strategy selection that build upon institutional strengths to enhance its value in the market, and clear in their brazen communication with the board of trustees and academic community (MacTaggart, 2017). The ACE American College President Study asked participating first-time presidents in which areas did they feel the most unprepared for (Gagliardi et al., 2017)? The presidents cited: fundraising (28.1%); technology planning (24.6%); entrepreneurial ventures (22.3%); governing board relations (19.1%); and capital improvement projects (21%) (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 89). The enterprise leadership model

combines several characteristics, including “tough-minded realism, sophisticated interpersonal skills, and courage” (MacTaggart, 2017, p. 7). With that said, it is easy to identify the areas where current presidents feel least prepared to manage could be improved under the enterprise leadership model. Enterprise leaders in higher education establish a vision for the institution and develop strategies to cultivate resources and enhance the value of the institution in a competitive marketplace (MacTaggart, 2017). Enterprise leaders actively engage members of the academic community in the development of these strategies, but are not afraid to have tough conversations with stakeholders if it is beneficial to the institution. While traditional academics certainly can be successful leaders of change within higher education using enterprise leadership traits, MacTaggart (2017) argues nontraditional candidates can effectively apply their training and experience to their new roles, while adjusting to the unique nature of academic culture, to become effective leaders as well. One could argue that the areas in which participating first-time presidents felt the least prepared for are areas that successful nontraditional candidates have demonstrated experience and skills in. Nontraditional candidates that have experience in managing complex organizations have had to initiate in tough and uncomfortable conversations with various constituents if it is for the betterment of the organization.

As shared governance at institutions of higher education continues to be an important topic of concern, and faculty members question the power and legitimacy of the president at some institutions, some traditional leaders may be hesitant to engage in blunt conversations with faculty members or other stakeholders. Further, the ACE American College President Study found that 45% of participating first-time presidents viewed faculty resistance as a frustration since being appointed as president (Gagliardi et al., 2017). In support of viewing nontraditional candidates as effective leaders, Atwell and Wilson (2003) state that one of the first

responsibilities of leaders is to “help the faculty and other stakeholders understand the difficult choices ahead for institutions of higher education while keeping policymakers focused on the increasing demand for student access” (p. 25). Business, law, and political leaders with experience in negotiating within the private sector could be effective leaders in initiating constructive conversations and conveying certain institutional strategies to faculty and governing boards that may be in opposition.

As the landscape of higher education continues to change and the need for presidents who are dynamic and well-versed in a variety of arenas increases, many institutions are viewing the hiring of nontraditional candidates as viable options for the role of the presidency (Selingo, 2013). As one can align the current needs of higher education and the demonstrated experience and skills possessed by nontraditional candidates, it appears this trend will continue.

#### Opposition to Nontraditional Candidates as President

Research has shown that the traditional academic pathway towards the role of a college or university president continues to be the norm, as well as the preferred pathway by those in the academic community (Bowman, 2011). However, there has been an increase in the number of nontraditional pathway candidates being selected as president. The role of the president in higher education has become more dynamic and many institutions are matching their needs with the demonstrated experience and skill sets to those of nontraditional candidates. Bensimon (1991) notes that the role of the college or university president is unique and has a blended composition of both academic and administrative responsibilities. As education is at the root of the higher education enterprise, one of the major obstacles facing appointed nontraditional presidents is faculty resistance (Bowman, 2011). Faculty can be particularly dubious of nontraditional presidents, who lack traditional scholarly credentials (Ivory, 2017). Nontraditional presidents



that have never been in the classroom are criticized by faculty, who question the legitimacy of their commitment to the academic tradition. While there has been a recent push for higher education to adopt practices that align with those in business organizations, the traditional foundations of academic culture have remained sound (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Scholars portray nonacademic cultures as those who focus on the bottom line and driven by maximizing profits (Hofstede, Van Deusen, Mueller, & Charles, 2002). Tradition runs inherently deep within academia, and in many cases, this tradition can be resistant to change. Faculty are proponents of shared governance ideals leaving many to fear the ramifications of the selection of a nontraditional leader, who could disregard this key principle (Brown, 2011).

Like the structure within any industry, higher education has its own culture, discourse, standards, and processes that presidents must maneuver and appreciate (Beardsley, 2017). Traditional academic pathway presidents normally have had long term exposure to the culture and climate within academia and have become accustomed to it. However, as the demands of the college and university president have become more dynamic, more institutions are selecting a nontraditional candidate for the role of president. These nontraditional candidates come to varied fields, such as business, law, and politics, with no previous experience in higher education. As such, some nontraditional candidates selected as president have been met with opposition and questioned about their legitimacy. Nontraditional presidents must find a way to properly immerse themselves within this complex culture where the faculty are the nucleus (Beardsley, 2017). As previously noted, the ACE American College President Study found that 45% of participating first-time presidents viewed faculty resistance as one of their main frustrations (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Based on the literature, one could assume that this percentage would be higher if the study were to be conducted with only presidents from a nontraditional background.

Nontraditional presidents must familiarize themselves with the institutional culture and develop an understanding of the internal climate. Alleviating faculty resistance, through the practice of shared governance, is very important for nontraditional presidents and allows them to establish a relationship with faculty and legitimize their tenure as president. Establishing and nurturing a relationship between the president and faculty will be conducive to the process of a nontraditional president understanding faculty beliefs, values, and patterns of thinking. Further, it will also allow the faculty to have a voice on institutional matters (Delabbio, 2006). Enacting shared governance can also be beneficial in allowing faculty to see some of the difficult decisions the president must make that are in the best interest of the institution, that they may otherwise be resistant to.

Patrick Gamble faced these criticisms when he was selected as the 13<sup>th</sup> president of the University of Alaska Statewide System in 2010. Gamble, a retired four-star U.S. Air Force General and former head of the Alaska Railroad Corporation, had extensive experience in managing large organizations that employed thousands and had massive budgets, but had limited experience within the field of education (Brown, 2011). As Gamble began his new role, he stated that the biggest challenge of the presidency is that “there is a culture deep within an organization that the leader must figure out and respect” (Brown, 2011). Reviving the University of Alaska Statewide System’s academic master plan was one of Gamble’s first major assignments. While Gamble led this process, he invited faculty to reformat and complete the plan. Gamble was praised for this and won over the faculty’s respect and trust by demonstrating his interest in faculty input and shared governance (Brown, 2011). By allowing faculty members to be a part of such a vital university process, Gamble set a tone of institutional shared governance that will afford the University of Alaska Statewide System future opportunities to become more efficient

and effective in educating students and improving the communities in which those institutions are located.

Veteran Florida state legislator, John E. Thrasher, was appointed as president of Florida State University in 2014. His appointment as president was met with substantial student and faculty opposition, who questioned his qualifications and cited political favoritism playing a role in the selection process (Schmidt, 2014). However, this opposition was countered by several members of the university's board of trustees that contended Thrasher's vast political network provided a platform to raise funds for the university and enhance its national reputation (Schmidt, 2014).

Most recently, the 2018 University of Massachusetts at Boston chancellor search witnessed all three of the selected finalists drop out, and was ultimately shut down, due to faculty criticism concerning the finalists and the search process. The search process was criticized on the lack of faculty input due to only having two faculty members selected to serve on the chancellor search committee. The selection of the three finalists was criticized by the faculty due to their judgement that none of the finalists have demonstrated experience that proves they are qualified to serve as chancellor of Boston's only public, four-year research institution (Kelderman, 2018). Kelderman (2018) argues that while having all three finalists step down from consideration is unusual, faculty often feel they have little or no say when it comes to the selection of a new president or chancellor. "The widespread use of search consultants, the decline in shared governance, and the politicization of higher education have all contributed to the marginalization of faculty input to searches" (Kelderman, 2018, p. 1).

A president must champion the leading role of designing and implementing change and must encourage faculty involvement in the change process to ensure its success (Zemsky, 2009).

Faculty involvement in the institution's decision-making process allows them experience in areas they may have limited or no experience in, such as budgeting (Brown, 2011). Involvement by various stakeholders allows for all viewpoints to be heard so change can have a positive effect on the morale and culture of campus (Brown, 2011).

As the number of nontraditional pathway presidents increases in American higher education, scholars of leadership and higher education should place more emphasis on them. More research is needed that has an enhanced focus on the obstacles nontraditional presidents face when acclimating to the culture of academia and their lived experiences while doing so. The increasing selection of nontraditional presidents is beginning to generate a momentous potential for a culture clash between the worlds of academic and nonacademic culture (Heuvel, 2017, p. 82). Due to this, extensive scholarly research surrounding the experiences of nontraditional presidents could alleviate potential adjustment problems and facilitate the success of nontraditional leaders.

### **Contemporary Challenges**

From the beginnings of higher education during medieval times, universities were primarily centers of ecclesiastical scholars (Swain, 2016). In modern times, universities are now multimillion-dollar businesses with complex leadership teams, mission statements, human resource departments, international strategies, communications executives, and directors of enterprise (Swain, 2016). Today, higher education continues to operate as one of the largest industries in the United States (Beardsley, 2017).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), expenditures from institutions of higher education during the 2014-15 academic year totaled \$536 billion (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Total expenses during

the 2014-15 academic year for public institutions reached \$336 billion, \$182 billion at private nonprofit institutions, and \$18 billion at private for-profit institutions (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Drawing from these numbers, it is easy to identify higher education as one of the largest industries in the United States (Beardsley, 2017). Corporate organizations and institutions of higher education continue to be recognized as key contributors and agents of economic growth and societal well-being (Knapp & Siegel, 2009).

Historically, higher education has attempted to distinguish its enterprise from comparisons to business. However, the current economic climate and demanding consumer influence has led to many drawing parallels in the operations of both (Knapp & Siegel, 2009). As isomorphic tendencies seem to mold the business of higher education in the United States to the business of big business, there is an enhanced emphasis is being placed on finding the proper fit for the role of president at institutions (Beardsley, 2017).

To combat this, presidents must play an active role in restructuring the array of programs and services the institution offers and in rebranding it to attract students in the face of growing questions about the value of a college degree (MacTaggart, 2017).

Selingo et al. (2017) states that one of the most recent challenges presidents of higher education institutions are currently facing is how to properly handle the increasing amount of student activism occurring on college campuses nationwide. Few institutions are exempt from the public demonstrations, occupations, sit-ins, and sit-outs of millennial and post-millennial generations of students skilled at exploiting social media to invigorate action to support their concerns. Typically, student activism causes are justified, they include: systemic racism, rape and sexual harassment, income equality, hostility to the LBGQTQIA community, the exploitation of athletes, and many others (MacTaggart, 2017, p. 10). Perhaps one of the most recent student

activist movements occurring on college campuses is the Black Live Matter movement. The Black Lives Matter movement began following the July 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman following the shooting death of Trayvon Martin (Alvarez & Buckley, 2013). The movement sought to raise awareness on historical state sanctioned violence towards Black people, specifically the problem of police brutality and the use of excessive force with Black people (Langford & Speight, 2015). Further, the movement aims to focus attention on improving present day race relations in United States society (Langford & Speight, 2015). Alicia Garza (2014), one of the three founders of the Black Lives Matter movement, describes Black Lives Matter as an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise. Garza (2014) adds to this by stating that Black Lives Matter is an affirmation of Black folks' contribution to this society, humanity, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression.

Evolving from a social media hashtag movement, Black Lives Matter activism quickly found its way onto college campuses in efforts to educate academic communities on their mission (Langford & Speight, 2015). "Teach-Ins" were held on the campuses of colleges and universities nationwide throughout the 2014-15 academic year, resulting in discussions on progressive ways to move forward following acts of social injustice and how disciplines and curriculum could address diversity issues (Norrena, 2015). "With most public university boards appointed by governors and confirmed by Republican legislators, presidents can find themselves caught in the middle between liberal academics and conservative policymakers" (MacTaggart, 2017, p. 10). As student activism increases on campuses nationwide, several presidents have become involved in high-profile debates with students and other institutional stakeholders, leading to the resignation of some presidents (Selingo et al., 2017).

A 2016 study, jointly conducted by the Deloitte Center for Higher Education Excellence and Georgia Tech's Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Universities, found that responding presidents ranked "student life/student engagement" eighth on a list of ten areas of responsibility they feel confident in providing executive oversight (Selingo et al., 2017). This lack of confidence highlights the importance of student affairs divisions and staff on campus. During the interview portion of the study, Selingo et al. (2017) revealed that several presidents believed leaders who ignore the will of students do so at the risk of their own demise. One participating president expressed their frustration stating, "sometimes presidents can be deaf to the actual needs of students and the campus community" (Selingo et al., 2017). Other interviews with participating presidents revealed a common belief that many presidents rely too heavily on their senior team to keep them informed on campus community activity, rather than taking an active engaged approach themselves (Selingo et al., 2017). Mitchell Stevens, associate professor in the Graduate School of Education at Stanford University, agrees with these views, arguing that as more presidents renounce some of their on-campus responsibilities by spending more time off campus, presidents will have a more difficult time immersing themselves within the institution, which will likely lead to strained relations with the campus community (Selingo, 2013). These perspectives reveal a clear concern that presidents of college and universities lack confidence and experience in providing leadership over student life. Every institution of higher education is grounded in the pursuit of educating students and providing resources to enhance the student experience. As student activism increases on campus and other needs of students are demonstrated, are presidents from nontraditional professional backgrounds able to provide adequate leadership in areas where they may have no prior experience in?

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

As the number of candidates from nontraditional backgrounds being selected as a college or university president continues to slowly increase across the United States, the purpose of this research study is to explore the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System. The study evolved from conducted semi-structured interviews, collecting narratives from three current nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System, about their lived experiences serving as a nontraditional chancellor, their desire to enter academia, the challenges they may have faced, and how they have overcome those challenges. Semi-structured interviews with faculty members of the three institutions on their perspectives of nontraditional leadership, and why the UNC System has seen an increase in the selection of nontraditional chancellors, were conducted. Interviews were also conducted with a member of the search committee at each institution that selected the nontraditional chancellors. This chapter will discuss the approach and research design of the study and a rationale for using a qualitative approach. I believe each narrative provided insight on the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System and views on nontraditional leadership by faculty members and chancellor search committee members. The research study also aimed to provide insight for future nontraditional candidates who desire to enter academia in the role of president or chancellor and the obstacles they may encounter if selected.

### **Rationale for Qualitative Study**

Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman (2013) argue that the intent of qualitative research is to “understand a particular social situation, event, role, group, or interaction” (p. 94). Miles and Huberman (1994) state that “qualitative research is conducted through intense contact with the



“field” or life situation. These situations are typically normal, and are reflective of the everyday life of individuals, groups, societies, and organizations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 6). Jan Greenwood, an executive search consultant with the firm Greenwood/Asher & Associates, explains the increase in the selection of nontraditional presidents by stating “because demand exceeds the supply of traditional candidates, we see search committees rethinking what is ‘acceptable’ and what is best for their own institutions” (Kiley, 2012, para. 6).

As there is a limited amount of qualitative research that focuses on the lived experiences of nontraditional presidents and chancellors, and even less on the experiences of nontraditional chancellors within the UNC System, I believed a qualitative research approach was especially useful with the sample under study. Eisner (2017) states that qualitative researchers are interested in matters of motive and the quality of experience undergone by those in the situation studied. Interviewing UNC System nontraditional chancellors will allow me to engage with research participants and develop a thorough understanding of each chancellor’s lived experiences, as well as perspectives on nontraditional leadership by faculty members at the individual institutions that selected these leaders.

Tressie Cottom states that the increase in the selection of nontraditional presidents may be a reflection of “the cultural shift away from the traditional core mission of the university as an altruistic public good, toward a revenue-seeking enterprise (Toppo, 2018, para. 7). With skepticism and questions surrounding how nontraditional presidents and chancellors could influence the academy, it is imperative to obtain detailed, in-depth information about the characteristics of these individuals, their motivations to enter academia, and their lived experiences to provide a foundation for future research. Since 2002, the UNC System has had nine chancellor vacancies at its institutions. Of those nine vacancies, three were filled with

candidates that came from a nontraditional background. Given the growing number of nontraditional candidates being selected as chancellor at an institution within the UNC System, this study aimed to gain an understanding through the exploration of common themes that emerged from the analyzation and coding of each participant interview regarding their lived experiences as a nontraditional chancellor in the UNC System and the perceptions of nontraditional leadership by faculty members and individuals that served on the chancellor search committee at the three individual institutions.

### **A Narrative Study Design**

Creswell (2014) identified five designs in which qualitative research can be conducted. Of the five described, I identified the use of a narrative research design was best suited for this study. Narrative research is “a design of examination drawn from the humanities where the researcher reviews the lives of participating individuals and asks them to provide stories about their lives through interviews” (Riessman, 2008, p. 5). Study participants were asked open-ended interview questions that required thoughtful, in-depth responses, to obtain first hand perspectives from participants (Creswell, 2014). Once participants interviews were conducted and are transcribed, I then collected and combined interview data in a process called narrative shaping. Narrative shaping involves using information collected from participant interviews to discover meaningful themes (Riessman, 2008). As meaningful themes emerged and were identified, I attempted to retell the lived experiences of the interview participants in a narrative of my own (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thus, a narrative study design aligned perfectly with the aims of a qualitative research study that highlighted the experiences of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System. The use of a narrative research design provided detailed information and identified

common themes that aided in developing an understanding of the unique experiences of nontraditional UNC System chancellors and obstacles they may encounter.

### **Interview Participant Selection Process**

The UNC System is made up of 16, four-year, degree granting institutions and the North Carolina School of Science and Math (The University of North Carolina System, 2017). Over the past six years, the UNC System has conducted nine institutional chancellor searches. Of the nine vacancies, three were filled with candidates from nontraditional backgrounds. Taking this information into consideration, and the limited amount of qualitative research on nontraditional presidents and chancellors in higher education, it is important to seek information to develop and understanding on why these nontraditional candidates were deemed most qualified and their lived experiences serving as chancellor within the UNC System.

According to the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education 2015 edition, two institutions have a Carnegie classification of Doctoral University: High Research Activity, while the third institution in the study has a Carnegie classification of Master's Colleges and Universities: Larger Program (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2015). While the study will have two institutions of the same Carnegie classification, due to prior knowledge of the different characteristics, cultures, and needs of the two institutions, I believed these were of importance in understanding why the UNC System is witnessing an increase in nontraditional chancellors.

To be considered as a participant of this study, I developed a list of the following requirements: (1) followed a nontraditional pathway into higher education as defined in this research study; (2) appointed as chancellor at a UNC System institution during the timeframe of

2012-2018; (3) currently serving as chancellor within the UNC System; (4) has served as a chancellor within the UNC System for a minimum of two years.

