This research brief presents results of a 2001 study of community college presidents using George B. Vaughan’s Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS). The CLS was conducted in 1984, 1991 and 1996 (Vaughan 1986; Vaughan, Mellander, and Blois 1994; Vaughan and Weisman 1998). Three particularly striking findings result from comparison of data from 2001 and previous surveys: a near-threefold increase in the percentage of female presidents, the lack of a sizable increase in the percentage of minority presidents, and an increased rate of presidential retirements.

Highlights of survey results:

- The percentage of community college presidents who were female increased from nearly 11 percent in 1991 to approximately 28 percent in 2001.
- Over the same 10-year period, little change occurred in representation by members of racial or ethnic minorities; the proportion of presidents who were white continued to exceed 85 percent.
- Ninety-five percent of all presidents served on the board of a community-based or nonprofit organization.

- The presidents met with high-ranking officials of business and industry more frequently than they met with officials of local elementary and secondary schools.
- The rate of anticipated presidential retirements appeared to be accelerating, with more than 79 percent of the presidents planning to retire within 10 years (Figure 1).
Methodology

This research brief presents selected results of the 2001 Community College Presidents: Career and Lifestyle Survey. The survey builds upon the Career and Lifestyle Surveys (CLS) administered in 1984, 1991, and 1996. The CLS is used to collect information on demographic characteristics of community college presidents, these officials’ pathways to the presidency, and selected factors concerning the position of community college president. This research brief focuses on presidents who were serving in 2001 and contains new information on their professional activities, as well as their interactions with community, business, and government leaders.

The study population consisted of the 936 presidents of public U.S. community colleges that belong to the American Association of Community Colleges. The report includes responses from presidents of public community colleges and presidents or chancellors of multicollege districts and of state community college systems only. The researchers excluded campus chief executive officers (CEO), provosts, and officials with similar titles. Interim or acting presidents were excluded only if they met three conditions: (1) They identified themselves as serving in an interim position; (2) they had been in their current position less than one year; (3) the current interim presidency was their first presidency.

The initial mailing went out in June 2001, and a follow-up letter was sent in July 2001. A total of 661 presidents completed and returned the survey by August 15, 2001, providing a response rate of approximately 71 percent. The data include the responses of presidents from 48 states.

Because the number of valid responses varied by question, data are reported in valid percentages. In other words, the phrase “of those presidents who responded to this question” is implied whenever findings are discussed. Only where total responses were significantly less than 661 is the number of responses to a question provided. All percentages have been rounded to whole numbers in the text, but are extended to the first decimal point in the figures and tables.

Three other CLS studies provide data for this report: the 1984 study by Vaughan; the 1991 study by Vaughan, Mellander, and Blois; and the 1996 study by Vaughan and Weisman. Statistics from these studies that appear in this report are derived from unpublished data gathered in the course of the studies. The authors refer to these statistics only by the year of the relevant study (i.e., 1984, 1991, or 1996). Readers interested in learning more about these studies should consult the list of published works at the end of this document.1

1 The combined results of the four CLS surveys do not represent a longitudinal study of specific presidents throughout their careers. Rather, each study represents a snapshot in time of the community college presidency in general. Although readers may infer certain trends in presidential characteristics from these studies, anyone reading this document should exercise care in drawing conclusions or making predictions, particularly about individual community college presidents who were surveyed.
Profile of the Presidents

Demographic Characteristics: Gender, Race or Ethnicity, and Age

One of the most important findings of the study is the increase in the proportion of female community college presidents. Between 1991 and 2001, representation of women increased from approximately one-tenth to more than one-quarter of the presidents (Figure 2).

Survey respondents identified their race or ethnicity by selecting from six categories: White/Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, American Indian/Native American, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and Other. Respondents who identified themselves as White/Caucasian retained the largest percentage of presidencies, down from slightly more than 89 percent in 1991 to nearly 86 percent in 2001. Because presidents who identified themselves as White/Caucasian retained such an overwhelming majority, there was little change in the proportions of presidents from other racial or ethnic groups. Distribution of the 2001 community college presidents by race or ethnicity is depicted in Figure 3.