The Great Recession of 2008 had a detrimental impact on higher education in the United States, in which most states have not fully recovered from (Mitchell & Leachman, 2015). From 2008-2015, North Carolina state per-student funding decreased by 23.4%, leaving students to fund a larger share of educational costs as tuition at UNC System institutions increased 35.8%, or about \$1,759.00 in the same timeframe (Mitchell & Leachman, 2015). As colleges are being forced to do more with less and facing a multitude of challenges, the roles and responsibilities of college and university presidents and chancellors have increased. Due to the increase and variation of roles and responsibilities, institutions of higher education are viewing nontraditional candidates that come from backgrounds in business, law, and politics, among others, as viable candidates for the role of president or chancellor (Fischer, 2005). The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors within the UNC System and identify emerging themes through the conduction of interviews. Due to the aims of this study, it was important that participants must be a current nontraditional chancellor serving at an institution within the UNC System. The selected timeframe of the years 2012-2018 is used because due to the amount of UNC System chancellor vacancies filled with nontraditional candidates. Serving as chancellor for at least two years was deemed a requirement because I believed this was an adequate amount of time for the chancellor to create their own vision, develop a strategic plan, and create initiatives that they believe will strengthen the institution. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014), argue that the use of a cross-case analysis can aid in qualitative data analysis because of its ability to “enhance generalizability and transferability of findings to other similar settings that can deepen the researcher’s understanding and explanation

of the findings” (Miles et al., 2014, para 1-2). I believe that the use of a cross-case analysis on the lived experiences of nontraditional UNC System chancellors, combined with perspectives on nontraditional leadership from faculty members and chancellor search committee members, led to the identification of emerging themes from individual narratives that were transferrable from each individual participant’s experience. The use of a study sample that only derived from data collected in North Carolina’s higher education system provided insight into the economic and political climate of the state and how this has impacted the selection of UNC System chancellors.

### **Data Collection**

According to Creswell (2014), the main goal of qualitative research is to purposefully select study participants that will aid the researcher in identifying and examining of the research questions and purpose. I identified three current chancellors that met the selected study criteria requirements after a review of their biographies on their institution’s website. I collected data through the conduction of in-person interviews and the recording and transcription of the semi-structured interviews with three sitting chancellors at institutions in the UNC System that arrived from nontraditional backgrounds. In addition to the three chancellors, three faculty members and three individuals that were on the search committee that selected the nontraditional chancellor at the participating institutions, were interviewed. A narrative research design was used to examine collected interview data to identify significant themes across all interviews about their lived experiences serving as a nontraditional chancellor in the UNC System, the perceptions of nontraditional leadership by the three faculty members, and institutional search committee representatives. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that “the researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of actors “from the inside,” through a process of deep attentiveness, empathetic understanding, and of suspending preconceptions about the topics under discussion” (p. 6). In

order to understand the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System during the study, I acted as the primary “instrument” of data collection.

## **Interviews**

To initiate the study data collection process, I navigated access to the identified interview participants to discuss the purpose of my study and to get them to agree to participate in the study. Once access to the identified participants was successful and written consent was given, I communicated with their administrative assistant to secure an appointment with the participant that was convenient for them, given their time-consuming schedules. A word document containing the list of interview research questions was emailed to the participants one week prior to the date of the interview for review. Interviews were conducted in the participant’s office on their respective campuses to ensure confidentiality and in aims for the participants to answer thoroughly and honestly. There is a belief that the use of in-person interviews will provide a platform to establish a rapport with each participant which will allow the participant to feel comfortable in describing their lived experiences in a more personal and in-depth manner. Interviews were anticipated to approximately 60 minutes and were adjusted once all interviews had been conducted. I communicated with research study participants on two separate occasions. As mentioned, the first was an in-person interview and the second was a follow-up conversation conducted by the individuals preferred method (phone, Skype, email). After the initial in-person data had been transcribed and put in a word document, interview participants received a word document via email of their interview. The follow-up conversation allowed participants the opportunity to further clarify anything on the transcription documents, include any additional comments they felt would be beneficial to the study, or delete anything that they would like from the study.

## **Observations**

In addition to participant interviews with nontraditional chancellors, field observations served as another source of data. I took field notes that described the physical setting and surroundings of each interview in hopes that it would provide contextual information for each observation. I stayed with each nontraditional chancellor in their office for thirty minutes after the interview and recorded their activity in my field notes. I observed the chancellors' behavior and interactions with others. Since the field notes were recorded in the chancellor's office, I aimed to gain insight into the daily actions, activities, and interactions of each chancellor participant. I also included descriptions about my own thoughts, assumptions, and experiences within the field notes.

## **Documents**

Data collection also took form in the examination of relevant documents. Collecting relevant documents allowed me to explore the backgrounds and experiences of each nontraditional chancellor, as well other interview participants. These documents included biographies, resumes, curriculum vitas, and anything that was of interest on the website of the participant's institution. The scanning of local and state level newspapers 90 days before and after presidential selection and installment also served as a data source. YouTube searches were conducted to find news segments on the chancellor search process of each participating institution and chancellor speeches. Faculty Senate meeting-minutes were examined and evaluated to see if emerging themes found from the interview narratives correlated with items discussed in the selection evaluation process found in the meeting minutes.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998) state that using a narrative design in qualitative research “influences the data by the interaction of the interviewer and interviewee” (p. 4). As research findings can be altered by the relationship between the researcher and interview participant, it was my intent to establish trust with the participants and be transparent about the objectives of the study throughout the process.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to establish trust, adhere to the rights and desires of participants (Locke, Spirduso, & Silverman, 2000), and nurture the ethical and moral components of the research study (Israel & Hay, 2006). I accomplished this by following a process of informing participants about the objectives of the research study, establishing trust, and obtaining their consent. In order to achieve this, I had to: (1) apply and obtain proper documentation granting permission from the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board of East Carolina University to conduct the specified research study; (2) concisely communicate, both verbally and in writing, the objectives of the study, the study timeframe, and data collection methods used, to each identified research participant; (3) obtain written permission from each identified interview participant that articulates participation in this research study is strictly voluntary; (4) develop individual transcripts for each interview to be made available for each participant to review, verify data, and give them an opportunity to include additional data they deem as beneficial to the study; and (5) develop a draft copy of results to be provided to each participant for review and clarification purposes. Brink (1993) argues that “making sure that all participants are very clear the research, why the researcher wants to conduct study, data collection procedures, and what the researcher plans to do with it is crucial in attempting to increase validity in interview responses” (p. 36).



The process of participant consent is essential to the research study for a multitude of reasons. Written consent from interview participants to record the interviews allowed myself the opportunity to engage with the participant more personally and for the transcription of data, which was conducive to a thorough analysis of data. Written permission from East Carolina University's UMCIRB allowed the use of interview participant's real names and identify the institutions they serve in the study. Including this information enriched the data that describes the participant's lived experiences as a nontraditional chancellor in the UNC System and allowed information on the characteristics of their respective institutions and aided in identifying themes that emerged throughout all interviews. I understood the importance of data confidentiality during the research process. In order to make certain that all interview data is kept confidential, I kept all data and typed transcriptions of interviews on a password protected flash drive, while audio data and written notes were stored in a secured file box.

### **Validation of Data**

According to Brink (1993), there are three ways to alleviate risks to the validity of a research study: (1) researchers should accurately and clearly describe research methods; (2) eliminate sampling or personal biases; (3) select research participants that are able to share information with the researcher that the researcher cannot observe or access himself (p. 37). Brink (1993) states that in a qualitative study, the researcher is often the data-gathering instrument, and this holds true for this proposed research study as well. In an attempt to eliminate any bias that may negatively impact collected data, I first established a good rapport with participants and built trust. Participants were then informed on all aspects of the nature and purpose of the study and ensured that their participation in the study was strictly voluntary, allowing the participants the opportunity to withdraw at any time.

The data analysis portion of the study included multiple steps. Gaining consent from participants and then conducting study interviews gave way for the first step in the data analysis process, transcription of interviews. The presence of the researcher, who was previously unknown to the participant, may make the participant uncomfortable and may lead to them withholding information or vague responses (Brink, 1993). As this would question the validity of collected data, Leininger (1992), argues that the researcher must identify themselves to participants as trustworthy and detail the purpose of the study before it is possible to collect data that is accurate and credible. Interviews were transcribed verbatim with the assistance of audio recordings. After the completion of each transcript, the participants were asked to review their transcript for accuracy and clarity. This gave the participant an opportunity to eliminate misrepresentations and errors, as well as a platform for further explanation that may be needed. This process is defined as a “member check” and ensures that the research and audience are viewing accurately recorded data (Brink, 1993).

In order to become fully engaged within the data, I began the data immersion process. To begin this process, I read the updated study transcripts, field notes, and documents that were beneficial to the study. I then reread all sources of data and made notes or jot down any ideas that came to mind in the margins of the data.

The next step of data analysis was to examine collected data through coding. I coded each line of data without the use of coding software. The coding process aimed to be emergent in nature. As I allowed the natural emergence of patterns to form identifiable categories and themes, I then developed the emerging themes and categories into broader patterns by comparing them to previous literature found in the literature review (Creswell, 2014). I then used my own

experiences in the study to develop generalizations of the collected data on the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors within the UNC System.

### **Summary**

The research study conducted interviews with a total of seven participants. Three are current chancellors in the UNC System that have a nontraditional background. Three individuals are faculty members of the institutions. Two of the faculty members served on a chancellor search committee and were accompanied by an additional participant that served on a chancellor search committee that selected the nontraditional candidates at the three institutions. The faculty members that served on the chancellor search committees were asked two different sets of questions to distinguish perceptions of nontraditional leadership by faculty and perceptions of nontraditional leadership as a member of a search committee.

Once ECU UMCIRB study approval was obtained, and written consent from the identified research participants was in possession, I conducted and recorded semi-structured interviews in the office of the individuals at their home institutions. The interviews were then transcribed and a copy of a typed transcription was returned to each interview participant. This allowed research interview participants an opportunity for further explanation on key points that may have been misunderstood or explained incorrectly. Once transcripts were finalized, they were analyzed and coded in efforts to identify emerging themes across interviews. Chapter Four will be a discussion about key findings and results of the study.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The research study sought out to learn and understand about the experiences of chancellors in the UNC System who took a nontraditional pathway to the position as well as the perceptions of nontraditional leadership from faculty members, chancellor search committee members, and former presidents of the UNC System. Institutions included in the study were University of North Carolina at Pembroke, The University of North Carolina Wilmington, and East Carolina University.

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNC Pembroke) is a public institution located in rural southeastern North Carolina. Founded in 1887 as Croatan Normal School to educate American Indian teachers, it is the nation's only four-year public institution founded by American Indians for American Indians (The University of North Carolina at Pembroke, 2018a). UNC Pembroke joined the UNC System in 1972 (The University of North Carolina at Pembroke, 2018a). With a student population of just over 7,000, students have the option of 41 undergraduate programs and 17 graduate programs (The University of North Carolina at Pembroke, 2018a). UNC Pembroke has a Carnegie Classification of Master's Colleges and Universities: Larger Programs (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2015).

The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNC Wilmington) is a public institution located on the coast in southeastern North Carolina. Founded in 1947 as Wilmington College, UNC Wilmington joined the UNC System in 1969 (The University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2016a). UNC Wilmington is a public institution with nearly 17,000 students and a variety of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs (The University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2016a). UNC Wilmington has a Carnegie Classification of Doctoral Universities: High Research Activity (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2015).

East Carolina University (ECU) is a public research institution located in eastern North Carolina. Founded in 1907 as East Carolina Teachers Training School, ECU joined the UNC System in 1972 (East Carolina University, 2019). ECU has a total student population of nearly 29,000. ECU has a variety of bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs, as well as a school of medicine and a school of dental medicine. ECU holds a Carnegie Classification of Doctoral Universities: High Research Activity (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, 2015).

Study participants included three chancellors that have a nontraditional background, three faculty members, two of which served on the chancellor search committee that selected the nontraditional candidate, and an additional chancellor search committee member. Data was collected from January 2019 to April 2019 using a recording device and then was transcribed using an online transcription service.

The interview questions were purposefully developed to be open-ended to allow for in-depth responses and for richness of personal detail from participants. See Appendices B, C, and D. Following a process outlined by Creswell (2012) for data analysis, I identified key words and phrases and organized the information thematically to interpret the meaning of key words and phrases, and then analyzed the meanings for what they revealed and added to the study.

### **Nontraditional Chancellor Interviews**

#### **Chancellor Robin Cummings**

Dr. Robin G. Cummings was named the sixth Chancellor of UNC Pembroke during July 2015. Chancellor Cummings is a native of Pembroke, North Carolina and a member of the Lumbee Tribe. His prior role before becoming Chancellor of UNC Pembroke was serving as Deputy Secretary for Health Services and Acting State Health Director of North Carolina. In

2013 Chancellor Cummings served as Director of the North Carolina Office of Rural Health and Community Care and previously enjoyed a long career as a cardiothoracic surgeon. Chancellor Cummings earned a bachelor's degree in zoology from UNC Chapel Hill and a medical degree from Duke University (The University of North Carolina at Pembroke, 2018b).

### **Chancellor Zito Sartarelli**

Dr. Jose V. Sartarelli was named the sixth Chancellor of UNC Wilmington on July 1, 2015. A native of Brazil, Chancellor Sartarelli earned an undergraduate degree in business administration in marketing from Sao Paulo School of Business Administration. Chancellor Sartarelli went on to Michigan State University as a Fulbright Scholar earning a master's of business administration in marketing and later a doctorate in business administration. Chancellor Sartarelli came to UNC Wilmington from West Virginia University, where he served as the Dean of the College of Business and Economics for five years. Before transitioning into higher education, Chancellor Sartarelli spent three decades in marketing and management for the international pharmaceutical industry at Johnson & Johnson and Bristol-Myers Squibb Co (University of North Carolina Wilmington, 2016b).

### **Chancellor Cecil Staton**

Dr. Cecil P. Staton was selected as the eleventh Chancellor of East Carolina University on April 27, 2016. A native of Greenville, South Carolina, Chancellor Staton earned an undergraduate degree from Furman University. Chancellor Staton went on to earn a Master of Divinity and Master of Theology from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Philosophy in Divinity from the University of Oxford. Prior to coming to East Carolina University, Chancellor Staton served as Interim-President of Valdosta State University and as Vice Chancellor for Extended Education for the University System of Georgia. Before entering

higher education Chancellor Staton served five terms as a Republican State Senator in Georgia and previously has a career in private business as the CEO of printing and publishing companies. Chancellor Staton's tenure serving as Chancellor of East Carolina University came to an end on May 5, 2019, as he resigned from the position (East Carolina University, 2019).

Research questions, located in Appendix C, were asked during the interviews with the three UNC System nontraditional chancellors. The intent of the interview questions was to: (1) discover the motivations of someone outside of academia to enter the field of higher education, (2) understand how previous professional experiences prepared them for the role of chancellor, (3) discover any similarities or differences that are evident between their nonacademic and academic leadership positions, (4) identify any areas of higher education that the nontraditional chancellors were least prepared for, (5) learn the advantages or disadvantages that exist for nontraditional chancellors, (6) determine if serving as chancellor has had any influence on their leadership style, (7) identify what skill-sets or qualities, both professionally and personally, are essential to possess while serving as chancellor, (8) gain an understanding of how serving as chancellor has impacted their personal life. After all interviews were conducted, the following themes emerged.

### **Theme One: Previous Professional Experience Valuable**

The nontraditional chancellors who participated in this interview held high-level leadership positions in various fields before entering the world of higher education. The previous professional experience of the three chancellors includes a mix of business, government (state), and medicine. One nontraditional chancellor previously enjoyed a career as the acting CEO of private businesses in the fields of publishing and marketing. This chancellor would eventually go on to serve as a state senator. The second nontraditional chancellor previously held executive

level positions at various multinational pharmaceutical and medical manufacturing companies before entering higher education. The final nontraditional chancellor enjoyed a long career in medicine as a cardiothoracic surgeon and would eventually go on to serve as the acting state health director. Each nontraditional excelled in their prior professions and enjoyed their positions before entering higher education.

Before learning how the nontraditional chancellors believed their prior professional experience would be beneficial, I first sought to discover what motivated and inspired each to enter the world of higher education to begin with. For one nontraditional chancellor, it was his own experience as a first-generation college student, which inspired him to enter higher education.

But really, higher education was something that I really wanted to be involved in, as early as my college experience, because it was such a life-changing event for me. I wanted to be a part of that for other people. So it was really its own impact on my life that sort of gave me a focus to want to be involved in it (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

The two other nontraditional chancellors stated that it was the encouragement from others that sparked their interest and motivated them to enter higher education.

I was finishing up my 30-year career in business, and I was not ready to get up and retire, and so I felt...and in conversations, and encouraged by my wife, close friends, and my former boss, I decided to apply (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

The final nontraditional chancellor discussed how he was encouraged by individuals to apply because of his familiarity with the institution and the community.



I was encouraged to apply for the role by many members of the local community, as well as individuals from across the state. I grew up in this community; in fact, I would walk by the university every day on my way to and from school as a child. I have deep roots in this community and have always been a great supporter of this institution. As more people encouraged me to apply, the more excited I became about the possibilities (R. Cummings, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

After discovering the reasons that motivated or inspired the nontraditional chancellors to enter higher education, I wanted to uncover how they believed their previous professional experience would be beneficial to them in their new field. The chancellors had nontraditional backgrounds that spanned from private, public, and non-profit sectors. While the three nontraditional chancellors arrived from vastly different areas, all were in agreement that their past experiences in these sectors properly prepared them to successfully lead and face the challenges that impact institutions of higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One chancellor had previous experience of being a CEO of different business and serving as a state senator, who was responsible for the state's appropriation process. This individual first entered higher education by serving in an executive role on the Georgia state university system governing board, and later as an interim-president of an institution. While this individual did not go from a career outside of higher education directly to the role of chancellor, his varied previous professional experiences in business and politics still align with the nontraditional pathway. Therefore, for the purpose of this research study, this individual is defined as a nontraditional chancellor. As this nontraditional chancellor serves at a public institution, he believes his unique blend of prior professional experiences is rare, and these experiences have been beneficial while serving in the role of chancellor.

Well, being a chancellor of president of a university, at the end of the day, is probably one of the most challenging jobs I can think of. But I really believe that having academic, business, and political experience is sort of the trifecta of preparation for at least being involved in higher education. You gotta have some business sense because at the end of the day, this is a business. This institution is almost a billion-dollar-a-year enterprise. It's very complex, decentralized. So having had some business experience is certainly helpful. The political side of this is obvious. We still receive a huge part of our funding from state government. So having walked in those shoes of state legislators for 10 years, and earlier in my career, I really can talk to them very often about this, in ways that, is a little more difficult perhaps for someone who's just come straight through that academic side of education (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

The nontraditional chancellor that came into higher education from the private sector believed his experience serving as an executive for some of the premiere pharmaceutical companies in the world for over 30 years has been very beneficial to him while serving as chancellor. When asked how these prior positions have been beneficial, the chancellor explains that they have given him an enormous amount of experience in managing complex organizations.