The average age of community college presidents in 2001 was 56 years. Respondents ranged from 36 to 78 years of age. Presidents, on average, were slightly older than they were in 1996, when the average age was 54.
Female presidents were younger than their male counterparts; female presidents’ average age was 54 years and male presidents’ nearly 57. At an average age just under 55 years, presidents in racial or ethnic categories other than White/Caucasian were slightly younger than their White/Caucasian counterparts, whose average age was almost 56 years.

**Educational Background**

Survey respondents answered questions about their highest degree earned, major field of study in pursuit of their highest degree, and history as community college students.

The education level of community college presidents appears to have changed little between 1996 and 2001. The 1996 CLS showed that approximately 89 percent of the presidents held a doctorate; that figure declined slightly, to about 88 percent, in 2001. More specifically, about 46 percent of the presidents held a Ph.D. and about 42 percent held an Ed.D. as their highest degree. By contrast, in 1984 approximately 76 percent of presidents reported that they held a doctorate. Figure 4 shows the distribution of the 2001 CLS respondents by highest degree attained.

As in 1996, approximately 72 percent of the community college presidents surveyed in 2001...
Both the number of presidents who had attended a community college and the number who had earned an associate degree changed little between 1991 and 2001. As in 1991 and 1996, in 2001, approximately 40 percent of the survey respondents said they had attended a community college. Slightly more of the 2001 CLS respondents had earned an associate’s degree, with the percentage increasing from about 16 percent in 1991 and again in 1996 to approximately 19 percent in 2001.

**Professional Background**

The presidents provided data on the number of years they had held their current position, the total number of years they had served as a community college president, the number of presidencies they had held, their position prior to their first presidency, whether they had been an internal candidate for their first presidency, and whether they had been a community college president when they accepted their current position.

The average number of years the presidents had held their current position was 7.3 years, a figure that has changed little since 1984. More than

![Presidents' Highest Degree Attained: 2001](image-url)
half (about 53 percent) of the 2001 respondents had been in their current position five years or less. About 21 percent of the presidents had been in their current position one year or less (Figure 5).

The average length of time respondents had served as community college presidents was nearly 10 years, practically the same tenure indicated in 1996.

The percentage of new presidents did not change between 1996 and 2001. In both years, 10 percent of the respondents reported a presidential tenure of one year or less and 17 percent a tenure of two years or less. Figure 6 depicts the time-in-tenure distribution of the 2001 survey respondents.

The majority of the 2001 respondents (nearly 70 percent) were in their first presidency. About another 22 percent were in their second presidency. The rest had held either three presidencies (about 6 percent), four presidencies (almost 2 percent), or five presidencies (less than 1 percent).

Since 1984, the most common pathway to the presidency has been through the academic administrative positions. Consistent with this trend, the 2001 CLS showed that about 55 percent of the presidents had served in academic administration prior to their first presidency. More than 39 percent of the presidents had been chief academic officers; almost 7 percent had been vice presidents with academic overview; nearly 6 percent had held the dual position of chief academic officer and chief student services officer; slightly more than 3 percent had held other positions with academic overview. The most common nonacademic community college positions held prior to the first presidency were chief student services officer (7 percent), campus CEO (about 6 percent), and chief business officer (about 4 percent). Figure 7 lists the 2001 survey respondents’ most commonly held positions prior to their first presidency.
FIGURE 6  Presidential Tenure: 2001

- Up to 1-5 years: 39.5%
- 6 to 10 years: 21.4%
- 11 to 15 years: 17.7%
- 16 or more years: 21.4%

FIGURE 7  Position Held Prior to First Presidency: 2001

- Chief Academic Officer
- Other
- Chief Student Services Officer
- Vice President with Academic Overview
- Campus CEO
- Chief Academic Officer and Chief Student Services Officer Combined
- Other Education (Outside C.C.)
- Chief Business Officer
- Vice President without Academic Overview
- Other, with Academic Overview
- CC State System
- Business or Industry
- Government

Percentage of Presidents
About one-third of the presidents (almost 34 percent) said they had been an internal candidate for their first presidential position. More than one-quarter (about 27 percent) stated that they had moved into their current position from another presidency. This percentage stayed fairly constant between 1991 and 2001.