Well, I think my prior job; working for three major global companies... You know, J & J (Johnson & Johnson) is the premier healthcare company in the world... 350 billion dollars capitalization, big company... 130,000 employees, 150 countries. It prepared me in terms of leading large organizations. Prepared me in terms of not just large-scale, but also prepared me in managing a lot of complexity. Prior to that, I had worked with Eli Lilly, in fact, and also with Bristol (Bristol-Myers Squibb)... I had managed countries as disparate as Canada, and Japan, and Australia, and Brazil. I mean, these are very disparate

countries... When I was a Bristol-Myers Squibb, I was president at one time of Japan, Asia-Pacific, Middle East, and Africa, and Latin America. I had about three-quarters of the world, so I had every single...religion, every single language, every single revolution, in my territory. It also prepared me in terms of developing a vision, and then implementing it. You know, vision development, it takes about five percent of the business. Ninety-five percent of the vision...and the strategy, and that's hard. It certainly prepared me to do that, and obviously prepared me to manage people, and to lead people (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

Another component of this nontraditional chancellor's prior professional experience in this industry that was cited as being extremely beneficial in the role of chancellor is the understanding of and need for research.

I got the importance of research. In all three companies I got a lot of that. At J & J, as a company we spent eight billion dollars a year in R & D (research and development). I mean, that's a lot of money. We had 3,000 PhDs working in research. I was interfacing with that. I took the initiative, for example, as we were starting to expand into Asia, I held, in fact, I organized, the first ever R & D summit in Asia-Pacific. We brought all our key scientists from the home office in New Jersey to Asia. It provided me the inspiration as well as the focus on the importance of research and innovation, and so on and so forth. I think in terms of managing complexity, I think it prepared me to manage large numbers. When you're managing a three billion dollar business, with nine thousand employees, and fifty countries, pretty complex. Those are the things that I got from all three major companies, yes (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

The third nontraditional chancellor is a former cardiothoracic surgeon that would eventually become North Carolina's state health director and Medicaid director. This chancellor said his previous professional experiences benefitted him in the role for several reasons. Serving as the hospital's chief surgeon, the chancellor had to work alongside many medical staff members of the hospital. The chancellor went on to say that these medical staff members have several bylaws and are their own component of the organization, comparing it to the way faculty members has their own rights and senate at an institution of higher education. The chancellor also turned to his time serving on state healthcare boards as being beneficial in his new role. "I had experience working with and reporting to various state governing boards and thought that this experience would be valuable in working with our institution's board of trustees and the UNC System Board of Governors" (R. Cummings, personal communication, February 28, 2019). Additionally, the nontraditional chancellor explained how his prior connection to the community and familiarity with the institution, has also been beneficial as he stepped into his new role.

You know, as I mentioned before, I was raised in this area. I'm deeply connected to this area. I have family and many close friends that remain in this community. I have served on the board of trustees of this institution years ago and have been a big supporter of athletics. I feel like my connection to the campus and community has been beneficial because those individuals who may have concerns or ideas are not afraid to share them with me because they see me as a friend, rather than someone who is unapproachable (R. Cummings, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

Discovering that the three nontraditional chancellors believed their prior professional experience benefitted them since stepping into the role of chancellor aligns with the findings of a qualitative study conducted by Glover (2005) on first-time college presidents and their transition

into the role. The qualitative study was based on interviews with fifteen first-time presidents, with eight of these presidents coming from a nontraditional background. The nontraditional presidents that participated in the study stated that they believed their prior professional experience were beneficial to them in their new role as a president (Glover, 2005). They attributed this primarily due to the “the leadership experience they can draw upon, coming from outside higher education affords them the ability to see a different perspective, and can use any relevant professional skills learned that would be applicable and beneficial in their new role in higher education as a president” (Glover, 2005, p. 135). When comparing the nontraditional presidents to those that took the traditional academic pathway, Glover (2005) concluded that the nontraditional presidents “demonstrated compelling leadership and organizational management experience, while serving in varied, complex organizations, businesses, and public positions” (p. 136) and they relied on this experience in their role as a college or university president.

The three nontraditional chancellors that participated in this study have a tremendous amount of leadership experience in varied sectors outside of higher education. Regardless, of whether their leadership experience came from business, politics, or medicine, all agreed that their previous professional experiences aided them in their new role as chancellor, aligning to the findings of the Glover (2005) study.

### **Theme Two: Shared Governance and the Decision-Making Process**

When asking the nontraditional chancellors if there was anything that was unfamiliar or challenged them when entering the role, they all responded that shared governance, and its influence in the decision-making process, was something that initially challenged them and had to acclimate to. Shared governance is defined by the High Education Program and Policy Council (2017) as “the set of practices under which college faculty and staff participate in

significant decisions concerning the operations of their institutions” (p. 4). The professional backgrounds of the nontraditional chancellors, and the executive-level positions they held, made them accustomed to having a compelling amount of authority and were confident in their ability to make the right decisions to quickly accomplish the goals at hand. The nontraditional chancellor from the private sector stated the concept of shared governance was something he was unfamiliar with and had to learn on the job.

I think the area that was most unusual for me is the...it’s a combination of the very concept of a shared governance, where there’s certain parts of the organization which are owned by certain people, like for example, curriculum and...is owned by the faculty, so, but...and it’s okay. You know, when I was working for the company, there was discovery research owned by the scientists, and I recognize that. But, tenure was...I was not used to. Employment for life, I was not used to. Those are unusual things that I had to learn how to live with and operate within, with the pros and cons that comes with it. Those were areas that I have had to learn, and I’ve consulted with a lot of people. I’ve...because one thing that’s fun in all of this is the ability to learn new things. So, it has forced me to be...to maintain myself alert, and be capable of learning...more than ever before. But those are areas that I felt perhaps...I feel that were unusual. I was not prepared for, because I lived in a world where those things did not exist (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

Another nontraditional chancellor explains how someone that comes from a nontraditional pathway may have a substantial amount of experience in running large organizations or in the political arena that is beneficial in the role, but warns that if these individuals do not respect and value the academic enterprise, they will run into challenges or potentially fail.

As I've observed higher education, there are experiments going on, they're institutions that hire people out of business. And that's an important skill set. And some of them have been successful some of them have not been successful because they really didn't get the academic enterprise. And how different it is, for example, the concept of shared governance, the role the faculty plays in curriculum, and deciding really and truly what you do academically. That's just a very important thing and a lot of people, if you're just coming straight out of business, you don't really get that. And you can hit a few potholes along the way that will make it difficult to be successful. It is the same thing for someone coming out of politics. I've seen people come straight out of politics into these roles, some are successful but many others find it challenging, because again, they don't understand the academic side. And then on the other hand, I see today there's still, in certain segments, of higher education, you still see institutions gravitate towards someone who's been a faculty member, or dean, or department chair, then a dean, then a provost. But some of those folks are ill prepared for the other side of it (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

As the third nontraditional chancellor discussed his previous experience outside of higher education, and how the decision-making process and operations differed, he discussed his career in medicine. One distinct difference that was highlighted was a sense of urgency.

In medicine...and especially everything concerning a patient with a heart condition is urgent. In emergency situations, you must take action right away. You don't have time to run a plan by a group or committee...you have to trust your judgment and rely on your knowledge and experience to initiate the proper course of action. Then there is your surgical team as well. You have to trust they are on board and have the appropriate skill

set and experience to work as a team. In performing surgery, sometimes a split-second decision can be life or death. So while I knew the decision-making process is different at an institution of higher education, due to previously serving on the institution's board of trustees, it was still vastly different than the decision-making process I was accustomed to in the medical field. You know...higher education...well, in general...has been slow to evolve over time...decision-making processes as well. So...in order to better serve in this role, I've had to adjust and learn to respect the values and mission of higher education...in order to immerse myself within the campus culture (R. Cummings, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

One of the nontraditional chancellors stated that while the traditional academic pathway will always be the norm in higher education, he believes there will be an increasing number of individuals selected as president or chancellor that come from the nontraditional pathway as well. As institutions of higher education continue to be impacted by a number of challenges, this nontraditional chancellor believes individuals with prior experience outside of academia will be attractive candidates for the position, but warns that these individuals have to embrace the traditions and values of higher education in order to be successful.

But I really do believe the future, it's fairly clear to me; we're going to see a lot more people in these roles from nontraditional paths. And I don't think that's a bad thing, but I certainly would encourage anyone coming through a nontraditional path, to get as much experience as you can with the academic side of the enterprise, because you really do have to understand, you're not coming into the role in a traditional CEO sense. You don't have that kind of authority as a chancellor or president of a university. I can't tell a faculty member what to teach in their classroom. I can't tell the faculty senate, or the



committee structure within a university, which courses to approve or not to approve...we have shared governance...we respect that. That's the valuable part of higher education. And if you don't understand that, you're going to step into issues very, very quickly that will make your success very, very difficult (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

The three nontraditional chancellors all expressed that the components of the deliberative decision-making process at institutions of higher education were something they were unfamiliar with upon entering higher education and this presented an initial challenge. However, all three recognized the process was justified and was a vital component of the mission and values of higher education. As a result, the three nontraditional chancellors stated they took the necessary action to acclimate themselves within the campus culture and the norms of higher education.

### **Theme Three: Team Building and Developing Relationships**

In order to be successful and meet desired goals in the previous positions of the three nontraditional chancellors, all had to have the ability to create and maintain relationships with a variety of constituents. A previous theme was that all three nontraditional chancellors believed their prior professional experiences were beneficial to them as they moved into the role of chancellor. A chancellor at an institution of higher education has the responsibility to create and maintain relationships with a variety of constituents that include: governing boards, faculty, staff, students, donors, alumni, and community members. Dowdall (2001) states that establishing positive relationships with internal and external constituents is a necessity in order for any president or chancellor to be successful. It goes without saying that the roles and responsibilities of a college or university chancellor are tremendous and require a lot of time. Due to this, it is also vital for a chancellor to build a leadership team that he/she can rely on and have faith they

are willing to put in the effort to achieve desired goals. Building this type of leadership team requires time and the chancellor must work to build and nurture these relationships in order to ensure the institution is successful.

Throughout the interviews with the nontraditional chancellors, a theme emerged on the importance of team building and how critical it is to establish and nurture relationships, both internal and external. One participating chancellor stated their belief that no single individual could ever run such a complex organization on their own and stressed the importance of being a collaborative leader.

That's a great question. I really think today, you have to be a collaborative leader. No one can do this by himself or herself. No one human being, I don't care what your experience is, how good you are, how smart you are, no one person runs an enterprise this complex. So really the big skill at the end of the day, is how do you get good people to come together as a team, have a vision, and a mission that we all buy into and then we move out and execute on it. So, a lot of my time as this institution has been spent recruiting key senior leadership (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

As these nontraditional chancellors previously stated there were areas of higher education that were unfamiliar and challenged them upon entering, another chancellor also stated that no one person could undertake the role and be successful. In efforts to acclimate to the role and be successful, the chancellor spoke about building a team around him to ensure he was making the right decisions and hold him accountable.

I think long are the days when you could be a hero on this stuff. The company or the organization, or the university, has a lot of...provide you with a lot of lifelines. You know, you've got...I've got four lawyers in the university, I've got a general counsel,

I've got all kinds of experts who can help me make the right decision...So, when I don't do that, and I do not consult with people, and I don't use the lifelines, then I'm fully exposed...I think leadership matters, leadership makes a difference, and I do believe that, in fact, in this day and age, one of the things that we miss is great leaders (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

When it came to building their leadership teams, a theme emerged about not only finding experienced individuals, but individuals who were the "right fit" for the institution and had the ability to alleviate areas of concern.

And people come to universities, by and large, because they believe in the mission. And so finding that right fit is incredibly important. But I think that's one of the ongoing challenges that we face, and something that is very important, that we get right. You have to be collaborative, you have to understand what a university is to begin with, what its purpose is. It's a business, but it's a business like no other. And you're not a CEO in the traditional sense that you get to come in here and snap your fingers and make things happen. You have to be collaborative, you have to listen, you have to find a path forward for the vision and mission of the institution (R. Cummings, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

The nontraditional chancellors have the responsibility of reporting to their respective board of trustees and the UNC System Board of Governors in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The nontraditional chancellors also have the responsibility to develop relationships with a very large and diverse number of constituencies. These constituencies include: alumni, donors, friends of the institution, faculty, staff, administrative leaders, and students. In order to establish and maintain productive relationships with all of these constituencies, it is important for a chancellor

to surround themselves with a leadership team that understands and values the mission of higher education, and is onboard with the vision the chancellor has for the future of the institution. Developing and maintaining relationships also allows institutional stakeholders the opportunity to give input and voice their concerns. “But it has really helped me to, I believe, become a better listener, someone who can ask questions because you have to do that. But you have to listen first, ask questions, and then again, be collaborative in achieving goals” (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

Lastly, one nontraditional chancellor described himself as a “vision-driven type of leader”. With this style of leadership the chancellor stated he chooses to focus on the long-term objectives or vision instead of worrying about the “short-term or day to day happenings”. In efforts to achieve this long-term vision for the institution, the chancellor highlights how important it is to be collaborative, and build trust with various constituencies so that they may buy-in to the vision.

The final thing is envisioning, in the ability to envision the future. Because people are not going to follow you just because the color of your eyes, the way you dress, or the way you talk. They are going to follow you, or be supportive of your leadership, if they share the same destination, or understand where the destination is. They have to believe in that vision and appreciate it...You want to make sure that you’re creating an environment, an ambiance, within your organization...whatever that is, corporate or academic...that is healthy, that is positive, that is constructive, that’s endearing to people (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

The participating nontraditional chancellors all acknowledged the importance of establishing and nurturing relationship with diverse constituents as a critical leadership skill that is necessary in

their role. Team building also emerged as a theme and was emphasized as it makes individuals feel valued and builds consensus. The chancellors also highlighted how their previous roles benefited them, as they had to work with varied constituencies to achieve desired outcomes.

#### **Theme Four: Impact on Personal Life**

The nontraditional chancellor participants were quick to point out how serving in the role had impacted their personal life, as well as their families. The following quotes are descriptions from the chancellors and how this theme emerged. One nontraditional chancellor discussed how he and his wife had to adapt to the high public exposure that comes within serving in the role and interacting with various constituencies.

The variety of people I'm exposed to is just tremendous. Tonight, we're going to have a meeting at the chamber of commerce. The people I'm going to be exposed to there are very different from the ones I was exposed to half a day ago. So, I think it's tough on one hand because of the variety of different personalities and types of vocations that people are pursuing, but at the same time, it's fun and enjoyable...It has certainly impacted my wife and I a lot. My wife and I have had to adapt into a more public life, a more engaged life with the community...with the university community, as well as outside community. There are a lot of positives to it. It's exciting. It's fun. You meet a lot of great people...but it's very different...now it is, you know, 24/7 (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

The remaining nontraditional chancellor participants discussed how the role of chancellor is constantly 24/7 with very little down time. These chancellors also stated the importance of taking time to rest for self-care, in order to have mental and physical well-being.

Well, personal life, we're empty nesters. My wife and I have been able to, sort of, pour a little more of ourselves into this than maybe someone could do if you have kids at home. But this is an enormously demanding job. There, literally during the semesters at least, there are very few weeks where we even get a day without something. Some days you just have to take it for yourself. You just have to take care of yourself. It's hard to do, but I mean it's like, there was a baseball game yesterday afternoon. Every day, there's something. Most evenings. So this can be a job that starts at seven in the morning, and you can have people leaving the residence, the caterers, after an event at 10 or 10:30 at night...and guess what...tomorrow you have to do it all over again (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

The third participating nontraditional chancellor spoke of similar experiences that he has undertaken since stepping into the role.

We have events to attend almost every day. There's always something going on and I really have to compliment my wife for embracing her role as first lady...she is there for everything to support not only me, but the institution as well. It's the kind of job that'll take a toll if you don't take care of yourself. You have to block time because, again, you may be a high energy person, you have to be to do this job, but if you burn yourself... both ends of the candle...it will take a toll. And so we figured that out. You know what your limits are and you have to try to deal with that. So it does take a mental and physical toll. It's one of the reasons why chancellors today don't stay in the role very long. The tenures have shortened and shortened over the years and I now know why. It really, really can wear on you if you don't really make attempts to take care of yourself...and your family, because they are in this too. So that's a challenge and I think it will continue to

be. It's not ever getting any easier (R. Cummings, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

### **Theme Five: Critical Areas of Concern for Higher Education**

When asking the participating nontraditional chancellors what they believed were the most critical issues or concerns facing higher education today, one chancellor stated, "there's several issues which are...some that we can do something about...and some that you can just respond to and react to it" (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019). As the interviews progressed, themes surrounding enrollment declines, state funding, student debt, and technology emerged.

Two of the nontraditional chancellors lead institutions of higher education that are located in rural, poverty-stricken areas. These areas are facing a decline in population, as well as a decline in traditional-aged high school students that are choosing to go to college. The demographic changes are having a negative impact on enrollment at institutions located in these rural areas. Also impacting these institutions, is the rapid urbanization of North Carolina in areas such as Charlotte and Raleigh. Due to this urbanization, high school students that reside in rural areas may be attracted to attend an institution that is located in a more urban and populated area. The remaining nontraditional chancellor's institution is located on the coast of North Carolina, making it an attractive area for potential students. This nontraditional chancellor pointed out that changing demographics is a problem not only impacting institutions of higher education within the UNC System, but various regions across the United States. Further, the nontraditional chancellor explained how a decrease in enrollment numbers negatively impacts the financial stability and well-being of an institution.

For example, one of the major issues in this country, is that depending where you are, depending on which state or region, the number of high school graduates is going up, but in some parts is declining. For example, if you're in the Midwest, most of those states, the future population of high school graduates is going down significantly. The same thing in the Northeast. In the Southeast where we are, and in the Great Plains, it's not. So, we are kind of in a special place, in that respect. Why is that important? Because universities are very fragile institutions. Close to seven percent of our expenses are people. So, if my enrollment drops five or six percent, or ten percent, it affects us directly. All of a sudden, if I'm not going to lose money, I'm going to have to adapt, and I'm going to have to fire people, very quickly. Because most of our expenses are people. So that's one issue, the availability of future students (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

As the nontraditional chancellors described how demographic changes have impacted enrollment numbers at certain institutions, and ultimately how it could impact the financial status of the institution, they also stated that the decline of state funding to public higher education in North Carolina is a really challenge and concern.

I am worried about state funding of public higher education. Since the beginning of the recession in 2008 or thereabouts, state funding of public higher education is still down about nine billion dollars, nationwide, over where it was before the recession. North Carolina is a generous state, but even here funding for public higher education is not growing. I think that's something the state's really going to have to grapple with if we're going to continue to be an economic powerhouse, a center for research, a growing state with respect to technology, and a workforce, and therefore growing economy. I think the



state's going to have to step up and make a larger investment in higher education (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

The rising student debt crisis in the United States also emerged as a theme during the interviews. All the participating chancellors highlighted the tremendous burden it is on student's lives once they leave the institution. One nontraditional chancellor attributed this to his perception of an outdated model of funding.

We have a model now...or this country has a model that's been going on for many years, but 50 years ago, like in the '50s or '60s, people went to college, and they were not accumulating lots of debt. Today, a lot of people, like in our own institution, my average...even though only sixty percent of my students take on debt, the rest do not, those sixty percent on average are probably accumulating \$25,000 by the time they leave the university...Now, this was unheard of back in the '50s, or '60s, or '70s. We've got 1.4 trillion dollars of student debt, and with a default rate of close to eight percent. Now, a default rate of eight percent on a company, you're bankrupt. You're gone, right? Now, in our case, this whole industry is kind of surviving because we are subsidized by the state, but over the years even that has decreased (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

The rise of technology and innovation has certainly made an enormous impact on how campuses are operated, professors teach, and students learn. However, a theme emerged of being wary of technological advances and how they can negatively impact institutions of higher education and students being hired in the workforce.