**Lifestyle**

The CLS includes questions on commuter marriages, membership in and use of a country club, presidents’ participation in sports, and their participation in cultural and entertainment activities. Information in this research brief is limited to data about presidents in commuter marriages.

Among 1996 survey respondents, nearly 6 percent said they had a commuter marriage. The 2001 CLS showed an increase in the percentage of commuter marriages to almost 10 percent. Of those presidents in a commuter marriage, approximately 39 percent said they were the commuter. Slightly more than 43 percent of the presidents stated that their spouses commuted, and in nearly 18 percent of the marriages both the president and the spouse commuted.

Of the 60 presidents in commuter marriages in 2001, 40 percent were women and 60 percent were men. In addition, male presidents were the commuter more frequently than female presidents. Figure 8 compares the commuting responsibilities for male and female presidents.
Profile of the Presidency

Professional Activities

The survey participants answered a variety of questions about their work activities, their plans for future employment, and their perceptions of the presidency.

- The presidents were asked to estimate the percentage of their work time spent in each of 10 activity categories. These categories are not mutually exclusive and the responses represent the presidents’ perceptions rather than objective observations, so readers should regard the data as informative rather than predictive. Even so, three general findings provide particular insight into the professional activities of community college presidents: About 56 percent of their time is devoted to internal activities such as administrative tasks, about 31 percent focuses on external relations, and about 13 percent is spent on professional development and other activities. (Table 1, based on 570 survey responses, provides more detailed information on these general findings.)

On average, teaching takes up less than 1 percent of presidents’ time (Table 1). In fact, only about 9 percent of the 2001 survey respondents indicated that they taught in a community college at least once per year, a sizable decline from the approximately 14 percent who said they did so in 1996.

Nevertheless, presidents evidently do have experience in the community college classroom, even if it is not necessarily recent. Approximately 45 percent of the 2001 survey respondents stated that they had once taught full-time in a community college. This percentage had not changed substantially since 1991. However, the percentage of presidents reporting that they had taught part-time had fluctuated dramatically over that period. In the 1991 CLS, approximately 63 percent of the presidents reported that they had taught at the community college level on a part-time basis at some stage of their career, but in 1996 that percentage dropped to about 41 percent. In 2001, however, almost 53 percent of the presidents said they had taught at the community college level on a part-time basis.

In 2001, for the first time in the CLS, presidents were asked whether they had a formal mentoring relationship with a potential future community college leader; approximately half of the presidents indicated that they had.

Presidents were also asked whether they were considering leaving their current position, and about the kind of position they would next pursue. Nearly 40 percent of the presidents indicated that there was a possibility they would seek or accept

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1</th>
<th>Percentage of Time Spent on Presidential Tasks: 2001</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal Activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Time Reported (56.3%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Tasks</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Meetings</td>
<td>21.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Meetings &amp; Interactions</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>External Relations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Time Reported (30.9%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Activities</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising Activities</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative Activities</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development and Other Activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Time Reported (12.9%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Meetings</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Reading</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
another full-time position within the next five years. Approximately 16 percent said it was very likely they would move on, and almost 23 percent said it was somewhat likely. A large majority (about 73 percent) said they would prefer to move on to another community college presidency. The next most popular positions of interest were the chancellorship of a state community college system (almost 8 percent) and positions in the private sector (slightly more than 4 percent).

Presidents were fairly evenly divided in terms of when they planned to retire, with the most common time frame being 7 to 10 years (about 28 percent) and the least common being more than 10 years (about 21 percent) (Figure 9).

The rate of presidential retirement appears to be on the rise. Among the 1996 CLS respondents, approximately 68 percent said they planned to retire within 10 years of the date they completed the survey; in 2001, this percentage increased to about 79 percent. Conversely, the percentage of presidents who planned to retire more than 10 years from the date of the survey decreased from about 32 percent in 1996 to approximately 21 percent in 2001.

**Employment Conditions**

- In the section of the survey dealing with employment conditions, respondents placed their employment contract into one of four categories: (1) rolling contract (315, or about 49 percent); (2) fixed contract (256, or about 40 percent); (3) no contract (56, or about 9 percent); (4) some other form of contract (17, or about 3 percent).

The percentage of presidents with a rolling contract increased from approximately 44 percent in 1996 to nearly 49 percent in 2001. The percentage of presidents with a fixed contract was almost unchanged since 1996.

The average presidential employment contract was for slightly less than three years, with more than 80 percent of the presidents having contracts of this duration.

**FIGURE 9 Plans to Retire: 2001**

![Bar chart showing percentage of presidents planning to retire in different time frames]
Unlike the presidents of many four-year colleges or universities, the majority of community college presidents (65 percent) neither live in college-owned housing nor receive a housing allowance, according to the 2001 CLS. Eight percent of the community college presidents said they lived in college-owned housing. Another 27 percent said they received a housing allowance.

The percentage of presidents living in college-owned housing declined by approximately two percentage points from 1991 to 2001. The percentage of presidents receiving a housing allowance increased from approximately 15 percent in 1996 to the 27 percent reported in the 2001 survey.

On the 2001 CLS, community college presidents reported earning an average of 22.4 days of annual leave (vacation time) each year. The number of days earned had remained almost constant since 1984, when the average was 22. However, the 2001 survey respondents reported taking an average of only 13.4 days of leave in the previous year. Furthermore, approximately 77 percent of the presidents said they performed work associated with the college while on vacation. Only about 7 percent of the presidents reported being paid for their unused vacation time.

Presidential Evaluation

A new set of questions on the 2001 survey dealt with presidential evaluation. Nearly three-quarters of the presidents said the governing board of their community college performed a formal presidential evaluation each year. Table 2 provides further information from the 477 presidents who reported that their governing board gave them an annual formal evaluation.

Another group of questions added to the 2001 survey dealt with what might be described as presidential crises—votes of no confidence and dismissals. Approximately 30 presidents (almost 5 percent) reported that they had received a vote of no confidence from the faculty. Fifteen (about 2 percent) said they had been dismissed from the presidency at some time in their career. Only three presidents (or less than half of 1 percent) reported both receiving a faculty vote of no confidence and being dismissed from the presidency. (It is unknown whether, in any of these cases, the vote and the dismissal concerned the same presidency.)

Community and Business Relations

The 2001 survey added questions on board membership; meetings with high-ranking business and industry officials, elementary and secondary school officials, and government officials; and community service or volunteer work.

Approximately 50 percent of the presidents said they served on the boards of corporations or other commercial enterprises. Nearly 15 percent said they served on a corporate board for business and industry and were paid for their service. Almost 35 percent said they served on a corporate board without pay.

The presidents were also asked if they served on the board of a community-based or nonprofit organization and whether they received pay for their service. An overwhelming majority (about 93 percent) of the presidents said they served on boards of nonprofit or community-based organizations without

<table>
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<th>TABLE 2 Board Evaluation of Presidents</th>
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<tr>
<td>A written report was issued following the evaluation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The evaluation by the board affected your compensation package.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A presidential self-assessment was part of the evaluation process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A presidential self-assessment was part of the evaluation process.</td>
</tr>
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 pay. Slightly more than 2 percent said they were paid for their service on a nonprofit organization’s board. Only 5 percent of all presidents stated that they do not serve on the board of a community-based or nonprofit organization. Figure 10 shows the distribution of presidents serving on different types of profit and nonprofit boards.

The presidents were asked how often they met with high-ranking officials of business and industry. Eleven percent of the presidents said they met with top business and industry leaders at least five times per week. Another 58 percent said they met with such leaders at least once a week, and approximately 27 percent said they met with these leaders at least once a month (Figure 11).