I think we are going to continue to struggle with the technology thing. It has been a disruptive force, I predict it will continue to be. There's a lot more competition today,

some of that is driven by technology. There are these mega universities that are coming to North Carolina, they do it all online. Whether its Western Governors, or University of Phoenix, or Arizona State University, or Liberty University, University of Southern New Hampshire. They're these huge enterprises and they want to grow and there are certain people that will meet a need for...there's certain people that will fall into the niche that they are aiming to serve, and I get that. But I think that's a challenge for institutions like ours and others, where we have this large infrastructure. To keep this viable, I must have students on campus, in classrooms, in seats (R. Cummings, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

As the nontraditional chancellors recognized how institutions of higher education have benefitted from technological advancements, they also stated how they can also potentially be harmful to institutions that are struggling financially and with declining enrollments. The nontraditional chancellors also agreed that innovations in technology can also negatively impact graduate's chances of obtaining a job in the ever-changing workforce.

Another issue that's important is the level of technological obsolescence. We've been experiencing this since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution back 200 years ago. You have a very rapid replacement of men and women in the workplace. We're becoming more and more...automation is really...See, automation for a long time we thought would only hit the blue-collar worker...well, it's hitting the white-collar worker. That's complicated, because depending where you choose to go, then you may have your job wiped out very quickly. Then you got to...in addition to student debt, you don't have a job (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

As all three institutions vary in geographical location, size, student demographics, and mission; it was interesting to observe emerging themes in the areas of concern each nontraditional chancellor has for higher education through the conduction of interviews. To distill an understanding of how the nontraditional chancellors viewed their roles as compared to senior faculty leaders and members of chancellor search committees, the following sections are an overview of data collected through the conduction of interviews with individuals in these specific roles. These individuals served as key informants due to their positionality as faculty leaders and/or as part of the search process that selected each nontraditional chancellor.

### **Faculty Member Interviews**

#### **Dr. Jeffrey Popke**

Dr. Popke is a Professor in Human Geography at East Carolina University. Dr. Popke has been a member of the faculty at East Carolina University since 1998 and received tenure in 2014. Dr. Popke currently serves as Chair of the Faculty at East Carolina University and is a UNC System Delegate of the Faculty Assembly.

#### **Dr. John Stiller**

Dr. Stiller is an Associate Professor in Biology at East Carolina University. Dr. Stiller has served as a faculty member at East Carolina University for nineteen years. He is the former Chair of the Faculty at East Carolina University and served on the chancellor search committee that selected Chancellor Cecil Staton.

#### **Dr. Richard Vela**

Dr. Vela is a Professor in English at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. Dr. Vela has served as a member of the faculty at the University of North Carolina at Pembroke

since 1971. He served on the chancellor search committee that selected Chancellor Robin Cummings, as well as serving as chairman of the provost search committee.

Interviewing three current faculty members during this research study provided an opportunity for each to reflect on nontraditional leadership in higher education, why they believe nontraditional candidates are now being viewed as viable candidates for the role of president or chancellor, and their experiences while working at an institution that has a nontraditional chancellor. The insight and perspectives from the faculty member participants added a richness to this study on the view nontraditional leadership and its impact on the climate at each institution under study.

The six interview questions asked of the participating faculty members were designed to:

- (1) Gain an understanding of the faculty members view of nontraditional leadership in higher education;
- (2) Understand how they believed the prior positions the nontraditional chancellors held impacted them in the role;
- (3) Their perceptions on any challenges the nontraditional candidates faced.

The majority of answers to interview questions from the participating faculty members showed very little discrepancy when it came to questions on why there has been an increase in the number of nontraditional candidates being selected to serve as president or chancellor across the United States and what was essential to establish a good relationship between the nontraditional chancellor and the campus community. In other questions, the participating faculty members had a minor divide of opinions. The following themes emerged from the faculty member research study interviews.

## **Theme One: The Importance of Shared Governance**

A newly appointed chancellor of an institution of higher education has an obligation to respect the culture and mission of their respective institution. A newly appointed nontraditional chancellor has the same obligation, but also must understand why the traditions of higher education exist and why they are in place. As an increasing number of colleges and universities are selecting presidents and chancellor from outside of the traditional academic pathway, it is important for these newly appointed nontraditional leaders to embrace the philosophy of higher education and the inner workings of their institution.

When asking the participating faculty members what they believed the nontraditional candidate selected as chancellor of their institution was least prepared for, all were quick to highlight the importance of shared governance at institutions of higher education. They believed that the idea of shared governance may be foreign to someone outside of academia and the nontraditional chancellors may not fully grasp the concept, nor appreciate how it impacts institutional culture. Due to the perception that a nontraditional chancellor may have a limited understanding of shared governance or working in a culture that values shared governance, a consensus was developed that many faculty members are skeptical that nontraditional candidates will fully embrace the ideals of higher education. This importance of shared governance at an institution is displayed by the words of one faculty member stating:

But what I'm skeptical about the nontraditional pathway I think is especially this. So my perspective, as chair of the faculty, what is really important about our system in the United States of higher education is the idea of shared governance, which is kind of an informal contract that's been developed really since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, that says that these institutions have multiple stakeholders, and especially boards, governing boards,

administration, and faculty. That's kind of the tripartite stool. And you must have a cooperative, collaborative relationship among those three groups if you're going to be able to effectively govern, certainly at a time of change. If you're going to effectively implement new ideas, new visions, new strategies, you've got to have those constituencies working together. I say those three, there are certainly other constituencies as well, right? The students, staff, alumni, I think the general public. Obviously, we are taxpayer supported, right? They have stake as well. But I think it's those three main constituencies that must be involved (J. Popke, personal communication, February 18, 2019).

Throughout the interviews, it was evident that faculty members place heavy emphasis on the importance of shared governance and how critical it is to the vitality of the institution. One faculty member voiced their opinion on how a nontraditional candidate, that has little or no experience in academia, probably would not have an understanding of the importance of the role faculty members play at an institution:

And my concern about the business model, or the military model, or the tech model, or whatever else these people might come from, is that they view faculty as mere labor, as a hindrance, and are not going to build the kinds of cooperative and collaborative relationships that really are necessary for effective governance of an institution of higher learning (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

In agreement with this view, J. Popke goes on to state "no one person is more important than the 2,000 faculty members who have invested sometimes decades of their careers making this institution what it is. The identity of this institution is nothing more than a collective investment of its faculty" (personal communication, February 18, 2019).

While the faculty members continued to stress the importance of shared governance at their respective institutions, they also made it clear that they recognize the chancellor as the leader, but this individual must have developed good leadership skills and lead in a way where every stakeholder has a voice. One faculty member suggested it was the nontraditional chancellor's responsibility to champion the role of being the leader by getting other constituencies and stakeholders to believe and support their vision for the future of the institution:

And the good charismatic leader can get people behind a vision, and suddenly this slow-moving ship can actually get moving faster if people are excited, and they agree, and they're on board with where we're going next as a collective process rather than just one individual saying, "Here's what we're going to do" (J. Popke, personal communication, February 18, 2019).

Throughout the interviews it was evident that many faculty members are hesitant with the selection of nontraditional chancellors because they may be unfamiliar or have limited experience with the importance and functions involved with shared governance. However, as the interviews proceeded, each went on to say how the nontraditional chancellors worked to embrace the mission of the institution and understand how critical shared governance was the success of their institution:

But secondly, and this goes back to my initial answer about shared governance, he has in fact I think treated faculty as an essential component of this institution. Maybe not enough consultation around some of this big vision for change initially, but it's clear that he defers to faculty on important things around faculty governance. He has due deference for faculty senate. He shows up every month, answers any question that comes to him,

sometimes pointed questions without any condescension, without any defensiveness. I think he's open with faculty about the challenges that we face. So, to that extent, he's not come in and governed really in a way that would be different from someone coming up through an academic background (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

The third faculty member noted that he initially had concerns with a nontraditional candidate being selected as chancellor of the institution due to the candidate's lack of experience in academia. However, since the nontraditional chancellor took over the role, the faculty member discussed how the chancellor has embraced the mission and immersed himself within the culture and life of the institution.

He's there, he understands what we're doing, he's here to support, he acknowledges his wife, he acknowledges the faculty, he acknowledges the students, their families, he understands it seems to me that whole sort of broader connection that being in a university really amounts to (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

### **Theme Two: Higher Education is Not a Business and Should Not be Operated as One**

As public support of higher education continues to decline, a turbulent economic climate and varying societal issues have also negatively impacted institutions of higher education. A decrease in federal and state funding to higher education has caused many institutions to have financial woes and forcing them to do more with less. In efforts to combat these obstacles and increase efficiency and effectiveness, many institutions have adopted operation models that align more with business organization practices and less from the traditional academic perspective (Ivory, 2017).



When asked why individuals from nontraditional pathways are being viewed as viable candidates for the role of chancellor at institutions in the UNC System, all faculty member participants had similar responses as to why this was occurring. It was stated that “there has been a politicization of views toward higher education that stems from a Republican controlled legislature” (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019). To support this stance, another participant contends, “Republicans think higher education is too bloated, too slow, too liberal, and too much groupthink” (J. Popke, February 18, 2019). North Carolina is one of only a few states in which the state legislature appoints all members of the state’s higher education governing body. A 2019 article states that North Carolina’s Republican leadership have “filled the 28-member board with hard-driving conservatives on a mission to “fix” rather than protect and advance the state’s greatest asset” (Pomeranz, 2019). With the belief that the selection of nontraditional chancellors within the UNC System is in large part due to the perspectives of what the Republican controlled Board of Governors believes is best for the institution and the system, a faculty member participant stated:

I think the answer is different for search committees versus board of trustees and board of governors. I think the board of trustees are largely hearing that they should be doing this from the board of governors, and the board of governors has a particular agenda with respect to viewing the system more as a business than as an educational endeavor. They’re looking more and more for people who speak their language and will view it in the same kind of ways they view it. Search committees are getting their marching orders largely from the executive administration, more than they should be. There’s a lot of hands on control and pressure if you will. The search firms that are hired are looking for quote unquote nontraditional (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

The three UNC System nontraditional chancellors who were at the center of this research study have backgrounds in business, politics, and medicine/healthcare director. The faculty members stated that perhaps the Board of Governors found these individual's previous professional experience could be beneficial in alleviating problems at each institution and pressured search committees to advance their candidacy.

The search committee viewed these people as CEOs, executive officers, that they were viewed in the same way that you would view an executive officer of a corporation, and therefore somebody who has run a big organization, if it's a corporation or in a government or anywhere else, ought to be qualified. That is their (Board of Governors) view (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

As a turbulent economic climate continues to plague American higher education, perhaps individuals with experience in running large complex organizations are viewed as viable candidates capable of stabilizing the institution by tightening the budget and cutting the work force. One faculty member alluded to this stating "in some ways, I think that candidates from outside academia are seen by governing boards as having the kind of experience that they are looking for, which is how to tighten the belt and manage properly" (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019). As previously mentioned, North Carolina Republican leaders view higher education as too liberal, too slow, and too mundane. In efforts to change this, governing boards may view a nontraditional candidate as a "disruptor" that could be beneficial to the institution. "I think the perception is if you get somebody from outside of academia, they can shake things up, get these institutions, you know, unfossilized and moving quicker and more nimble, and so on and so on" (J. Popke, personal communication, February 18, 2019).

In an attempt to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of an institution, many governing boards are advocating for nontraditional candidates, with experience in running large complex organizations, for the role of chancellor. Faculty members are concerned that this will harm the overall mission of the institution and that operating an institution under a business model takes away from the long-standing tradition and values of higher education.

What I fundamentally think, and I think the vast majority of faculty members, would view as the inherent purpose of higher education, the inherent public and civil good that lies behind the long and vibrant tradition of institutions of higher learning in the United States. And to view that as an opportunity to apply business principles from consulting, management consulting firms or whatever, I think is likely to be misplaced (J. Popke, personal communication, February 18, 2019).

As governing boards, especially those under Republican control, continue to promote institutions of higher education adopting business operation models, one faculty member stressed the importance of understanding that higher education and the world of business are simply not alike.

I think it's vitally important that those who are on boards of trustees, and governors in charge with overseeing institutions of higher education realize that they're not like businesses, that they're just fundamentally different kinds of organizations with different kinds of organizational dynamics and fundamentally a different mission (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

### **Theme Three: The Role of the Chancellor has Changed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

A theme of initial uncertainty and skepticism emerged from interviews with faculty members surrounding the selection of a nontraditional candidate as chancellor and their

capability to lead an institution of higher education. However, all were in agreement that the roles and responsibilities of a chancellor have changed, and an institution needs someone that is experienced in a variety of diverse arenas in order to propel that institution forward.

I think that there used to be a time when we thought of the academic world as kind of shut off from everything and as long as we were doing our work, produced our graduates and all of that sort of thing we were pretty much okay. I think now the tendency is to think more in terms of reaching out toward the rest of the community, the rest of the world for that matter. It takes people, I think to some extent with a real-world experience as well as simply the academic experience to be able to do the kinds of thing that need to be done (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

As institutions of higher education continue to battle financial woes and attempt to alleviate them, one faculty member discussed how the role of chancellor places heavy emphasis on fundraising and building relationships with outside constituencies.

So, now here's, you know, you can ask yourself the question of "What today is the role of a chancellor or president at an institution of higher learning?" And it's different from maybe what it was 25 years ago. I think your job is to really in many ways be externally-focused. Those chancellors that have a really good rapport within the community I think are very widely praised and beloved if they walk around campus and they know everybody. But I think the fact of the matter is if you're going to be good at being chancellor, you've got to spend most of your days schmoozing. I mean, it's about fundraising, working with alumni, working with your donor base, probably where you can, working politics (J. Popke, personal communication, February 18, 2019).

As the roles and responsibilities of being a chancellor or president in the 21<sup>st</sup> century require someone who has a wealth of experience in a variety of diverse arenas outside of strictly academics, those that have not followed the traditional academic pathway are increasingly being viewed as viable candidates for the role. Those with experience managing complex organizations with large budgets, as well as those with experience in developing relationships with political and community constituencies, may be viewed as the right candidate to alleviate problems and propel the institution forward. The perspectives of all participating faculty members aligned with previous literature that stated the roles and responsibilities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century chancellor have become increasingly “outwardly focused” and requires experience and skills that some candidates from the traditional pathway may not possess.

### **Chancellor Search Committee Member Interviews**

Included in the research study interviews were individuals that served or chaired the search committee at the three UNC System institutions that appointed a nontraditional candidate to serve as chancellor. Previously mentioned were Dr. John Stiller and Dr. Richard Vela who served on the chancellor search committees that selected a nontraditional chancellor at East Carolina University and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke, respectively. Along with Dr. Stiller and Dr. Vela, I also interviewed Wendy Murphy. Ms. Murphy is a former University of North Carolina Wilmington Board of Trustees Chair and chaired the chancellor search committee that selected Chancellor Sartarelli. Ms. Murphy currently serves on the UNC System Board of Governors. Interviewing the search committee members provided insight on the rigors of the search process, the needs of the institution, and what made the nontraditional candidate stand out. While most themes that emerged from the interviews was positive, there was also a

consensus on the criticism the search committees of the three institutions faced surrounding the secrecy of the search process.

### **Theme One: Previous Experience of Nontraditional Candidate Could Alleviate Critical Areas of Concern at Institution**

It has been well documented that the roles and responsibilities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century chancellor have become increasingly “outwardly focused” (MacTaggart, 2017). Through my interview with the chair of the chancellor search committee at UNC Wilmington, I learned that finding a candidate that could go out and build relationships within the community and beyond was a high priority.

We wanted someone who could step into the role that would immerse themselves within the community to strengthen the relationship between Wilmington and UNCW, while leaving the provost in charge of the academic side (W. Murphy, personal communication, March 11, 2019).

A turbulent economic climate and continued reductions of funding left UNCW in a position where they would be forced to cut athletic teams and academic programs. While the institution was facing these tough decisions, the search committee believed that perhaps someone who had experience in overseeing major budgets, and had the knowledge on utilizing financial resources in an efficient and effective manner, could alleviate these problems. The UNCW search committee also believed that by selecting someone that had experience in the business world and was capable of incorporating components of a business operating model could be beneficial to the institution.

The institution desperately needed someone who had experience with budgeting and being smart with money in a complex organization. Higher education is being plagued by

a number of obstacles, especially with funding and allocating additional resources. We needed to change with the times in order to combat these obstacles and incorporating a model of operations that aligns more so to business was believed to be beneficial (W. Murphy, personal communication, March 11, 2019).

Through the interview with UNCW's chancellor search committee chair, I discovered that the search committee was seeking a candidate that has the experience and capability to establish a good standing in the community, along with experience in building partnerships with constituencies in diverse arenas, along with experience in operating complex organizations and overseeing large budgets. The characteristics of the desired candidate described by the chancellor search committee at UNCW is a prime example of the "outwardly focused" shift in the roles and responsibilities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century president or chancellor in higher education.

The University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP) faculty member participant also served as chair of the chancellor search committee that selected a nontraditional candidate as chancellor, and answered interview questions that aligned with his experience on the chancellor search committee as well. The search committee chair acknowledged the outward shift in the roles and responsibilities of a chancellor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and that the search committee needed to be open to candidates that had demonstrated professional experience outside of academia, as well as those that climbed the academic ladder. I learned that one of the main focal points of the UNCP chancellor search committee was to find an individual who could increase the notoriety and recognition of the institution within the UNC System.

We've been little brother in effect to a lot of schools in the (UNC) System for a long time. I think we've made a lot of progress and I think that was a critical area of concern for us to continue to move in that general direction of establishing who we are, making

our connections and making a specific name for ourselves (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

The UNCP chancellor search committee chair alluded to the fact that the university experienced an overall decline in vital areas of the institution over the past few years and needed someone who could not only raise the profile of the institution, but could also establish partnerships within the community, political constituencies, and other universities as well.

We seemed to have dropped back some and so I think we're looking for a renaissance, a regeneration but somehow or other a way to be able to grow again to reach out to the community, the academic world as well, to other universities (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

To address the areas of concern at UNCP it is easy to understand why a candidate that has "outwardly focused" skills would be desirable. One could also see that someone from a nontraditional pathway, with experience in the resurgence of an organization and raising its profile, could also be desirable.

Additionally, the UNCP chancellor search committee profile listed that an individual with a thorough understanding of healthcare was desirable. They wanted someone that could raise the profile of and increase the number of healthcare programs that would be beneficial to the region. "We had been trying to work healthcare programs, nursing programs and perhaps more, optometry and other kinds of things into the curriculum of the university for some time" (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019). Through the interview, I learned the university conducted a nationwide search for a new provost in 2018. This search resulted in the selection of a candidate who had a wealth of experience in establishing new academic programs focusing on healthcare. By finding a candidate that possessed experience in healthcare and



running a complex organization, the UNCP chancellor search committee believed it would be the right combination to alleviate institutional concerns. This would also make it possible to position the institution to improve and add to their healthcare programs to better serve the region.

### **Theme Two: A Nontraditional Candidate is Nothing to be Threatened By**

As the role of the president or chancellor at an institution of higher education has become more dynamic, many institutions are matching their needs with the demonstrated experience and skill sets to those of nontraditional candidates (Bensimon, 1991). As education is at the root of the higher education enterprise, one of the major obstacles facing search committees and nontraditional presidents and chancellors is faculty resistance (Bowman, 2011). During the course of the interviews with chancellor search committee members, the theme of faculty skepticism and resistance in the selection of a nontraditional chancellor found in the interviews with faculty members, emerged as a theme as well. One of the main criticisms chancellor search committees encountered from faculty, either serving on the committee or after selection, was that a nontraditional chancellor would undermine the core values of higher education. Chancellor search committees also received criticisms on the basis that the selected candidate climb the academic ladder, therefore would not value faculty members. “By definition, they lack experience, which is one of the reasons that they are not traditional because they really aren’t qualified in a lot of ways, without any experience in academics”. The UNCP chancellor search committee chair admitted he himself had concerns about the selection of a nontraditional candidate, and while the needs of the institution aligned with the experiences of the selected nontraditional candidate, he questioned if it was the right fit.

I am trying to think back, but I think he was the only real nontraditional candidate. I know that there were one or two people who had hesitation about him because he did not

have a strict academic background. I know that in the questioning I raised questions specifically about a concern that I saw because I had seen it happen here before (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

When the announcement of the selection of a nontraditional candidate was made public, chancellor search committee members continued to receive criticism from faculty members of their institutions.

They were critical of the nontraditional selection on the premise a nontraditional chancellor would not have a knowledge and understanding of the importance of what goes on in the classroom, or what the research enterprise looks like in different fields, how one goes about securing grant funding to pursue a research agenda, and the importance and understanding of how critical shared governance is to the success of the institution (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

To combat opposition and criticism on the selection of a nontraditional candidate to serve as chancellor, the search committee members stated they urged faculty members and others to “be open minded” and to “please be patient and allow these individuals time to establish themselves and immerse themselves within the campus community” (W. Murphy, personal communication, March 11, 2019). The nontraditional chancellor surely would not be successful if one of the most valuable components of the institution did not support them, and if they just gave the nontraditional chancellor time to establish themselves and their vision, those who opposed and criticized, may change their minds. This advice from the chancellor search committee members ended up being positive. While the faculty members and others may have initially been apprehensive about the selection of a nontraditional candidate to serve as

chancellor, over time, the faculty members interviewed said they were overall pleased with what the nontraditional chancellor was doing at their institution.

This chancellor brought with him a full set of people, a range of how he wanted to do things, an understanding of what it took to get jobs done. I think he's been extraordinarily successful at doing all of that. Much of what he's done has been really admirable and I look forward to what's going to happen in the future. Partly because of what he's brought to it and because of our provost, Dr. Ward, has brought to the program as well. I really think that we're going to have a future that we would not have otherwise if we did not have those two people in position (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

The selection of a candidate from a nontraditional pathway to serve as president or chancellor at an institution of higher education will always be met with initial skepticism from faculty members of the institution. Many faculty members believe that those who have not climbed the academic ladder do not value or understand the world of academia. This held true throughout my interviews from the initial skepticism from faculty member participants to criticism the chancellor search committee participants encountered on their selection of a nontraditional candidate. However, it is important to note, that as time passed and the nontraditional chancellor had the opportunity to immerse themselves within the campus community, the faculty members were generally pleased with the work of the nontraditional chancellor and their vision for the institution.

### **Theme Three: Criticism of the Search Process**

One interesting theme that was discovered through interview with chancellor search committee members was that, not only did they receive backlash on the selection of a nontraditional candidate to serve as chancellor, but the actual search and selection process was

criticized and questioned by numerous institutional and community stakeholders. The UNCW chancellor search committee chair stated, “I would say that the search process, as mandated by our Board of Governors, is very closed” (W. Murphy, personal communication, March 11, 2019). An ECU chancellor search committee member stated that the public outcry surrounding the secrecy of the chancellor search process and selection is warranted. “There needs to be a more open process that would bring finalists to campus, name them, and have a vigorous and engaged process with various constituencies” (J. Stiller, February 21, 2019). While the secrecy of the search and selection process was criticized, one redeeming quality chancellor search committee members highlighted was the belief that a public search process would not attract the top-tier candidates the institution desired. “There is a belief that the most desirable candidates in executive level roles, inside or outside academia, would not want their current employer to know they were looking for other opportunities” (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019). In the initial phases of the search process it is easy to sympathize with and understand why potential candidates would not want their current employer to be made aware that they are looking for other opportunities. However, one search committee member argued that once finalists were identified, the chancellor search process should be made public information.

It should be, it needs to be a public search at that point. The community, both our internal constituencies and our community constituents need to have an opportunity for judgement and input. As importantly, the candidate needs to have an opportunity to meet those people and get an idea of what kind of position, what kind of group dynamics that that individual is going to get into (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

As the selection of a nontraditional candidate to serve as chancellor at UNCP was publicly announced, the search committee member recalled the public backlash accusing the search committee of trying to protect the nontraditional candidate through the closed off search process.

There was a notion that the people on top wanted a closed search process because they were worried a nontraditional candidate would not play well in a public forum where they may not have the answers to questions asked by faculty, students, and other stakeholders, therefore making them hesitant to take the position (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

The chancellor search committee's rebuttal to this accusation was that the committee recommended two candidates, one traditional and one nontraditional, to Margaret Spellings, President of the UNC System, and it was ultimately her decision to select the nontraditional candidate.

Most of the criticism surrounding the secrecy of the chancellor search process highlighted the lack of involvement by institutional and community stakeholders. While one chancellor search committee chair agrees with the criticism on lack of public involvement, he also argued that a closed search process negatively impacts the selected candidate, no matter their professional background.

It's just unfortunate that they don't have that opportunity (to interact with institutional and community stakeholders). It hampers them. It makes it much harder to transition. It makes it harder to, you know, they have to gain trust and respect once on the job rather than coming in with that. They have to learn about what they're doing. Basically, it's all on paper and what the executive people who've talked to them and a few search

committee members, but very few faculty, very few students, very few staff, very few of the people they might be working with so they have an opportunity to really engage with seriously. This is a real, you know, it's bad from all angles (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

### **Overarching Themes**

As each of the three groups contributed their own insight and perspectives on nontraditional leadership in higher education, five common themes emerged from the interviews: (1) The Previous Experiences of Nontraditional Chancellors is Valuable; (2) Understanding and Respecting Shared Governance is Critical; (3) Nontraditional Chancellors Face Challenges, but Can Overcome Them; (4) Nontraditional Chancellors Must Develop a Strong Leadership Team; (5) Higher Education is Not a Business.

#### **Theme One: The Previous Experiences of Nontraditional Chancellors is Valuable**

The nontraditional chancellors all believed that their previous professional experiences were beneficial and properly prepared them to lead an institution of higher education. While faculty members, and some members of the chancellor search committees, expressed initial skepticism, all discussed how the nontraditional chancellor's previous experience has been beneficial to their institutions. Although the nontraditional chancellors admitted to encountering various obstacles, all were confident in their leadership abilities because of their previous professional experiences. Further, the nontraditional chancellors discussed how they believed their perspectives and previous professional experiences brought a unique vantage point that a chancellor who came up through the traditional academic ranks. As previously mentioned, faculty members shared their initial skepticism about the selection of a nontraditional chancellor, mainly citing their lack of an academic background. However, as interviews progressed, the

faculty members discussed as the nontraditional chancellor's tenure progressed, they believed their previous professional backgrounds served them well in their role, and perhaps those experiences were what made them attractive candidates to the chancellor search committee.

Dr. Cecil Staton enjoyed a career serving as a Republican State Senator in Georgia and chaired the committee that oversaw public higher education in Georgia. As North Carolina is currently a Republican controlled state, both faculty members and chancellor search committee members discussed how they thought it was believed Dr. Staton's political savvy and background would be beneficial in developing relationships with political leaders that could benefit East Carolina University.

During the chancellor search at UNC Wilmington, the institution was facing major budget deficits that were forcing them to debate the elimination of certain athletic and academic programs. Dr. Zito Sartarelli enjoyed an extensive career in business for major international pharmaceutical companies that gave him experience in managing complex organizations, a large number of employees, and overseeing major budgets. The chancellor search committee members agreed that Dr. Sartarelli's previous professional experience could be beneficial in alleviating the financial struggles of the institution.

Dr. Robin Cummings believed that his prior professional background in medicine and leading the North Carolina State Department of Health Care was beneficial to him serving as a chancellor, stating there were many similarities between leadership roles in health care and higher education. Another unique characteristic that Dr. Cummings believed was beneficial to him was his familiarity with the institution and the community. The faculty members, although with initial skepticism, and chancellor search committee members stated that they appreciated

his existing ties to the institution and community and that his prior professional experience leading a complex state organization was beneficial to him in the role of chancellor.

### **Theme Two: Understanding and Respecting Shared Governance is Critical**

Every individual that was interviewed in this research study discussed shared governance and how critical it is at institutions of higher education. The nontraditional chancellors admitted that shared governance was something that they initially struggled with upon entering higher education, especially those with backgrounds in business. However, the nontraditional chancellors stated that as time went on, they learned to respect and embrace the role and importance of shared governance in order to maintain a cohesive campus community. Shared governance was discussed as something that faculty members took very seriously and allows their voices to be heard by the executive leadership team, as well as the opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes at the institution. Along with lacking the academic experience, faculty members were also in consensus expressing their skepticism on questioning how much value and emphasis would be placed on practicing shared governance by a nontraditional chancellor.

The faculty members that also served on the chancellor search committees maintained their same initial skepticism in their role on the chancellor search committee. However, the chancellor search committee chair, and also Chair of UNC Wilmington's Board of Trustees, stated she understood faculty members skepticism on how much a nontraditional chancellor understood the role of shared governance, but encouraged them to be patient, and told them a nontraditional chancellor was nothing to be afraid of. As the interviews progressed, all faculty members praised their respective nontraditional chancellor for making shared governance a



priority, and respecting how vital it is to the decision-making process at institutions of higher education.

### **Theme Three: Nontraditional Chancellors may Face Challenges, but Can Overcome Them**

The three nontraditional chancellors admitted facing challenges that had to be addressed and overcome. As previously mentioned, faculty skepticism of their selection due to their lack of academic background was an initial challenge that needed to be addressed. This led faculty members to question whether the nontraditional chancellors would embrace and respect the mission of the institution, as well as the culture and values of higher education. However, the nontraditional chancellor's overcome this challenge by respecting and embracing the cultural norms of the institution. They also overcame this by respecting and valuing the concept of shared governance and involving faculty members in the process of decision-making on appropriate matters.

Another challenge that was discussed during the interviews with the nontraditional chancellors was college athletics and the role it plays within the life of the institution. One nontraditional candidate spoke candidly to this challenge:

I don't care if you've been a faculty member, and a department chair, and a Dean, and a Provost. Athletics don't report to any of those entities. Athletics reports to the Chancellor or President of the university. I came to ECU after a brand new football coach had been hired the year before...I had no way of knowing, when I showed up here in the summer of 2016, that ECU was getting ready to have three 3-9 football seasons. And so I have spent an extraordinary amount of my time over the last couple of years figuring out how to reboot an athletics program that found itself in a very challenging place. And I also had to deal with the incoming, because I was getting blamed, "Why don't you do this? Why

don't you fire him? Fire this person, fire the AD, fire the coach." Airplanes flying over the stadium. And so nothing really prepares you for that. Division one athletics is always a very challenging part of this. So, I've really had to learn a lot on the job. And I've really taken some hits for that and a lot of criticism. However, with the help of Dave Hart, we've been able to find a way to hit the reset button and hire a new athletic director and new coaches. I think things are much better now, but that's something that really, there's very little out there in a traditional, or many times in a non-traditional path, that prepares you for that (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

Other issues impacting the nontraditional chancellors surround the financial stability of their respective institutions. Numerous things were cited as challenges that needed to be addressed in attempts to alleviate financial concerns at the institutions. These were varied and wide-ranged, from issues of enrollment and retention to decreasing subsidies from state and local government. The next theme that emerged was how the nontraditional chancellors addressed these challenges.

#### **Theme Four: Nontraditional Chancellors Must Develop a Strong Leadership Team**

The previous theme emerged from the nontraditional chancellors, faculty members, and search committee members discussions on challenges that impacted each nontraditional chancellor. The fourth theme emerged when the nontraditional challenges discussed how they overcame those challenges. In attempting to adjust to their new role, acclimate to the campus culture and community, and address challenges, both personally and institution wide; each nontraditional chancellor expressed the importance of building a strong leadership team. Chancellor Sartarelli argued that no one can do this job by themselves and that building a strong leadership team has provided him lifelines that help him in his role.

I think long are the days when you could be a hero on this stuff. The company or the organization, or the university, has a lot of...provide you with a lot of lifelines. You know,...I've got four lawyers in the university, I've got a general counsel, I've got all kinds of experts who can help me make the right decision (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019). Chancellor Staton contended this viewpoint, arguing that no one person can properly run an enterprise as complex as an institution of higher education. Further, it was stated that in order to be successful in the role of chancellor, one must be a collaborative leader and recruit good people.

Since I've been here, I've not even hit the three-year mark, it's just around the corner, but we've had to recruit a new Vice Chancellor for Business Administration, who is the CFO of this enterprise. We've had to recruit a new Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development and Engagement. We've had to recruit a new Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences and Dean of the Brody School of Medicine. We have a new Dean of Engineering and Technology, a new Dean for Health and Human Performance. We have a new Dean for the College of Business. And I'm leaving out a lot of other people, a Chief Communications Officer, Chief of Staff. So, we spend a lot of time just recruiting talent (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

Recruiting accomplished individuals is a necessity, but to build a strong leadership team for an institution it was stated in the interviews, from all groups, that you must find the right people. Finding the right people was described as finding individuals who are not only talented, but can come together as a team, buy into the mission and vision of the institution, and execute strategic plans and initiatives together.

It has already been discussed how the faculty members at the three institutions applauded the nontraditional chancellors efforts to involve the faculty within the decision-making process through the practice of shared governance, even after initial skepticism. In addition, faculty members also stated that they approved of how the nontraditional chancellors went about building strong leadership teams of individuals that were capable of achieving the mission of the institution.

This chancellor has brought with him a full set of people, a range of how he wanted to do things, and an understanding of what it took to get jobs done. I think he's been extraordinarily success at doing all of that. Much of what he has done has been really admirable and I look forward to what's going to happen in the future. Partly because of what he's done in recruiting key leadership positions, like our new Provost Dr. Ward. I really think that we're going to have a future that we would not have if this leadership team was not in place (R. Vela, personal communication, February 28, 2019).

I believe the emergence of this theme was valuable for two reasons. The first one being that, even in the face of initial skepticism, the nontraditional chancellors demonstrated that they understood and respected the role the faculty play at their institution. The second is that each nontraditional chancellor realized this was a job in which they could not successfully do alone and had to surround themselves with individuals that could push their institution forward. This type of collaborative leadership demonstrated by each of the nontraditional chancellors shows they respect and value the mission and values at their respective institutions.

#### **Theme Five: Higher Education is not a Business**

The final theme that emerge from the interviews stemmed from the issue of operating institutions of higher education with practices that align more with private business. It was noted

that a turbulent economic climate has led to financial instabilities at a number of colleges and universities. This has led to some institutions to adopt a business oriented operational model. As this theme emerged in my research study, the discussions highlighted how each group differed in their perspectives on the issue.

The faculty members discussed their displeasure in viewing institutions of higher education as businesses, and operating them as such takes away from the very fundamentals that are the basis of higher education. As those that did not take the traditional academic pathway are often viewed as unqualified by the faculty, one faculty member stated those serving with him on the chancellor search committee viewed those holding titles of CEO or Executive Officer outside of higher education as qualified.

It was clear when I served on the search committee that these people were viewed as CEOs, executive officers, that they were viewed in the same way that you would view an executive officer of a corporation, and therefore somebody who has run a big organization, if it's a corporation or in a government or anywhere else, out to be qualified. That is their view (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

Another faculty member shared his concern that governing boards were also viewing business leaders as qualified applicants that could use their previous experience to benefit the institution.

I think it's vitally important that those who are on boards of trustees, and governors in charge with overseeing institutions of higher education realize that they're not like businesses, that they're just fundamentally different kinds of organizations with different kinds of organizational dynamics and fundamentally a different mission...I mean, we have a university system that has been built over literally 200-plus years and is the envy of most countries of the world...and to view that as an opportunity to apply business

principles from consulting, management consulting firms or what, I think is likely to be misplaced (J. Popke, personal communication, February 18, 2019).

Moreover, applying business principles in operating an institution of higher education would fundamentally harm the overall mission and values of an institution.

In terms of the ultimate missional goals of the institution, it's a little different. You tighten the budget and lay people off in an educational institution, that has an enormous impact on the students and the education that you're trying to serve. In some ways, I think that from the viewpoint of the governing boards, they have the kind of experience that they're looking for, which is how to tighten the belt and manage properly (J. Stiller, personal communication, February 21, 2019).

As faculty members discussed how applying business principles to institutions of higher education was "misplaced", the nontraditional chancellors discussed their belief that institutions of higher education were in fact businesses, but different than any enterprise on Earth. "It makes myself more respectful of the role that a chancellor of a university plays. It is a CEO job, with even more complexity than a regular CEO job" (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019). The nontraditional chancellor discussions shed light on institutions of higher education that hired people straight from the private sector to become a chancellor. Some of those individuals have been successful and a good fit for the institution, but some have also failed. The nontraditional chancellors noted that having business savvy and a business skill-set is valuable to have, but argued that you must have an understanding and respects for the academic enterprise.

I certainly would encourage anyone coming through a nontraditional path to get as much experience as you can with the academic side of the enterprise, because you really do

have to understand, you're not coming into the role in a traditional CEO sense. You don't have that kind of authority as a chancellor or president of a university. I can't tell the Faculty Senate or the committee structure within a university, which courses to approve or not to approve. We have shared governance, we respect that. That's the valuable part of higher education. And if you don't understand that, you're going to step into issues very, very quickly that will make your success very, very difficult (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019).

As two of the faculty members are served on the chancellor search committee held their same view on operating institutions of higher education under a business model, the third chancellor search committee member had a different perspective. Wendy Murphy, chair of the UNC Wilmington chancellor search committee, stated that Dr. Sartarelli's vast background in business was attractive, along with his prior experience serving as Dean of the Business School at West Virginia University.

During the time of the chancellor search, UNCW was facing a period of financial instability. Our backs were on the wall and we were being forced to address the possibilities of cutting athletic and academic programs. Dr. Sartarelli's extensive and successful background caught our eye and we thought he had the necessary skills and experience that could alleviate these financial concerns plaguing the institution. Dr. Sartarelli came to us from West Virginia University, so we knew he had an understanding of how institutions operate. We also believed he was capable of respecting and upholding the mission and values of UNCW (W. Murphy, personal communication, March 11, 2019).