The respondents to the 2001 CLS also reported meeting with officials of local primary, middle, and secondary schools, but with less frequency than they met with high-ranking officials of business and industry. Less than 1 percent of the presidents said they met with school officials at least five times a week. About 19 percent said they met with these officials at least once a week; about 56 percent said they met with such officials at least once a month. The remainder (about 24 percent) said their meetings with local school officials occurred less than once per month.

For the first time on the CLS, presidents were asked if they had performed community service or volunteer work during the past year. A large majority—nearly 84 percent—said they had done so during the past year. Almost 24 percent said they worked with children. Nearly 11 percent reported working with seniors, and more than 16 percent said they worked on neighborhood improvement projects. Thirteen percent reported working at social service agencies.

A majority of the presidents (about 57 percent) said they helped to raise funds for nonpolitical purposes that were not related to their community college. Almost 17 percent of the presidents raised funds for—-and more than 9 percent volunteered for—political campaigns. Figure 12 shows the presidents’ participation in community service or other forms of volunteer work.

The responses to CLS 2001 indicate that community college presidents see value in establishing and

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**FIGURE 10** Board Membership: 2001

![Figure 10: Board Membership: 2001](chart.png)
FIGURE 11 Contacts with Business and Industry Officials: 2001

- Less than once per month: 3.8%
- 1-3 times per month: 27.2%
- 1-4 times per week: 58.0%
- 5 or more times per week: 11.0%

FIGURE 12 Community Service or Volunteer Work: 2001

- Worked with Children
- Worked with Seniors
- Neighborhood Improvement Projects
- Worked at a Social Service Agency
- Raised Money for Nonpolitical Purposes
- Raised Money for Political Campaign
- Volunteered for Political Campaign
- Other Community Service
maintaining relationships with state and federal officials. Nearly all respondents to CLS 2001 (92 percent) said they had visited legislators during their state’s last legislative session for the purpose of promoting the interests of their community college. More than half (about 52 percent) of the presidents said they spoke with the state representative for their community college’s district more than 10 times per year, and about 48 percent reported having conversations with the state senator representing their college’s district more than 10 times per year. Approximately 45 percent of the presidents said they spoke with their college’s state representative 2 to 10 times per year; almost 49 percent reported speaking with their college’s state senator 2 to 10 times per year.

Presidents also maintained contact with the governor’s office in their state. A More than 53 percent of the presidents said they spoke with the governor’s office 2 to 10 times per year, and more than 8 percent reported having conversations with their governor’s office more than 10 times yearly.

The survey respondents also reported that they kept in touch with federal elected officials representing their college’s congressional district. The majority of presidents (61 percent) reported having conversations with their college’s member of the U.S. House of Representatives 2 to 10 times per year, and slightly less than half (about 48 percent) had conversations with their U.S. senator 2 to 10 times yearly.

Figure 13 shows the responses of presidents regarding the frequency of their conversations with governors and state and federal legislators.

**FIGURE 13 Conversations with Government Officials: 2001**


Conclusion

The responses to the 2001 CLS reveal important changes in the community college presidency as well as some dismaying facts about characteristics that are not changing fast enough. Perhaps the most important change is the increase in the proportion of female presidents. As the survey indicates, the percentage of female community college presidents increased from almost 11 percent in 1991 to nearly 28 percent in 2001. This increase more than doubled the percentage of female presidents in just a 10-year period.

Perhaps the most meaningful statistic is one that indicates stasis rather than change: the representation of ethnic or racial minorities in the presidency. In 1991, approximately 11 percent of the community college presidents identified themselves as members of an ethnic or racial minority; in 2001, that segment had only increased about three percentage points, to approximately 14 percent.

With the rate of anticipated presidential retirements on the rise, community colleges, universities, and professional associations face the urgent need to collaborate on expanding the pool of qualified minority presidential candidates. Initiatives to provide minority community college professionals with opportunities to gain formal graduate education, professional development training, and formal mentoring experiences with current community college presidents may be the key to achieving a more diverse presidential applicant pool. Although many such initiatives are already under way, the 2001 data reveal that these efforts have yet to translate into a population of community college presidents that reflects the United States’ racial and ethnic diversity.


Previous Career and Lifestyle Surveys: Published Results


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