As institutions of higher education and million-, and sometimes billion-, dollar enterprises, they are businesses to a certain extent. However, the interviews demonstrated how they are an enterprise unlike any other, and should not be operated under the same model as a private business because it discredits the core mission and values of higher education. As faculty members expressed their concerns of this occurrence, it was refreshing to hear the nontraditional chancellors discuss how imperative it is to understand and respect the mission and values of higher education.

### **Summary**

As each group of participants, and each individual, contribute their own insight, experiences, and perspectives into the interview dialogue, it was evident that the nontraditional chancellors brought value to their respective institutions. Five common themes emerged across the interviews: (1) The Previous Experiences of Nontraditional Chancellors is Valuable; (2) Understanding and Respecting Shared Governance is Critical; (3) Nontraditional Chancellors Face Challenges, but Can Overcome Them; (4) Nontraditional Chancellors Must Develop a Strong Leadership Team; (5) Higher Education is Not a Business.

For all interview participants, it was well recognized the importance for each nontraditional chancellor to understand, respect, and value the mission of their institution and the overall culture of higher education as well. While each institution faced their own challenges that were unique to them, it was apparent that the backgrounds and previous professional experiences of each nontraditional chancellor prepared them to handle the roles and responsibilities specific to being the chancellor and the complexities of the ever-changing higher education landscape. It was well documented that nontraditional chancellors face challenges and obstacles in the role, especially in terms of initial faculty skepticism and resistance. However, it was acknowledged



that the nontraditional chancellors were generally successful in overcoming the majority of those challenges. It was also deemed vital to the success of the nontraditional chancellor to create and surround themselves with a strong leadership team that respected and believed in the mission of the institution, and the nontraditional chancellors acknowledged and accomplished this.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION**

### **Overall Summary**

In the world of higher education, history has shown us that it is not uncommon for there to be hundreds of president and chancellor searches at colleges and universities throughout the United States in any given year (Alton & Dean, 2002). Today, as colleges and universities continue to face numerous obstacles, there has been an increasing trend of institutions selecting candidates from nontraditional pathways to serve as president or chancellor (Fischer, 2005). A nontraditional candidate is someone who did not follow the traditional academic pathway to the role. The selection of a nontraditional candidate to serve as chancellor or president at an institution of higher education is not a brand new occurrence. However, the amount of research conducted to understand these individuals' motivations for entering academia and their experiences serving in this role has been limited. The majority of studies that have been conducted on presidents and chancellors in academia have been quantitative in design and focus primarily on demographic characteristics. Moreover, there has been minimal qualitative studies focused on presidents and chancellors, and even less qualitative research on the experiences of those presidents and chancellors that took a nontraditional pathway (Davies, 2005).

### **The Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to collect data from three current chancellors that have a nontraditional background and serve at institution within the UNC System about their motivations to enter academia and their lived experiences since serving in the role. The research study was also supported by the perspectives of nontraditional leadership in higher education by faculty members and chancellor search committee members.

Data was collected through the conduction of interviews with the three nontraditional chancellors, three faculty members, and three individuals who served on the chancellor search committee that selected the nontraditional chancellor at their respective institution.

Five common themes emerged from the qualitative research study: (1) The Previous Experience of Nontraditional Chancellors is Valuable; (2) Understanding and Respecting Shared Governance is Critical; (3) Nontraditional Chancellors Face Challenges but Can Overcome Them; (4) Nontraditional Chancellors Must Develop a Strong Leadership Team; (5) Higher Education is Not a Business.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were used to frame the qualitative research study on the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System:

1. How do participating nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System describe their pathway into higher education and what inspired them to take on the role of chancellor? How do the nontraditional chancellors believe this pathway has prepared them for the role of chancellor?
2. What is it like being a nontraditional chancellor in the UNC System? How has being selected as a nontraditional chancellor in the UNC System changed their lives?
3. How have the experiences of being a nontraditional chancellor in the UNC System shaped their leadership style? What did they learn the most? What expectations were met? What was most unexpected?

#### **Research Question One**

The first question asked about the inspirations and motivations of the nontraditional chancellors to enter higher education and assume the role of chancellor. In addition, the

nontraditional chancellors were asked how their previous professional experiences have prepared them for the responsibilities of the role. Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, and Bragg (1983) argue that those in the roles of president or chancellor at an institution of higher education rarely have initial aspirations to achieve the role because there is no definitive route that an individual can take that guarantees them to serve as a president or chancellor. The three nontraditional chancellors at the center of this research study do not refute this claim because they all discussed how they did not start their career with this end goal in mind.

These three individuals had extensive and demonstrated leadership experience in the arenas of politics, private-sector business, and healthcare prior to initially entering higher education and serving in the role of chancellor. They admitted that they did encounter various challenges and obstacles but were confident in and relied on their past leadership experience that properly prepared them to overcome these challenges. Due to the current economic climate and its impact on higher education, the three nontraditional chancellors also believed that their particular backgrounds may be more beneficial to the institution than a candidate who came from the traditional academic pathway. In addition to a turbulent economic climate, Nichol (2018) argues that governmental suppression of academic freedom is also having a negative impact on public higher education within the state of North Carolina. Nichol directed the Center on Poverty, Work, and Opportunity at UNC Chapel Hill. As the center was responsible for the publishing of articles and reports that criticized the Republican controlled North Carolina General Assembly on their policies on poverty, Nichol received numerous threats and warnings from Republican legislatures to never publish anything (Nichol, 2018). As Nichol continued to publish articles that were critical on the poverty policies upheld by North Carolina legislature after warnings and threats, the North Carolina Senate eventually passed an amendment that led to

a four-million-dollar budget cut to UNC Chapel Hill's School of Law (Nichol, 2018). While it is important to develop external relationships with varied constituencies to propel the institution forward, a nontraditional chancellor must also be cognizant to take the appropriate measures to protect his internal constituents and their academic freedoms. This is consistent with the perspective of Trachtenberg, Kauver, and Bogue (2013) who argued that as the climate of higher education becomes increasingly more complex, the role of the chancellor has become more difficult. Due to this, the position of chancellor has become more difficult and demands that the selected individual have substantial experience in varied arenas to ensure the morale of the institution remains high in a turbulent economic and social climate. Terrance MacTaggart (2017) argues that the role of the university presidency is becoming increasingly "outwardly focused". In addition, Bowman (2011) states more nontraditional candidates are being selected as a president or chancellor because the position is becoming more externally focused as fundraising and legislative relations are now key responsibilities of the role.

As each of the three nontraditional chancellors were confident that their previous leadership experience has been beneficial to them in their current role, Dowdall (2000) attributes the increase in nontraditional candidate selection to particular skill-sets they possess from careers outside of academia that are needed to meet certain goals at their respective institutions. This perspective was also supported by faculty members and chancellor search committee members who were interviewed in this research study, as they discussed how the selected nontraditional chancellor's background aligned with the areas of concern at their own institution.

The backgrounds of all three individuals that took nontraditional pathways to the role of chancellor varied in nature and field. However, all were in agreement that their past professional experiences were extremely beneficial on their unsuspected journey to becoming a chancellor in

the UNC System. The chancellor who had experience in government cited that institutions of higher education are extremely complex enterprises and cited his government experience as being beneficial in helping him navigate those diverse complexities of the enterprise, as well as dealing with a large number of diverse constituents. The chancellor with previous experience in medicine and healthcare highlighted the similarities of his previous experiences and higher education, stating that working with doctors and nurses was parallel to working with faculty members and staff to achieve desired goals. As chancellors keep close oversight over the financial and budgetary matters of the institution (Selingo, 2005), having previous experience in managing major budgets and a thorough understanding of financial practices for complex organizations are beneficial. The chancellor with over three decades of experience within the private-sector believed this was beneficial in managing the financial complexities at his institution.

As the three nontraditional chancellors stated how beneficial their previous professional experiences were in their role, they also discussed their motivations and inspirations that led them enter academia. These would include the impact higher education made on their early lives, the encouragement of their peers and mentors, and being professionally challenged by stepping into an unfamiliar leadership role. While this only held true for one selected nontraditional chancellor, another interesting motivation was a prior affiliation to the institution and community. While the faculty member at this institution admitted initial skepticism in the selection of this nontraditional individual, he agreed that having a prior affiliation to and familiarity of the institution and community would be beneficial when acclimating to the role of chancellor. Having a prior understanding of the culture and history of the institution is valuable,

as Bornstein (2005) argued a substantial problem that arises for an individual outside of academia, or who is unfamiliar with the institution, is fitting into its culture.

The nontraditional chancellors demonstrated that their previous leadership experience, along with learned skill-sets, can transfer and benefit them in their role as a chancellor of an institution of higher education. Although all chancellors noted they faced challenges in the role, their previous experience in leadership roles gave them the confidence and knowledge on how to properly address those challenges. As the literature and interviews with the nontraditional chancellors depicted there is no one perfect route to take in order to obtain the role of president or chancellor at an institution of higher education, one could conclude that there are certain professional roles, experiences, and skills that would prepare an individual to meet the demands and responsibilities of the role.

### **Research Question Two**

When asked about their experience since taking the role of chancellor and how it has changed their lives, the three nontraditional chancellors responded in very similar manners. As previously mentioned, the roles of presidents and chancellors in higher education has become “outwardly focused” (MacTaggart, 2017). Managing the increased responsibilities surrounding the establishment of major fundraising campaigns, alumni and donor relations, and representing the institution in community relations and legislative affairs, have become the college and university president or chancellor’s primary focus; leaving the provost to oversee the internal academic operations of the institution (MacTaggart, 2017). As the role of the 21<sup>st</sup> century college or university president or chancellor becomes more “outwardly focused” (MacTaggart, 2017), there has been an increased demand for a president or chancellor to have extensive experience and be well versed in a variety of diverse arenas and develop relationships with many

constituents. All nontraditional chancellors were in agreement of this and acknowledged that a chief executive leader in academia has to interact and develop relationships with a multitude of constituencies that are more diverse and more significant in comparison than the constituencies they interacted with in the private and public sectors they previously held leadership positions in. In order to be successful in this endeavor, MacTaggart (2017) argues that president and chancellors must have “tough-minded realism, sophisticated interpersonal skills, and courage” (p. 7).

Interacting and developing a relationship with a multitude of diverse constituencies takes a lot of time and energy. The three nontraditional chancellors were quick to acknowledge how the role of chancellor at an institution of higher education is one that is twenty-four hours and a day and seven days a week. They also discussed how the role can take a toll on your mental and physical well-being at times. One of the nontraditional chancellors described one of his typical days as having an 8:00 a.m. meeting, only to have three more meetings right after. Then having to attend a community event that afternoon, and shortly after making an appearance at a university athletics event. He stated this was followed by hosting an evening reception at the chancellor’s home. “By the time everyone heads home, and the caterers leave it is almost midnight, and guess what? You have to wake up and do it all over again the next day” (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019). Another nontraditional chancellor told me he had just gotten back from a meeting with the state legislature in Raleigh, North Carolina five minutes before I arrived to interview him. He then proceeded to discuss how he would be in meetings all afternoon, and then was the keynote speaker at a chamber of commerce event that night.

These lived experiences of the nontraditional chancellors align with the findings of the 2017 ACE American College President Study. When asked what their biggest challenges were,



45% of the participating first-time presidents and chancellors said lack of time to think, while 30.1% of participants answered too many demands and not enough time.

As the nontraditional chancellors discussed the enormous demands of the role, they also discussed the toll it can have on an individual mentally and physically, and perhaps a reason that the average tenure of presidents and chancellors continues to decrease. Gagliardi et al. (2017) argues that it is soon expected that over half of current college and university presidents and chancellors are expected to leave in five years or less. “You have to block time because, again, you may be a high energy person, you have to be to do this job, but if you burn yourself, both ends of the candle, very long, it will take a toll” (C. Staton, person communication, February 25, 2019). The importance of mental and physical well-being, which was described by the nontraditional chancellors as imperative to the role, was also found in the literature. MacTaggart (2017) argues that the ability to sustain one’s personal mental health in a complex environment is one of the personal qualities an individual must possess when serving in the role of a college or university president or chancellor.

In order to combat a turbulent economic climate, as well as a state political climate, which continues to extensively reduce budgets and micromanage public institutions within the state, the roles and responsibilities of presidents and chancellors at institutions of higher education have increased and become more demanding (Beardsley, 2017). The interviews with the three nontraditional chancellors and the literature gave aligning evidence that the role has become increasingly outwardly focused. This demands chancellors, both traditional and nontraditional, to interact and build relationships with numerous diverse constituents, along with those within the campus community as well. As the roles and responsibilities have increased, the literature and interviews agreed that the role of the 21<sup>st</sup> century chancellor has become extremely

demanding and time consuming, which can take a toll on an individual's physical and mental well-being. From the information collected through the conduction of interviews with the three nontraditional chancellors and previous literature, one can conclude that in order for a chancellor at an institution of higher education to meet the demands and be successful in the role, they must first make sure they are taking the time to take care of themselves.

### **Research Question Three**

Research question three aimed to discover how serving as a nontraditional chancellor influenced and shaped their style, what they learned, and what were some unexpected challenges. Although it was not unexpected, when speaking of challenges encountered since taking the role, all three nontraditional chancellors stated that faculty and campus stakeholder resistance and opposition of a nontraditional chancellor was the primary challenge. In several cases, the selection of a president or chancellor from a nontraditional pathway has led to faculty and campus stakeholder oppositions and initial questions of credibility (Bowman, 2011). The literature states that resistance and skepticism from faculty members is based on a number of premises. Bowman (2011) argues that faculty members and campus stakeholders assume that an executive leader from a nonacademic background could disregard key principles of higher education, such as shared governance and academic traditions. Further, faculty members can be particularly dubious of nontraditional chancellors, who lack scholarly credentials, which has traditionally meant a doctoral degree (Ivory, 2017). As lacking proper academic credentials has been cited as a main principle of faculty resistance to nontraditional chancellors, it is of importance to review the three nontraditional chancellor's academic backgrounds. Two of the nontraditional chancellors possess a doctoral degree, as well as a master's degree, and the third possesses a medical degree. By observing the three nontraditional chancellor's academic

achievements, one would be hard pressed to say they are uneducated. In addition, faculty members are resistant towards nontraditional chancellors or president under the assumption that their nontraditional backgrounds will lead them to operate institutions of higher education under a business model. As public support of higher education continues to decline, a turbulent economic climate and varying societal issues have negatively impacted institutions of higher education (Freeland, 2018). A decrease in federal and state funding to higher education has left institution's with large budget deficits as well. In efforts to combat these obstacles and increase efficiency and effectiveness, many institutions have adopted operation models that align more with business organization practices and less from the traditional academic perspective (Ivory, 2017). The faculty members interviewed believe that running an institution of higher education using a business model of operations would undermine the real mission of the institution. With that mission being to produce the highest level of educational access and success for students and intellectual success of the scholarly endeavor. Further, the faculty members discussed questioning the nontraditional chancellor's commitment to the mission of their institution and value its traditions. It was also noted that operating a college or university under a business model could jeopardize the very moral and ethical principles academia was founded on. Larry Nielson (2013) expresses these sentiments by arguing, "if we ran the institutions of higher education in the same manner of a business, we would all be in jail within a week". A challenge that was unexpected, or perhaps unfamiliar, to the nontraditional chancellors was the deliberative decision-making process in higher education. This decision-making process is slower in comparison to the sectors of their previous occupations, and the nontraditional chancellors discussed how it was something they had to adjust to upon entering higher education. One nontraditional chancellor stated that the slow pace of the consensus-building process in academia

was initially frustrating because everything was urgent, and decisions were made right away, usually from the top down, in the private sector. As the public perception of higher education is eroding (Beardsley, 2017), one faculty member theorized that there has been an increase in the selection of candidates from nontraditional pathways due to a belief that they can be a “disruptor”. “But I think the perception is if you get somebody from outside of academia, they can kind of shake things up, get these institutions, you know, unfossilized and moving quicker and more nimble” (J. Popke, personal communication, February 18, 2019). As there may be a perception among individuals that nontraditional candidates are selected to be presidents and chancellors to “disrupt” or “unfossilize” the decision-making processes at institutions, despite initial frustration, the three nontraditional chancellors appeared to respect and appreciate that it was part of the tradition of academia.

The last unexpected challenge the three nontraditional chancellors discussed was the increasing amount of student activism occurring on college campuses nationwide and how to properly manage it. Previous literature states that typically, student activism causes are justified (MacTaggart, 2017). One nontraditional chancellor highlighted the importance of free speech: The issues of free speech on campus, which we are a very strong believer in free speech. How do you do free speech on campus, at the same time providing dignity to people and respect? You have to do both. In a democratic system, you have to do both. It’s not a, you know, “Forget it. I’m not going to do one, I’m going to do the other”. You have to do both, because the very preservation of free speech is preservation of democracy. You’ve got to do it (Z. Sartarelli, personal communication, February 27, 2019).

While it is important to protect free speech and the right to protest, the nontraditional chancellors discussed how critical it was to use caution when decided to become involved and

engage in student activism events. As student activism increases on campuses across the nation, several presidents and chancellors at institutions have become involved in high-profile debates with students and other institutional stakeholders, which ultimately led to them resigning (Selingo et al., 2017), this group includes former UNC Chapel Hill Chancellor, Dr. Carol Folt.

As the above sections of Research Question Three addressed the challenges the three nontraditional chancellors encountered, this second part will address what they've learned and how they overcame obstacles. Fisher and Koch (1996) argue that the position of a college or university president holds a distinctive authority that enables presidents to transform an institution of higher education, beginning with the board of trustees and moving downward through the institution. As all nontraditional chancellors, faculty members, and chancellor search committee members highlighted the skepticism the selection of a nontraditional chancellor was met with, combined with supporting literature, one could argue it would be difficult for a nontraditional chancellor to make a positive impact on the institution if they did not have the support of the campus community. Birnbaum (1992) theorized that college and university presidents and chancellors can legitimize their tenure by interacting and developing relationships with institutional stakeholders and the campus community. Throughout the interviews and previous literature, it has been well documented that one of the main these of faculty resistance to the selection of a nontraditional chancellor or president, is the skepticism on whether or not they value and respect the traditions of higher education, such as shared governance. Like the structure within any industry, higher education has its own culture, discourse, standards, and processes that chancellors must maneuver and appreciate (Beardsley, 2017). While one nontraditional chancellor admitted shared governance was something he was unfamiliar with, all recognized how important shared governance was and how they value the tradition of it in higher

education. Allowing faculty to have a voice on institutional matters is one way a nontraditional chancellor can legitimize their tenure (Delabbio, 2006). Further, enacting shared governance can also be beneficial in allowing faculty exposure to the tough decisions a chancellor has to make that are in the best interests of the institution. While understanding and respecting the importance of shared governance is an initial concern of faculty members when it comes to nontraditional chancellors, previously literature argues that the past professional experiences of nontraditional candidates can be beneficial to the process. Atwell and Wilson (2003) state that one of the first responsibilities of leaders is to “help the faculty and other stakeholders understand the difficult choices ahead for institutions of higher education, while keeping policymakers focused on the increasing demand for student access” (p. 25). The nontraditional chancellors previously stated that their past professional experience gives them the confidence to know they could lead an institution of higher education. In the three varied fields the nontraditional chancellors arrived from, all discussed making difficult decisions and enacting policy and strategies that were sometimes met with opposition. Having the self-confidence and interpersonal skills to properly communicate with those that may not be in favor of a decision was described as necessary for presidents and chancellors at institutions of higher education (Barrax, 1985). All three categories of individuals recognized the importance of shared governance in the decision-making process of higher education. The nontraditional chancellors also discussed how valuing shared governance and upholding its principles can help build a better rapport with institutional stakeholders, who may have had initial skepticism. However, due to the current climate of higher education, there are times when difficult decisions need to be made that everyone will not be in favor of. As the nontraditional chancellors stated their respect for shared governance, they also discussed how

their previous professional experiences gave them the confidence in making unpopular decisions that are in the best interest of the institution.

It has already been discussed that the roles and responsibilities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century chancellor require establishing relationships with a variety of constituents, both internal and external. As it was stated that no one person can do the job of chancellor successfully on their own, they all discussed the importance of being a collaborative leader in their role. Bornstein (2002) states that presidents and chancellors “must exhibit a leadership style that positively influences and is cohesive to the culture of the institution to gain legitimacy” (p. 25). Expressing their respect for the tradition of shared governance with faculty is one example of how the nontraditional chancellors stated it took being a collaborative leader in order to achieve success. As the role of chancellor has become more “outwardly focused” (MacTaggart, 2017), the three nontraditional chancellors discussed the importance of developing a strong leadership team to first, help them acclimate to the role and campus community, as well as finding individuals capable of overseeing internal operations, if they had to focus on external matters. The nontraditional chancellors, faculty members, and chancellor search committee members stated how important it was to not only find qualified individuals but find those individuals who are the right fit and bought into the mission of the institution. Another important part of finding the right people was that they can aid the chancellor in making the correct moral and ethical decisions. This is why one of the nontraditional chancellors stated he had a team of four lawyers working for him that advised in decision-making, if needed. Higdon (2003) argues that “recruiting, hiring, and retaining the right senior executive leadership team is crucial to helping the institution move in the right direction” (p. C1). One faculty member discussed that his institution had a desire to increase their health sciences programs, but under the previous traditional pathway chancellor,

there was very little progress made. He went on to discuss how the nontraditional had been very active and successful in cultivating a senior leadership team that was the right fit and bought into the nontraditional chancellor's vision for the institution. The faculty member also applauded the nontraditional chancellor for his successful recruiting of a provost that had extensive experience in developing health sciences programs at a similar institution.

Across the interviews and literature, it was discussed how the nontraditional chancellor's use of a collaborative leadership style was essential in creating a positive, interactive, and engaged campus community. The development of a strong executive leadership team was also viewed as important, as these individuals can assist the nontraditional chancellor in acclimating to the role and campus community, while also contribute in the decision-making processes to propel the institution forward.

### **Limitations**

The initial section on limitations, found in chapter three, discussed my perceived notions on what could possibly impact my research study. As suspected, navigating and negotiating access to individuals with extremely demanding schedules, especially those of the nontraditional chancellors, was something that impacted the timeline of my proposed research study. The demanding schedules of individuals also altered my interview methods, as I had to conduct the initial interview with one individual over the phone.

In my initial research study design, I had planned to recruit then - UNC System President Margaret Spellings to participate. However, before I had an opportunity to discuss her participation, Ms. Spellings abruptly announced her resignation as UNC System President. As Ms. Spellings had the final say on the selection of the three nontraditional chancellors, it would have added rich detail on her perspectives of nontraditional leadership in higher education and



why she believed the three candidates, and their past professional experiences, were viewed as the most qualified.

### **Practical Applications**

The last question on the research study interview protocol for the three nontraditional chancellors asked them to reflect and discuss what advice they would give someone from a nontraditional background that aspires to enter academia in a leadership position. This question aimed to provide insight to the audience and individuals aspiring to enter higher education from a nontraditional background, but also to learn about what guidance the three nontraditional chancellors may have wished they had before they made the move into higher education.

Birnbaum and Umbach (2001) argue that the lack of a terminal degree, PhD or EdD, is detrimental to a president or chancellor at an institution of higher education. The lack of a terminal degree may lead to faculty members and others to believe that these nontraditional individuals do not understand or value the mission of higher education. As previously mentioned, this is important because all three nontraditional chancellor selections were met with criticism from faculty members and other institutional stakeholders. However, two of the nontraditional chancellors possess a PhD, while the third possesses an MD. Thus, one could argue that, while these individuals may have entered academia from a nontraditional pathway, they still respect and value the mission of academia.

One nontraditional chancellor, who described himself as having the perfect “trifecta” of experience in business, politics, and education to serve as chancellor, stressed how important it was for nontraditional leaders to gain as much experience as they could with the academic side of the enterprise. This was believed to be imperative among all of those that were interviewed. As one nontraditional chancellor described academia as “the grandest of enterprises, but also a

very strange one” (C. Staton, personal communication, February 25, 2019), individuals may think they know how academe works or should work, but often times are wrong or have misconceptions. Another nontraditional chancellor stated the importance of buying into the mission and values of the institution is essential. It was stated that an individual could step into the role full of great ideas and strategies on ways to propel the institution forward. However, if that individual does not abide by the missions and values of higher education while enacting these ideas, they will ultimately fail. While all individuals were in agreement that individuals coming from nontraditional backgrounds benefit greatly from gaining experience and an appreciation for the academic side of the house, it is important to note that two of the nontraditional chancellors served in leadership roles at other institutions before being selected as chancellor. Due to this, one could assume their experiences already within higher education, helped them develop an understanding and appreciation of the academic side. While the third nontraditional chancellor did not have previous professional experience in higher education, he did previously serve as the institution’s Board of Trustees Chair. Serving as chair allowed him to gain familiarity to the institution, experience in the decision-making process in higher education, and an appreciation for academia.

While gaining experience and developing an appreciation for the academia side of the house was deemed as imperative to those aspiring to enter higher education from nontraditional pathways, another chancellor suggested the individual take time to look within themselves. He stated an individual aspiring to hold a leadership role in higher education must possess a series of guiding principles, in which they use to lead and make decisions. Further, he stressed the importance of anyone in a leadership position having clear ethics and being transparent. Finally, he said in order for anyone to be successful in the role, traditional or nontraditional, you must

create, and promote, a culture of reporting and accountability to ensure a positive campus community. All individuals agreed that ideas and strategies were needed to alleviate critical areas of concern at their institution, but cited these strategies need to be ethically, morally, and lawfully right.

Finally, it was suggested that a future nontraditional chancellor have an individual or develop a team at the institution, who could serve as an advisor and mentor to help the nontraditional chancellor acclimate to the role. It was noted that these individuals should be trustworthy and possess the confidence to be straightforward with the chancellor on difficult institutional matters.

### **Opportunities for Future Research**

As there has been numerous studies conducted surrounding the academic presidency, very little scholarly research has been conducted to examine the overall efficiency of nontraditional presidents and chancellors or the issues they face in adjusting to academic culture (Heuvel, 2017). The following suggestions are interesting areas of future research that could build off the findings of this research study.

First, the research study was based off the conduction of interviews with three different groups of individuals: nontraditional chancellors, faculty members, and chancellor search committee members. All individuals involved in this study serve in their role at an institution in the UNC System. Conducting a similar study that also involved traditional pathway chancellors from UNC System institutions would allow for additional data that may aid in quantifying the results of the research study. A comparison of the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors and traditional chancellors, their motivations, and challenges they have faced would provide insight on if challenges faced are subject to the chancellor's background or could be encountered

by all chancellors, no matter the background. A study surrounding the lived experiences of traditional and nontraditional pathway chancellors may also shed light on critical areas of concern within the UNC System. Learning the perspectives on nontraditional leadership in higher education from traditional background chancellors would also add another dynamic to the study.

Second, as previously mentioned, this study was conducted with nontraditional chancellors, faculty members, and chancellor search committee members from institutions within the UNC System. As each university state system faces obstacles and challenges that are specific to them, it would be interesting to conduct a research study on nontraditional leadership in higher education, within another university state system, to see if the perspectives on nontraditional leadership and the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors, align or differ from the findings of this study. In addition, it would be interesting to conduct a research study on the perspectives on nontraditional leadership in higher education and the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors or presidents within private institutions.

Third, while numerous studies have been conducted on the traditional pathway presidency, they have mainly been quantitative in nature, focusing on demographic characteristics. Conducting a qualitative study with traditional chancellors or presidents on how their education has prepared them and benefitted them in the role, their motivations and aspirations to enter the role, as well as their lived experiences since serving in the role, would be beneficial and contribute to the lack of qualitative studies on the traditional academic presidency.

### **Conclusion**

Based upon previous literature and the research conducted through interviews, an individual can draw a number of conclusions about the lived experiences of nontraditional

chancellors. The nontraditional chancellors had demonstrated successful previous leadership experience that gave them the knowledge and confidence to lead a large, complex organization. A turbulent economic climate has negatively impacted institutions of higher education, forcing them to do more with less (Beardsley, 2017). All three nontraditional chancellors had extensive managerial and leadership experience in an impressive array of professional arenas outside of higher education. The findings are consistent with that of Ivory (2017), who stated that due to the influence of a turbulent economic climate, candidates with experience in overseeing major change initiatives and those within the private sector, who have increased their organization's profit margin and have grown the organization, are now being seriously considered during college and university president and chancellor searches.

In efforts to combat challenges and obstacles of the institution, it was said that the roles and responsibilities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century chancellor have become increasingly "outwardly focused" (MacTaggart, 2017). Combatting these challenges has now made it an expectation of the college or university chancellor to develop collaborative relationships and partnerships within these communities (Gavazzi et al., 2014). It was noted that perhaps the hiring of nontraditional candidates to serve as chancellor is because of certain skill-sets they possess that may be needed to meet certain goals of an institution (Dowdall, 2000). It was acknowledged that the past experiences of nontraditional chancellors may have been attracted to chancellor search committees. Bowman (2011) supports this by arguing governing boards are increasingly open to hiring outside the academic ranks, mainly because the position has become more externally focused as fundraising and legislative relations are now key responsibilities of the president or chancellor.

As building external relationships with constituencies has been deemed a critical responsibility of the role of the 21<sup>st</sup> century chancellor or president, cultivating and maintaining positive relationships with internal stakeholders, such as faculty, staff, students, and the governing board, is still a vital component of the mission of the institution and responsibility of the chancellor or president. In efforts to legitimize their selection and tenure, both the literature and interview data state that the nontraditional chancellor must immerse themselves within the campus community and uphold the values, vision, and traditions of higher education, such as the practice of shared governance.

The research study yielded results that align and parallel with the findings of previous studies of this nature. However, as previously mentioned, there has been very little research regarding the experience of nontraditional chancellors and presidents. Due to this, the research study discovered significant findings that include the following:

- The past professional experiences of nontraditional chancellors are valuable, and perhaps more valuable than those of a traditional academic pathway chancellor, to meet the demands of the role in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Nontraditional chancellors will absolutely face challenges and obstacles, especially in terms of faculty resistance, but can overcome them.
- It is essential that a nontraditional chancellor cultivate a strong leadership team to help in acclimating to the role and the institution, as well as aid in the decision-making process.
- Higher education is not a business and will never be one. Further, those nontraditional chancellors that do attempt to run an institution like one will surely fail.

- Leadership skills acquired in other sectors can also be used and are beneficial in the world of higher education.

Relying on their leadership skills, confidence from past professional experiences, and buying into the tradition and values of the institution, presidents and chancellors from nontraditional pathways have proven their value and capability to immerse themselves within the campus community and become effective leaders that are beneficial to the institution and its stakeholders. They have adapted their leadership style and skill-sets to acclimate to the world of higher education, along with the demands of their institution, but still use their confidence in decision-making even in the face of opposition.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century president or chancellor at an institution of higher education has witnessed an increase in the demands and responsibilities of the role. Given that the role has become more externally focused, growth of the institution can be strictly aligned with their ability to develop relationships with a multitude of diverse constituents. In addition, a turbulent economic climate is forcing colleges and universities to find candidates that have experience managing complex organizations, a large number of employees, and major budgets. Due to these needs of institutions of higher education in today's world, one could state that it is perhaps likely to witness more presidents and chancellors being selected that arrive from nontraditional pathways.

## REFERENCES

- Alton, B., & Dean, K. (2002). Why presidents think the grass is greener. *Trusteeship*, 10(3), 19-23.
- Alvarez, L., & Buckley, C. (2013, July 13). Zimmerman is acquitted in Trayvon Martin killing. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/14/US/george-zimmerman-verdict-trayvon-martin.html>
- Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges. (2016). Shared governance: Is ok good enough? Retrieved from [https://www.agb.org/sites/default/files/survey\\_2016\\_shared\\_governance.pdf](https://www.agb.org/sites/default/files/survey_2016_shared_governance.pdf)
- Atwell, R., & Wilson, B. (2003, March). A nontraditional president may fit just right. *Trusteeship*, 24-28.
- Ault, B. (2017). *Insight from the top: Experiences that best prepare presidents to lead institutions of higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (Order No. 10271009). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.jproxy.lib.ecu/docview/1965482217?accountid=10639>
- Barrax, J. (1985, Winter). A comparative profile of female and male university administrators. *Journal of the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors*, 26-31.
- Basinger, J. (2001). Private sources play more of a role in paying public-university chiefs. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 48(14), A.24-A.26.
- Beardsley, S. (2017). *Higher calling: The rise of nontraditional leaders in academia*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press.
- Bensimon, E. (1991, November). The social processes through which faculty shape the image of a new president. *Journal of Higher Education*, 62(6), 637-660.



- Birnbaum, R. (1988). Presidential searches and the discovery of organizational goals. *Journal of Higher Education*, 59(5), 489-509.
- Birnbaum, R. (1992). How academic leadership works: Understanding success and failure in the college presidency. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Birnbaum, R., & Umbach, P. (2001). Scholar, steward, spanner, stranger: The four careers paths of college presidents. *The review of Higher Education*, 24(3), 203-17.
- Blimling, G., & Whitt, E. (1999). Identifying the principles that guide student affairs practice'. In G. Blimling & E. Whitt, *Good practice in student affairs: Principles to foster student learning* (1-20). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bornstein, R. (2002). Redefining presidential leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *The Presidency*, 5(3), 16-19.
- Bornstein, R. (2003). *Legitimacy in the academic presidency*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.
- Bornstein, R. (2005, November 4). The nature and nurture of presidents. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. B10.
- Bowen, W. (2011). *Lessons learned: Reflections of a university president*. Princeton University Press.
- Bowman, K. (2011, Summer). Nontraditional candidates often a natural fit for campus top spot. *The Presidential Pipeline*, 16-19.
- Boyce, P. (2004, March). Letter from the president. *Australasian Psychiatry*, 12(1), 85-86.
- Brink, H. (1993, March 13). Validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Curationis*, 16(2), 35-37. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4102/curationis.v16i2.1396>
- Brown, A. (2011). *Cautionary tales: Strategy lessons from struggling colleges*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>

- Carbone, R. (1981). *Presidential passages*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Clandinin, D., & Connelly, F. (2000). *Handbook of narrative inquiry: Mapping a methodology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Cohen, M., & March, J. (1974). *Leadership and ambiguity: The American college presidency*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Cohen, M., & March, J. (1986). *Leadership and ambiguity: The American college president (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. Cambridge, MA: The Harvard Business School Press.
- Corrigan, M. (2002). *The American college president: 2002 edition*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
- Cottom, T., Hunnicut, S., & Johnson, J. (2018, May 22). The ties that corporatize: A social network analysis of university presidents as vectors of higher education corporatization. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/wpcfq>
- Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (4<sup>th</sup> ed.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Davies, R. (2005). *The new university president: How nontraditional presidents construct their presidencies*. The State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY.
- Delabbio, D. (2006). *Non-traditional paths to presidencies of higher education institutions in Michigan*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI.

- Desrochers, D., & Wellman, J. (2011). *Trends in college spending 1999-2010*. Delta Cost Project. Washington, DC.
- Die, A. (1999). Going the distance: Reflections of presidential longevity. *The Presidency*, 3(2), 32-37.
- Dorich, D. (1991). The making of a president. *Currents*, 17(4), 6-11.
- Dowdall, J. (2000). Pathways to the presidency. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Pathways-to-the-Presidency/46337>
- Dowdall, J. (2001). The final steps to a presidency. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-Final-Steps-to-a/45480>
- Dowdall, J. (2012). Search consultants and the presidency. *The Presidency, Spring Supplement*, 15-16.
- East Carolina University. (2019). *ECU by the numbers*. Retrieved from <https://facts.ecu.edu>
- Eisner, E. (2017). The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 111, 262. doi:10.1080/00220671.1362220
- Fain, P. (2004). Help wanted please. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 1-4.
- Fischer, K. (2005). Running for a different kind of office. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, A18-19.
- Fisher, J., & Koch, J. (1996). *Presidential leadership: Making a difference*. American Council on Education/Oryx Press series on higher education. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Freeland, R. (2018, March 7). Yes, higher ed is a business-but it's also a calling. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Yes-Higher-Ed-Is-a-Business/242852>

- Gagliardi, J., Espinosa, L., Turk, J., & Morgan, T. (2017). American college presidents study 2017. *American Council on Education*. Retrieved from [www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/American-College-President-Study.aspx](http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/American-College-President-Study.aspx)
- Garza, A. (2014). *A herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter movement*. Retrieved from North Seattle College, News Web site: [https://www.news.northseattle.edu/files/blacklivesmatter\\_Herstory.pdf](https://www.news.northseattle.edu/files/blacklivesmatter_Herstory.pdf)
- Gavazzi, S., Fox, M., & Martin, J. (2014). Understanding campus and community relationships through marriage and family metaphors: A town-gown typology. *Innovative Higher Education*, 39(5), 361-374.
- Glover, G. (2005). *The new college president initiates change: A qualitative inquiry into how a group of first-time college presidents of varying career backgrounds approach learning and change during their transitions into office*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University.
- Goldring, W., & Greenfield, W. (2002). Understanding the evolving concept of leadership in education: Roles, expectations and dilemmas. In J. Murphy, *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. 1001<sup>st</sup> Yearbook for the National Society for the Study of Education (Chapter 1). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Guilbault, M. (2018). Students as customers in higher education: The (controversial) debate needs to end. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 40, 295-298. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S09696989173?via%3Dihub>
- Heuvel, S. (2017). Understanding a new type of higher education leader: A call to arms to study nontraditional college presidents. *International Leadership Journal*, 9(2), 80-84.
- Higdon, L. (2003, December 5). Making the team. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. C1.

- Higher Education Program and Policy Council. (2017). *Shared governance in college and universities*, p.4.
- Hofstede, G., Van Deusen, C., Mueller, C., & Charles, T. (2002). What goals do business leaders pursue? A study in fifteen countries. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 33(4), 785-803.
- Hoyle, M. (2009, January 16). How does a President shut down a college? *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.chronicle.com/article/How-does-a-President-shut-down/17468>
- Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research. (2015). *The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education* (2015 ed.). Bloomington, IN. Retrieved from [carnegieclassifications.iu.edu](http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu)
- Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). *Research ethics for social scientists: Between ethical conduct and regulatory compliance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Ivory, J. (2017). *A review of nontraditional presidents in higher education: Benefits and challenges of change agents in colleges and universities*. Benedictine University, Lisle, Illinois.
- Kauffman, J. (1982, May). The college presidency: Yesterday and today. *Changes*, 12-19.
- Kelderman, K. (2018, May 21). Frustrated professors shut down a chancellor search, leaving UMass's president 'mortified'. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Frustrated-Professors-Shut/243479>
- Kiley, K. (2012, October 4). Searching for an answer. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2012/10/04/major-turnover-research-university-presidencies-could-lead-unconventional-picks>

- Kisslinger, J. (2004). Dwight D. Eisenhower. *C250 Celebrates Columbians Ahead of Their Time*. Retrieved from Columbia University Web site: [c250.columbia.edu/c250\\_celebrates/remarkable\\_columbians/dwight\\_d\\_eisenhower.html](http://c250.columbia.edu/c250_celebrates/remarkable_columbians/dwight_d_eisenhower.html)
- Knapp, J. C., & Siegel, D. J. (Eds.). (2019). *The business of higher education: Leadership and culture* (Vol. 1). Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC.
- Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (2002). *The leadership challenge*. Joseey-Bass. 173-189.
- Kruse, S., & Beck, E. (1928, May). A study of the presidents of state teachers and of state universities. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 358-361.
- Lambert, M. (2015). Privatization and the public good. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 47(3), 6-13.
- Langford, C., & Speight, M. (2015). #BlackLivesMatter: Epistemic positioning, challenges, and possibilities. *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric*, 3/4, 78-89. Retrieved from [https://www.contemporaryrhetoric.com/wpcontent/uploads/2017/01/Langford\\_Speight\\_1\\_1\\_4.pdf](https://www.contemporaryrhetoric.com/wpcontent/uploads/2017/01/Langford_Speight_1_1_4.pdf)
- Leininger, M. (1992). *Culture care, diversity and universality: A theory of nursing*. New York, NY: National League for Nursing.
- Lieblich, A., Tuval-Mashiach, R., & Zilber, T. (1998). Narrative research: Reading, analysis, and interpretation. *Applied Social Research Methods*, 47. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Locke, L., Spirduso, W., & Silverman, S. (2000). *Proposals that work* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Locke, L., Spirduso, W., & Silverman, S. (2013). *Proposals that work: A guide for planning dissertations and grant proposals* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

- MacTaggart, T. (2017). *The 21<sup>st</sup> century presidency: A call to enterprise*. Retrieved from <https://www.agb.org/trusteeship/2017/julyaugust/new-paths-to-the-presidency>
- Martin, J., & Samuels, J. E. (2004). *Presidential transition in higher education: Managing leadership change*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Merriam-Webster dictionary*. (2018). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Incorporated.
- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Miles, M., Huberman, A., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Mitchell, M., & Leachman, M. (2015, May 13). Years of cuts threaten to put college out of reach for more students. *Center on Budget and Policy Priorities*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/s-13-15sfp.pdf>
- Moore, K., Salimbene, A., Marlier, J., & Bragg, S. (1983). The structure of presidents' and deans' career. *Journal of Higher Education*, 54(5), 500-515.
- Morse, J. (2009). Approaches to qualitative-quantitative methodological triangulation. *Nursing Research*, 40(1), 120-123.
- Nichol, G. (2018, November). Political interferences with academic freedom and free speech at public universities: The threat of governmental suppression of academic inquiry. *American Association of University Professors*. Retrieved from <https://www.aaup.org/article/political-interference-academic-freedom-and-free-speech-public-universities.XRqc1C2ZNxg>
- Nielsen, L. (2013). *Provost: Experiences, reflections, and advice from a former "number two" on campus*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

- Norrena, J. (2015). *Black lives matter teach-in highlights CCA's commitment to diversity*. Retrieved from <https://www.cca.edu/news/2015/03/12/black-lives-matter-teach-highlights-ccas-commitment-diversity>
- Pierce, S. (2011). *On being presidential: A guide for college and university leaders*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Pomeranz, J. (2019, January 28). How to fix the UNC Board of Governors. *The News & Observer*. Retrieved from <https://www.newsobserver.com>
- Rhodes, F. (1998, Spring). The art of the presidency. *The Presidency*, 1(1), 14-18.
- Riessman, C. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Salimbene, A. (1982). *Pathways to the presidency: An examination of the careers of current college and university chief executives*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The Pennsylvania State University.
- Sandeen, A. (1991). *The chief student affairs officer: Leader, manager, mediator, educator*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 200-237.
- Schmidt, P. (2014, September 24). Florida State U. board picks politician as president despite widespread protest. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from [http://chronicle.com/article/Florida-State-U-Board-Picks/148975/?cid=at&utm\\_source=at&utm\\_medium](http://chronicle.com/article/Florida-State-U-Board-Picks/148975/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium)
- Selingo, J. (2005). A Chronicle survey: What presidents think. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp. A26-A27.



- Selingo, J. (2013, March 4). As colleges evolve, so must their presidents. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/As-Colleges-Evolve-So-Must/137635>
- Selingo, J., Chheng, S., & Clark, C. (2017, April 18). Pathways to the university presidency. *The future of higher education leadership*. Retrieved from <https://duppress.deloitte.com/dup-us-en/industry/public-sector/college-presidency-higher-education-leadership.html>
- Shapiro, D., Dunder, A., Yuan, X., Harrell, A., & Wakhungu, P. K. (2014, November). *Completing college: A national view of student attainment rates-fall 2008 cohort*. (Signature Report No. 8). Herndon, VA: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.
- Slaughter, S., & Rhoades, G. (2004). *Academic capitalism in the new economy*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Stoke, H. (1959). *The American college president*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers Publishing.
- Swain, H. (2016, May 14). The business of running a university. *Higher education network*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2016/may/14/the-business-of-running-a-university>
- Thelin, J. (2004). *A History of American Higher Education* (pp. 1-40): John Hopkins University Press.
- The University of North Carolina at Pembroke. (2018a). *Quick facts*. Retrieved from <https://www.uncp.edu/about/quick-facts>
- The University of North Carolina at Pembroke. (2018b). *Meet the chancellor*. Retrieved from <https://www.uncp.edu/resources/chancellor/meet-chancellor>

- The University of North Carolina System. (2017). Our campuses. Retrieved from <https://www.northcarolina.edu>
- The University of North Carolina Wilmington. (2016a). *About UNCW*. Retrieved from <https://uncw.edu/aboutuncw/>
- The University of North Carolina Wilmington. (2016b). *Office of the chancellor*. Retrieved from <https://uncw.edu/chancellor/profile.html>
- Trachtenberg, S., Kauver, G., & Bogue, E. (2013). *Presidencies derailed: Why university leaders fail and how to prevent it*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). *The Condition of Education 2017* (NCES 2017-144). Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=75>
- Wessel, R., & Keim, M. (1994, March). Career patterns of private four-year college and university presidents in the United States. *Journal of Higher Education*, 65(2), 211-225.
- Wilkins, W. (2012). On not aspiring to the presidency. *The Presidency, Spring Supplement*, 8-10.
- Zemsky, R. (2009). *Making reform work: The case for transforming American higher education*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Zwell, M. (1999). *Creating a culture of competence*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.

## APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER



**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board**  
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building- Mail Stop 682  
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834  
Office 252-744-2914 @ · Fax 252-744-2284 @ ·  
[www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb)

### Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

**From:** Social/Behavioral IRB  
**To:** [Glen Burnette](#)  
**CC:** [Crystal Chambers](#)  
**Date:** 12/3/2018  
**Re:** [UMCIRB 18-002379](#)  
The Lived Experiences of Nontraditional Chancellors in the UNC System

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 12/3/2018 to 12/2/2019. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Nontraditional Pathways to the University Presidency: The Lived Experiences of Contemporary Chancellors in the University of North Carolina System	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Research Study Participant Interview Protocol	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Research Study Participant Recruitment Documents	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Updated Research Study Participant Consent Form	Consent Forms

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR UNC SYSTEM CHANCELLORS**

1. What inspired you to enter the field of higher education and pursue the role of chancellor?
2. How have your prior professional experiences prepared you for the role of chancellor?
3. What experiences do you believe have best prepared you to serve as a chancellor in the UNC System? How and where were these obtained?
4. In your opinion, what kind of personal and professional experiences are essential to have to serve as a chancellor?
5. What areas of higher education did you feel least prepared when you became chancellor?
6. In what ways did your nontraditional pathway to the role of chancellor affect your preparation?
7. How has taking the nontraditional pathway to the role of chancellor affected your view of the role?
8. In your opinion, what skill-sets or qualities, both personally and professionally, would you describe as essential for the role of chancellor at an institution?
9. Has serving as chancellor reshaped your leadership style? How?
10. In what ways have your experiences while serving as chancellor impacted your personal and professional lives?
11. What do you believe are the most critical issues or concerns facing higher education?  
Describe how your previous experiences have aided you in addressing these.
12. What advice would you give to someone who aspires to become a president or chancellor from the nontraditional pathway?

## **APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR UNC SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS**

1. Why do you believe the UNC System has seen an increase in the selection of nontraditional chancellors? What has influenced this?
2. In your opinion, what has impacted higher education, on national and state levels, that has led to an increase in the selection of leaders from nontraditional pathways?
3. Do you believe the prior professional experiences of nontraditional chancellors translates well to the demands and needs of higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
4. How would you describe your professional relationship working with nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System?
5. In your opinion, what areas were the selected nontraditional chancellors least prepared for when they entered higher education?
6. In your opinion, have the selected nontraditional chancellors benefitted their institutions and the UNC System?
7. Is there anything else you would like to expand on concerning nontraditional leadership and its impact on the UNC System and higher education as a whole?

**APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR INSTITUTIONAL  
CHANCELLOR SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

1. Why do you believe president/chancellor search committees and board of trustee members are increasingly viewing candidates from nontraditional pathways as viable candidates for the position?
2. In your opinion, do the prior professional experiences of nontraditional chancellors translate well to meet the demands and needs of higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
3. What were the outlined challenges and opportunities in the job description set by the chancellor search committee?
4. In your opinion, what are the most critical areas of concern at your institution?
5. Describe why the chancellor search committee felt that a nontraditional candidate, and their previous experiences, were the best fit to alleviate these areas of concern at the institution.
6. Were there any areas the chancellor search committee felt the nontraditional candidate selected as chancellor was least prepared for when entering the field of higher education?
7. In your opinion, did the search committee receive any criticism on the selection of a nontraditional candidate to serve as chancellor from the faculty or any other institutional stakeholders?

## **APPENDIX E: LETTER OF SOLICITATION FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEW**

### **PARTICIPATION FOR CHANCELLORS**

Dear Chancellor,

My name is Gordon Burnette and I am a current doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at East Carolina University. I am writing to ask for your participation in a qualitative research study on the experiences of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System. This research study is being conducted in efforts to fulfill part of the requirements to complete my doctoral degree (Ed.D.) in Higher Education Leadership.

I would like to include you in this research study because of your experience serving as a chancellor in the UNC System with a nontraditional background. Serving as a nontraditional chancellor has given you critical insight and knowledge on the current state of leadership in higher education during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and learning about your lived experiences since being selected as chancellor would provide my dissertation with rich detail. Participation in this study will include:

- A one hour interview that will be conducted at your university.
- A thirty-minute follow-up discussion via email or by phone for accuracy and/or clarification purposes. This will also allow you an opportunity to include any additional information you may want to include.

A typed pdf file of the interview questions will be sent to you via email to the provided address one week prior to the date of the interview. After the interview has been conducted, a transcript of the interview will be provided to you to ensure the accuracy of your comments. Additionally, if there are comments within the transcript that you would like to be removed, they will be removed immediately and not used in the dissertation.

Please note that your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. The research is overseen by East Carolina University's University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB). Therefore, some of the UMCIRB members or the UMCIRB staff may need to review your research data. If you desire, your identity can be kept confidential and there will be no information included in the dissertation that will identify you. Therefore, your responses cannot be traced back to you. If you chose to include your identity, it will only be evident to those individuals who see this information. However, I will take precautions to ensure that anyone not authorized to see your identity will not be given that information.

If you have questions about your rights when taking part in this research, call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance at (252) 744-2914 (8:00 am-5:00pm).

Please feel free to contact me at (910) 734-8973 or burnetteg16@students.ecu.edu if you have any questions regarding your participation in this research study. I will be following up with you regarding your decision on participating in the interview. In the interim, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gordon Burnette, M.Ed.

**APPENDIX F: LETTER OF SOLICITATION FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEW**  
**PARTICIPATION FOR UNC SYSTEM ADMINISTRATORS**

Dear UNC System Administrator,

My name is Gordon Burnette and I am a current doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at East Carolina University. I am writing to ask for your participation in a qualitative research study concerning the selection of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System. This research study is being conducted in efforts to fulfill part of the requirements to complete my doctoral degree (Ed.D.) in Higher Education Leadership.

I would like to include you in this research study because of your experience serving as an administrator in the UNC System. Serving in your capacity, on a system level, has given you critical insight and knowledge on the current state of leadership in higher education during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and hearing your views on nontraditional leadership and experiences working with traditional and nontraditional chancellors would provide my dissertation with rich detail.

Participation in this study will include:

- A one hour interview that will be conducted at your university.
- A thirty-minute follow-up discussion via email or by phone for accuracy and/or clarification purposes. This will also allow you an opportunity to include any additional information you may want to include.

A typed pdf file of the interview questions will be sent to you via email to the provided address one week prior to the date of the interview. After the interview has been conducted, a transcript of the interview will be provided to you to ensure the accuracy of your comments. Additionally, if there are comments within the transcript that you would like to be removed, they will be removed immediately and not used in the dissertation.

Please note that your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. The research is overseen by East Carolina University's University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB). Therefore, some of the UMCIRB members or the UMCIRB staff may need to review your research data. If you desire, your identity can be kept confidential and there will be no information included in the dissertation that will identify you. Therefore, your responses cannot be traced back to you. If you chose to include your identity, it will only be evident to those individuals who see this information. However, I will take precautions to ensure that anyone not authorized to see your identity will not be given that information.

Please feel free to contact me at (910) 734-8973 or burnetteg16@students.ecu.edu if you have any questions regarding your participation in this research study. I will be following up with you regarding your decision on participating in the interview. In the interim, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Gordon Burnette, M.Ed.



## **APPENDIX G: LETTER OF SOLICITATION FOR RESEARCH INTERVIEW**

### **PARTICIPATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL CHANCELLOR**

#### **SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Dear Chancellor Search Committee Member,

My name is Gordon Burnette and I am a current doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at East Carolina University. I am writing to ask for your participation in a qualitative research study concerning the selection of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System. This research study is being conducted in efforts to fulfill part of the requirements to complete my doctoral degree (Ed.D.) in Higher Education Leadership.

I would like to include you in this research study because of your experience serving on a chancellor search committee at an institution that selected a nontraditional candidate to serve as chancellor. Serving in your capacity has given you critical insight and knowledge on the chancellor search and selection process, and hearing your views on why the search committee believed a nontraditional candidate was the best fit for the institution would provide my dissertation with rich detail. Participation in this study will include:

- A one hour interview that will be conducted at your university.
- A thirty-minute follow-up discussion via email or by phone for accuracy and/or clarification purposes. This will also allow you an opportunity to include any additional information you may want to include.

A typed pdf file of the interview questions will be sent to you via email to the provided address one week prior to the date of the interview. After the interview has been conducted, a transcript of the interview will be provided to you to ensure the accuracy of your comments. Additionally, if there are comments within the transcript that you would like to be removed, they will be removed immediately and not used in the dissertation.

Please note that your participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. The research is overseen by East Carolina University's University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB). Therefore, some of the UMCIRB members or the UMCIRB staff may need to review your research data. If you desire, your identity can be kept confidential and there will be no information included in the dissertation that will identify you. Therefore, your responses cannot be traced back to you. If you chose to include your identity, it will only be evident to those individuals who see this information. However, I will take precautions to ensure that anyone not authorized to see your identity will not be given that information.

Please feel free to contact me at (910) 734-8973 or burnetteg16@students.ecu.edu if you have any questions regarding your participation in this research study. I will be following up with you regarding your decision on participating in the interview. In the interim, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Gordon Burnette, M.Ed.

## APPENDIX H: RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Nontraditional Pathways to the University Presidency: The Lived Experiences of Contemporary Chancellors in the UNC System.

Investigator: Glen Gordon Burnette III

- Purpose of the Study:** This study will explore the lived experiences of nontraditional chancellors in the UNC System, their motivations for entering higher education, and their perception of how their nontraditional pathway best prepared them to meet the demands of leading an institution of higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This study will also explore the perceptions of nontraditional leadership in higher education from the perspectives of chancellor search committee members and UNC System administrators.
- Interview Procedures:** The interview protocol will be emailed to you for review one week prior to the scheduled interview date. This consent form must be signed and dated prior to the start of the interview. If given your approval, the interview will be recorded to ensure accuracy of data. The interview will be transcribed and a copy of the transcription will be made available for your review. Please review the transcript for accuracy and clarity purposes. After review, if you would like anything removed from the study, I will do so. I will also add anything you wish to include.
- Risks of Participation:** There are no known risks in being a participant in the research study.
- Benefits:** While there will be no direct benefits to participants, the results of the research study are expected to benefit and enrich the field of higher education.
- Duration/Time:** The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and take place on the campus of the interview participant. A follow-up conversation will take place via phone or email after the participant has reviewed the transcript data.
- Statement of Confidentiality:** Participation in this research study is completely voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. If you would prefer anonymity during your participation in the study, a pseudonym will be used for your identity and your institution. Any records of this study will be kept private. All data will be locked and stored by the researcher for a minimum of three years. The research is overseen by East Carolina University's University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB). Therefore, some of the UMCIRB members or the UMCIRB staff may need to review your research data. If you desire, your identity can be kept confidential and there will be no information included in the dissertation that will identify you. Therefore, your responses cannot be traced back to you. If you chose to include your identity, it will only be evident to those individuals who see this information. However, I will take precautions to ensure that anyone not authorized to see your identity will not be given that information. If you have questions about your rights when taking part in this research, call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance at (252) 744-2914 (8:00 am-5:00pm).
- Compensation:** There will be no payments or monetary compensation for individuals that participate in this research study.

8. **Contact:** You may contact the researcher at the following address, phone number and email address, should you have questions about your participation in the research study and/or request documents about the findings of the study:

Gordon Burnette  
3408 Briarcliff Drive Apartment J  
Greenville, NC 27834  
(910) 734-8973  
burnetteg16@students.ecu.edu

9. **Participant Rights:** Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw from the research study at any time without negative reactions or penalty.

**Signatures:**

I have read and fully understand the consent form and parameters of the research study. I sign it on my accord and voluntarily. I have been given a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Signature of Participant:

Date Signed:

I certify that I have personally explained this consent form and the parameters of the study before requesting the signature of the research study participant.

Signature of Researcher

Date Signed:

