

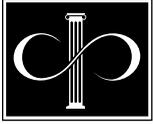


THE COUNCIL OF
INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

A Study of
Career Patterns of the Presidents of
Independent Colleges and Universities



Harold V. Hartley III
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The Council of Independent Colleges is an association of more than 600 independent liberal arts colleges and universities and 60 higher education affiliates and organizations that work together to strengthen college and university leadership, sustain high-quality education, and enhance private higher education's contributions to society. To fulfill this mission, CIC provides its members with skills, tools, and knowledge that address aspects of leadership, financial management and performance, academic quality, and institutional visibility. The Council is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC.

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Executive Summary

Beginning in 2008, as part of the initiative to reinvigorate leadership development for senior executives of small and mid-sized private colleges and universities, the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) engaged in research on the career patterns of college presidents. Using data from the American Council on Education's American College President Study, CIC analyzed the career pathways, education, and other demographic characteristics of first-time American college and university presidents from 1986 to 2006. Comparisons were made between first-time presidents of CIC member institutions and presidents of four major sub-sector groups: public baccalaureate and master's (BA/MA) level institutions, private doctoral—or research—universities, public doctoral universities, and public two-year or community colleges. The Council of Independent Colleges is grateful to the American Academic Leadership Institute (AALI) for funding to support this research and to the American Council on Education for providing access to data from the American College President Study.

In considering the various career routes—or pathways—to the presidency, CIC examined the types of positions held prior to assuming the office of president, various background and demographic characteristics of first-time presidents, such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, and major field of study, as well as presidents' sense of readiness for various presidential responsibilities. Some of the key findings of the study include:

Immediate Prior Position—When compared with first-time presidents of other institutional groupings in 2006, in their most recent prior position first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities were:

- Less likely to have been a chief academic officer (35 percent—though an increase from 33 percent in 2001), except for those at private doctoral universities (30 percent) (the national average was 40 percent);
- More likely to have been a nonacademic officer (33 percent—though a decrease from 37 percent in 2001) (the national average was 23 percent);
- More likely to have come from outside higher education (business, public service, etc.) (13 percent versus 5 percent at public BA/MA institutions); and
- Less likely to have been hired internally (22 percent versus 39 percent at public doctoral universities).

Major Field of Study—A larger proportion of CIC presidents earned their highest degree in the humanities and fine arts (21 percent) than any other institutional grouping; an even larger proportion, however, earned their highest degree in education/higher education (35 percent) (only presidents of community colleges reported a higher percentage—75 percent).

Demographic Characteristics—When compared with first-time presidents of other institutional groupings in 2006, presidents of CIC member colleges and universities were:

- Slightly younger, with an average age of 59 (the average age at public doctoral universities was 62), though graying as rapidly as their peers in other types of institutions (CIC presidents were an average of seven years older in 2006 than in 1986 versus eight years older at private doctoral universities);
- More likely to be female (28 percent; except for presidents of community colleges—30 percent); women presidents of CIC institutions were also more likely to come into the presidency through the academic officer route and more likely to be hired internally; when

examined over time, however, the proportion of female presidents of CIC member colleges and universities has grown less dramatically since 1986 (8 percentage point increase) than at public institutions (at public BA/MA institutions, the gain was 16 percentage points);

- Less likely to be a person of color (8 percent; except for presidents of private doctoral universities—none), with slower gains in this category of diversity (3 percentage points) than at public institutions (at public BA/MA institutions, the gain was 6 percentage points); and
- Excluding presidents who are members of religious orders, CIC presidents are as likely to be married as presidents of other types of institutions (86 percent versus 85 percent at public BA/MA institutions and 89 percent at public doctoral universities).

Preparation for Presidential Responsibilities—When asked to indicate which presidential responsibilities first-time presidents felt insufficiently prepared for when assuming the presidency, CIC presidents indicated the following in descending order:

- Fundraising (19.9 percent)
- Risk management and legal issues (18.3 percent)
- Capital improvement projects (17.9 percent)
- Budget and financial management (17.6 percent)
- Entrepreneurial ventures (16.3 percent)

Several conclusions are suggested by these findings. First, given the importance of teaching and learning in CIC member colleges and universities, particularly at the undergraduate level, the lower likelihood of presidents coming from the academic ranks, especially from the position of chief academic officer, is striking. When considered in concert with the greater prevalence of presidents with a nonacademic officer or outside of a higher education background and the presidential responsibilities for which first-time presidents felt unprepared, these findings suggest that trustee search committees of CIC institutions may believe that chief academic officers do not have the fundraising and managerial skills they assume are needed to be successful presidents (a new ACE survey of chief academic officers found that only a quarter of CAOs at CIC institutions were interested in pursuing a college presidency).

Second, although as a group the first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities have become more diverse over the past two decades, these gains have fallen behind those of presidents in other sub-sectors. In particular, over the past two decades the modest gains in the proportion of female presidents were surpassed by a margin of two to one by presidents of public BA/MA institutions. A similar pattern was exhibited when tracking the modest increase in presidents of color.

Third, while slightly younger than presidents of other types of institutions, the average age of first-time CIC presidents—59 years—has risen just as swiftly over the past 20 years. In 2006, first-time CIC presidents, like their counterparts in other institutional settings, are older today, by an average of at least seven years, than first-time presidents in 1986.

Based on analysis of these data, several recommendations follow:

1. Greater emphasis should be placed on preparing chief academic officers to assume the presidency, particularly in fundraising, risk and financial management, and other administrative and leadership skills often called upon in the presidency.
2. Equally, more opportunities should be provided to orient new presidents from nonacademic backgrounds to faculty, curricular, and shared governance issues, as well as to orient new presidents from outside higher education to the dynamics of academe, especially the particularities of independent higher education.
3. Women and persons of color should especially be encouraged to apply to CIC programs that prepare prospective presidents.
4. The graying of the presidency suggests that programs to prepare potential presidential candidates and orient new presidents will continue to be of importance to the health and vitality of the presidency for some years to come.
5. CIC should consider ways to share the implications of these findings with trustee search committees and presidential search consultants. ♦

Introduction

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) engaged in research beginning in 2008 on the career patterns of college presidents as part of the Council's initiative to reinvigorate leadership development for senior executives of small and mid-sized private colleges and universities. This research is intended to support a larger CIC project, "The Presidency of Independent Colleges and Universities: Leadership at the Crossroads," which brings together the many CIC leadership development programs and services that have as their ultimate goal securing the future of higher education leadership. In 2006, the average age of all presidents serving a CIC member college or university was 60, with nearly half (49 percent) over the age of 60. It is highly likely that in the next ten years a significant number of these presidents will retire. At the same time, many executive search consultants have reported that the typical search for a college president attracts fewer candidates—and fewer well-qualified candidates—than was the case a decade ago. Through a greater understanding of the career patterns of college presidents, CIC hopes to be more able to assist in the preparation of tomorrow's college and university presidents.

Using data from the American Council on Education's American College President Study (ACPS), and with generous financial support from the American Academic Leadership Institute, CIC analyzed the career patterns, education, and other demographic characteristics of first-time American college and university presidents from 1986 to 2006. Because of the Council's interest in the preparation of college and university presidents and the professional routes they took to the presidency, the analysis was limited to first-time presidents, thus excluding from the study those who had previously served as president of another college or university. To determine if important differences existed between presidents of different types of institutions, comparisons were made between first-time presidents of CIC member institutions and presidents of four major sub-sector groups, namely public baccalaureate and master's (BA/MA) level institutions, private doctoral—or research—universities, public doctoral universities, and public two-year or community colleges.

The inquiry was begun by analyzing data from the 2006 ACPS survey. Based on the membership of CIC at the time, presidents serving CIC member colleges and universities were identified and responses to questions of interest were examined. Using this same CIC membership base, responses to similar questions posed in prior ACPS surveys were then considered: 1986, 1990, 1995, 1998, and 2001. This trend analysis helped CIC examine changes in career patterns over time. In studying the various career routes—or pathways—to the presidency, CIC considered the various types of positions held prior to assuming the office of president, the various background and demographic characteristics of first-time presidents, such as gender, race/ethnicity, age, and major field of study, as well as respondents' sense of readiness for various presidential responsibilities. ♦

Pathways to the Presidency

To understand better how presidents came into their positions of executive leadership, CIC looked at the various types of positions they held prior to assuming the office of president. Comparisons were made among presidents of the five major groupings by institutional type. Among the presidents of CIC member institutions, differences by gender and length of tenure, as well as changes over time, were also examined. Finally, whether or not presidents were hired from within the institution they served was also considered.

Prior Positions of First-Time Presidents

First-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities displayed some noteworthy differences in the career pathways taken to the presidency when compared with the entire sample of first-time presidents who responded to the 2006 ACPS survey. The five major response categories were (1) chief academic officers (CAO) or provosts, (2) other academic administrators, such as associate or assistant vice presidents or deans, (3) nonacademic officers, such as advancement, finance, or student affairs administrators, (4) faculty members or department chairs, and (5) those with positions outside of higher education, such as public officials, corporate executives, or other nonprofit leaders.

Chief Academic Officers. The most common immediate prior position of CIC presidents was that of CAO or provost (35 percent) (*see Figure 1*). This level, however, was lower than the overall pattern of all respondents (40 percent). Not surprisingly, among CIC presidents who previously served as a CAO, 85 percent were academic administrators or faculty members in their second prior position.

Nonacademic Officers. Both CIC presidents and presidents in the larger ACE sample reported nonacademic officer as the second most common previous position. Thirty-three percent of CIC presidents held this position immediately before assuming the presidency, compared with only 23 percent overall. In addition, over half of the CIC presidents who were nonacademic officers were also nonacademic officers in their second prior position. The nonacademic officer category consists of six positions: senior executive in development, senior executive in finance/administration, senior executive in student affairs, senior executive in external affairs, senior executive (unspecified), and assistant to the president. CIC presidents who came from a nonacademic officer position were mostly likely to be a senior executive in development (35 percent), senior executive in finance/administration (31 percent), or senior executive in student affairs (22 percent). These findings suggest that presidents following this pathway may need special orientation to academic matters, especially faculty, curricular, and shared governance issues.

Positions Outside Higher Education. The third most likely route to a CIC presidency was through a position held outside academe. A slightly smaller proportion of first-time CIC presidents (13 percent), however, came from outside higher education when compared with all respondents to the ACPS survey (17 percent). A large majority of these individuals—at least two-thirds—worked outside higher education in their second prior position as well. These findings indicate a career outside the academy prior to assuming the presidency and suggest that such presidents may need special orientation to the dynamics of academe, especially the particularities of independent higher education.

Other Positions. Presidents from both groups reported comparable percentages for the other academic officer and chair/faculty member positions. Fifteen percent of CIC presidents reported other

academic officer as their immediate prior position compared with 16 percent for the entire sample, and 4 percent of CIC presidents reported their immediate position as a chair/faculty member compared with 5 percent for the entire sample.

Comparisons with Other Groupings of Institutions. Evaluating immediate prior positions of first-time presidents across the five groupings of higher education institutions, over half of all first-time presidents of public institutions were chief academic officers or provosts: 58 percent at baccalaureate and master’s level institutions, 58 percent at public doctoral universities, and 54 percent at public two-year institutions (see Figure 2). In comparison, only 35 percent of presidents of CIC colleges and 30

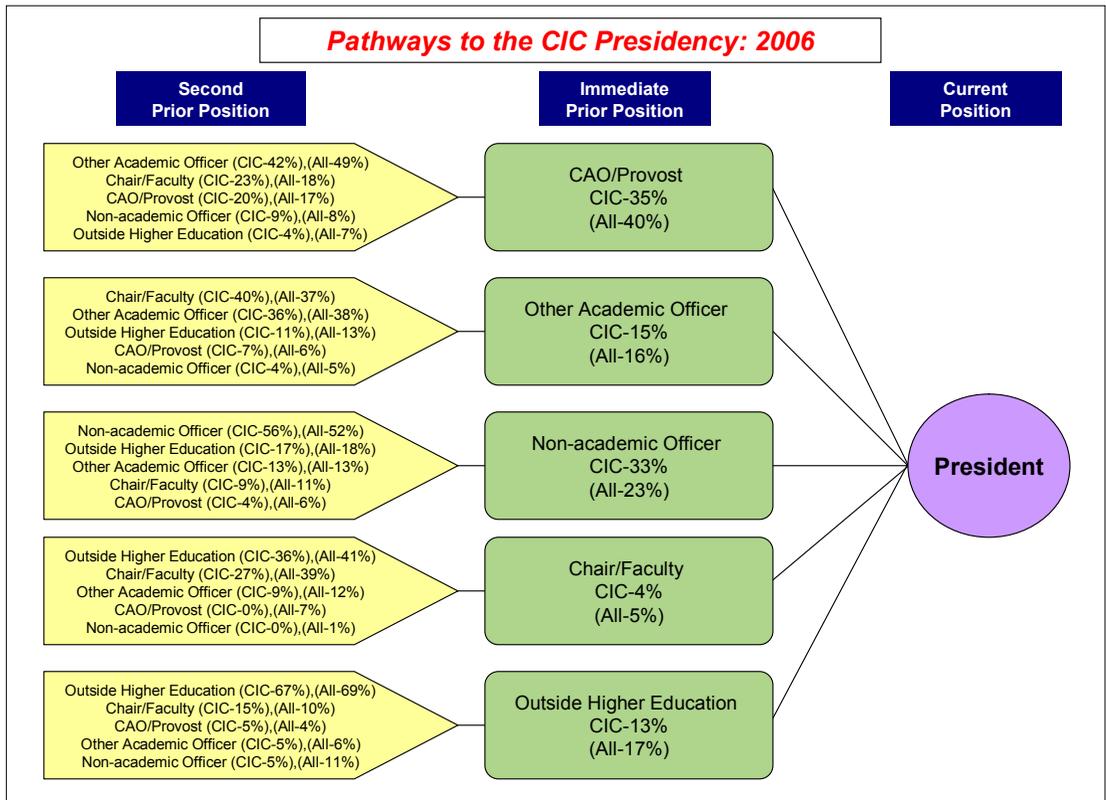


Figure 1. Adapted from King and Gomez, 2008.

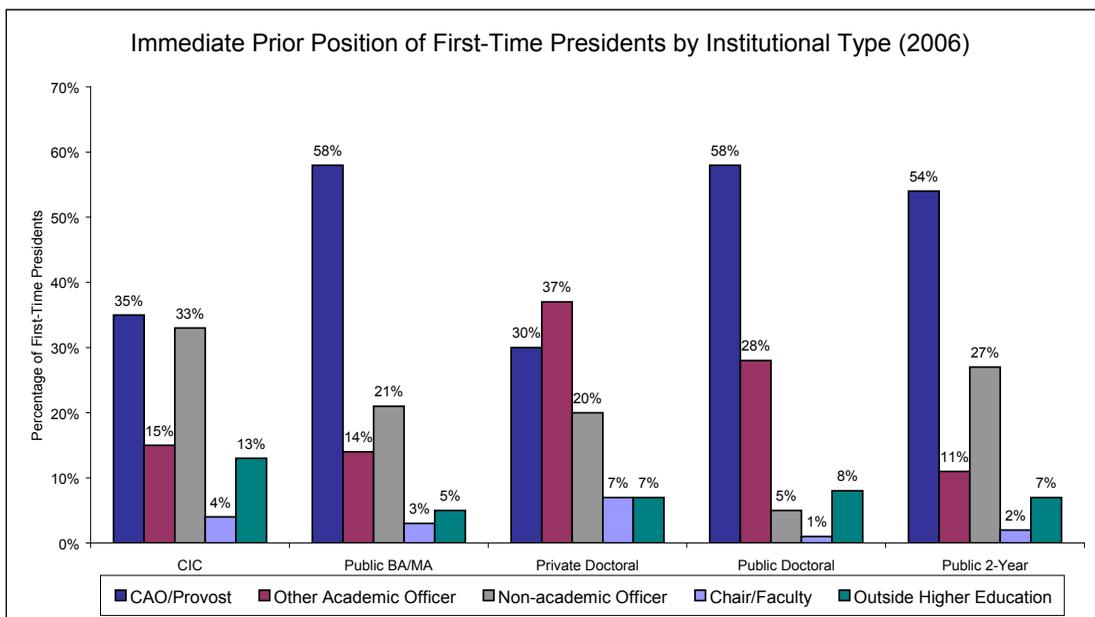


Figure 2.

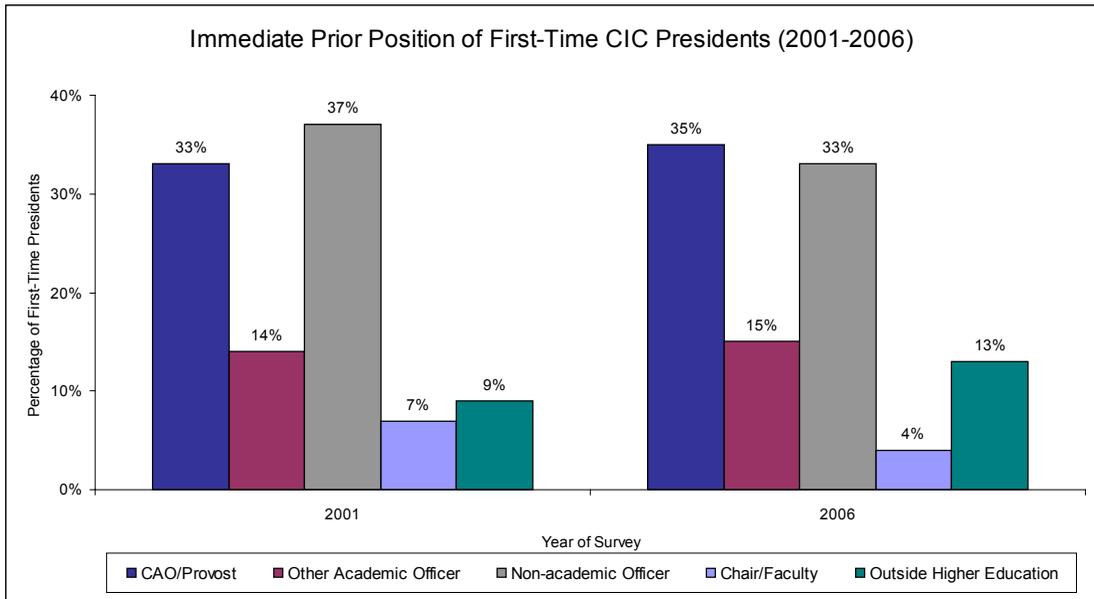


Figure 3.

percent of presidents of private doctoral institutions were CAOs. CIC presidents reported the highest percentages of nonacademic officers (33 percent); there were no discernable patterns with respect to doctoral vs. non-doctoral or public vs. private institutions. While 13 percent of CIC presidents came from outside higher education, all other groupings reported between 5 and 8 percent. First-time presidents of doctoral universities reported a higher percentage of other academic officer positions (37 percent for private and 28 percent for public) than those of the non-doctoral sub-sectors (15 percent for CIC, 14 percent for public baccalaureate and master's level, and 11 percent for public two-year). Finally, across all groupings, the least common immediate position was a department chair or faculty member, with all groups reporting under 8 percent.

Trends in Previous Positions. A major objective of this study was to examine changes over time in the pathways to the presidency. CIC had hoped to analyze data from all six ACPS surveys, but inconsistencies in the coding of prior positions in the data files of previous surveys make a 20-year trend analysis unfeasible. Analysis of data from the past two ACPS surveys, 2001 and 2006, was possible. The changes in the immediate prior positions of first-time CIC presidents over these five years were modest but important. In 2001 and 2006 the CAO/provost and nonacademic officer positions were the two most common immediate prior positions. In 2001, the nonacademic officer position was the most common (37 percent compared with 33 percent for CAO/provost), a reverse of the pattern observed in 2006 (see Figure 3). Additionally, the percentage of presidents from outside higher education increased from 9 percent in 2001 to 13 percent in 2006. The proportion of presidents from faculty positions decreased from 7 percent to 4 percent over the same period.

Another way to consider trends over time is to examine changes by length of service among respondents to the same survey. When first-time CIC presidents in 2006 are separated by the number of years in their current positions, data show that those who have served three years or less were half as likely to have been a nonacademic officer in their previous position than presidents who have been in their current position for at least 14 years (26 percent vs. 54 percent) (see Figure 4). In contrast, presidents with three years or fewer in their current position were more likely to have been other academic officers or to have come from outside higher education in their immediate prior position than presidents with 14 or more years in their current position (24 percent vs. 10 percent for other academic officers and 18 percent vs. 4 percent for individuals from outside higher education).

Previous Positions and Gender. Among first-time CIC presidents in 2006, 39 percent of female presidents and 34 percent of male presidents came from a CAO/provost position (see Figure 5). Nearly double the proportion of females (23 percent) as males (12 percent) served as other academic officers in

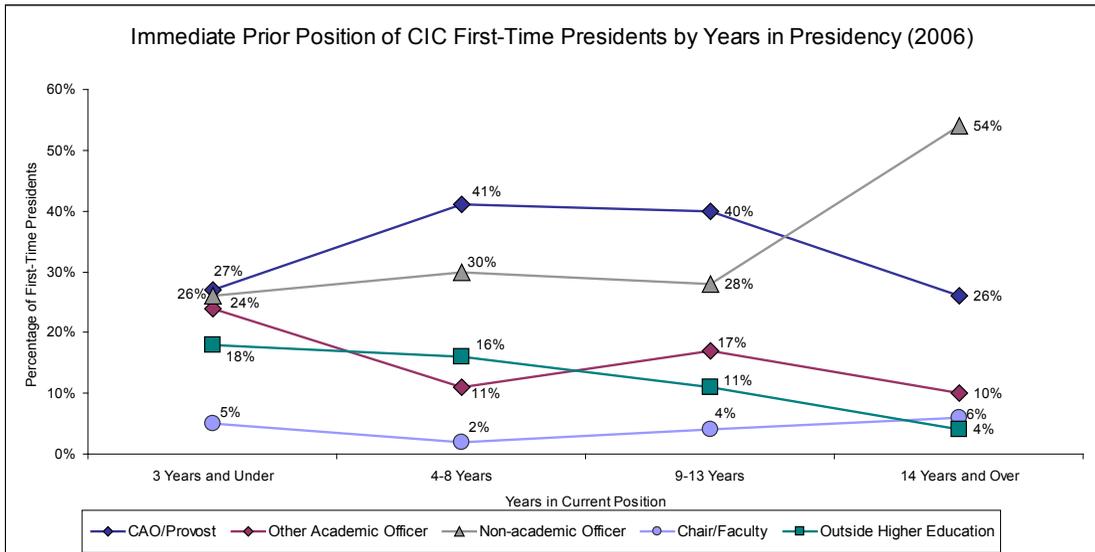


Figure 4.

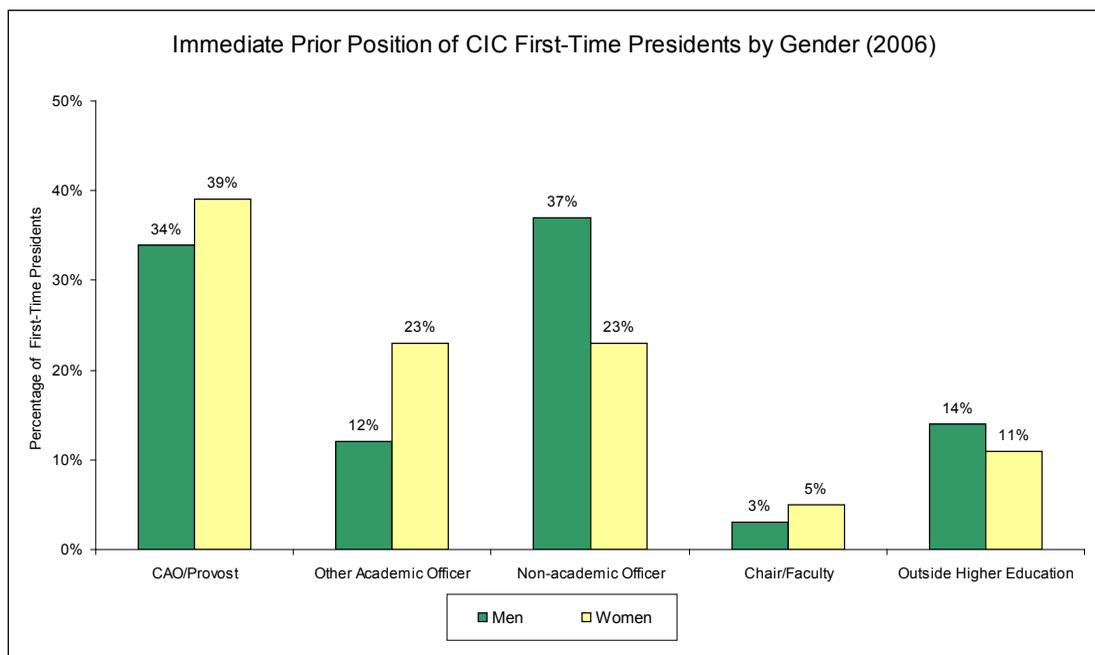


Figure 5.

their most recent positions. Additionally, 5 percent of women and 3 percent of men came from faculty positions. Taken together, two-thirds of the women came from an academic administrator or faculty role, compared with only half of men. A higher proportion of men than women came from the positions of nonacademic officer (37 percent vs. 23 percent) and outside higher education (14 percent vs. 11 percent).

First-Time Presidents Hired Internally

Among presidents who entered the presidency from a position in higher education, determining whether or not they were selected from within the institutions they serve provides additional information to understand better the pathways to the presidency. Reporting the lowest percentage of all groupings in 2006, only 22 percent of first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities were hired internally. A higher proportion of presidents of private doctoral universities were hired internally

(27 percent). Presidents of public institutions, however, were more likely to be hired from within the institutions they served: 29 percent of public baccalaureate and master’s level presidents, 38 percent of public community college presidents, and 39 percent of public doctoral presidents. In 2006, within CIC institutions, a higher percentage of women (32 percent) was hired internally than men (18 percent). Additionally, presidents who had most recently served in faculty positions were more likely to be hired internally (36 percent), followed by chief academic officers (26 percent), nonacademic officers (24 percent), and other academic officers (18 percent). Furthermore, CIC presidents with 14 or more years of service were more likely—by a margin of 3 to 2—to be hired from within the institution than those who had served just three years or fewer (29 percent vs. 19 percent).

Looking at changes in hiring patterns over time, first-time presidents of private institutions surveyed in 2006 were less likely to report that they had been hired internally than were those polled in 1986. Conversely, presidents of public institutions were more likely to report being hired internally in 2006 than they were in 1986 (see Figure 6). More recently, however, presidents in all groupings reported increases in internal hiring over the past three surveys, 1998 to 2006. While the proportion of internally hired presidents of private institutions has declined over the past 20 years, the public sectors have seen increases. ♦

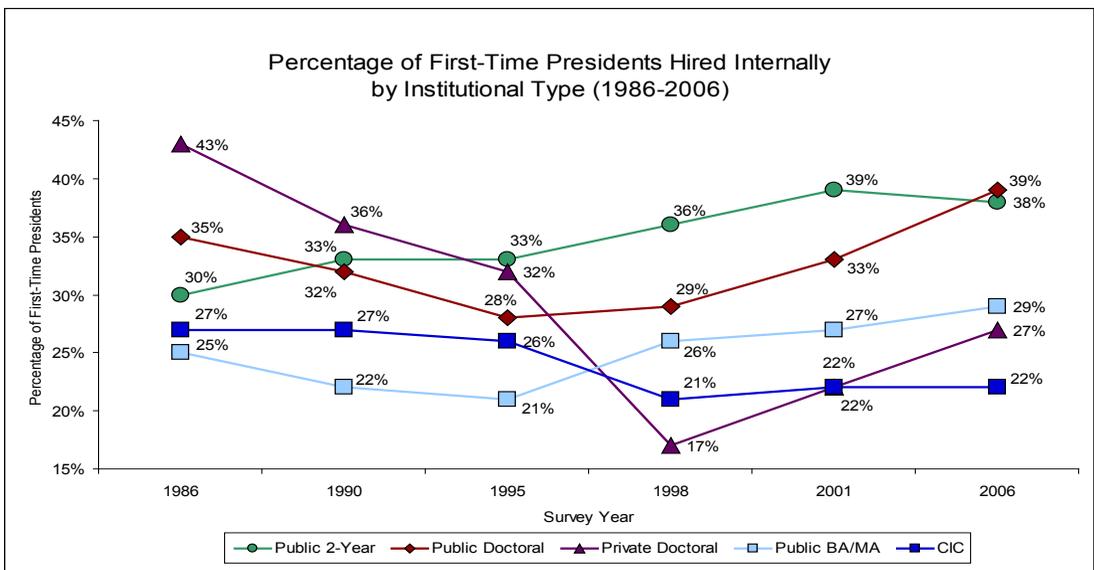


Figure 6.

Presidents' Field of Highest Earned Degree

The academic field of study of college presidents provides another indicator of their preparation for the presidency. Data from the ACPS surveys identified seven major fields of study: (a) business, (b) education or higher education, (c) humanities and fine arts, (d) law, (e) religion and theology, (f) science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and (g) social sciences. (An eighth response category, “other,” was excluded from the analysis due to the low number of responses.) Using the most recent survey data (2006), CIC first looked at differences among first-time presidents of CIC institutions by immediate prior position, length of tenure, and gender. Comparisons were then made between first-time presidents of CIC institutions and those of other institutional types and changes were examined over time going back to 1986 (earned degrees in business were first reported in 2001).

Field of Highest Earned Degree among CIC Presidents

Immediate Prior Position. Most first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities reported education, humanities and fine arts, and social sciences as their top three fields of highest earned degree (see Figure 7). The prevalence and ordering of these fields, however, varied by the type of position held immediately prior to entering the presidency. Chief academic officers and provosts were most likely to have earned their degrees in the humanities and fine arts (31 percent), followed by education (25 percent), and social sciences (21 percent). Other academic officers were most likely to have earned their degrees first in education or higher education (31 percent), second in the humanities and fine arts (26 percent), and third in social sciences (21 percent). Nonacademic officers were even more likely to have earned their highest degrees in education or higher education (58 percent), followed by social sciences (12 percent), and humanities and fine arts (11 percent). For first-time presidents from outside higher education, the top three responses were social sciences (31 percent), humanities/fine arts (19 percent), and education (17 percent). For first-time presidents from outside higher education, the top three responses were social sciences (31 percent), humanities/fine arts (19 percent), and education (17 percent).

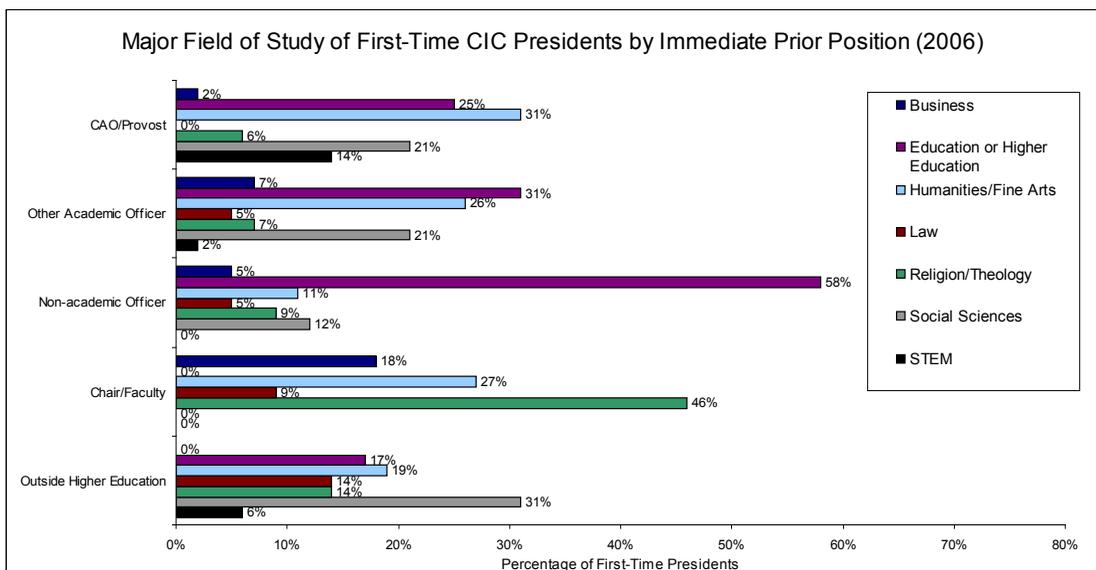


Figure 7.

Though the least common route to the presidency, faculty members and department chairs exhibited marked differences from their colleagues with different career backgrounds. Almost half (46 percent) of presidents who were a department chair or faculty member in their immediate prior position earned their highest degrees in religion or theology, followed by humanities/fine arts (27 percent) and social sciences (18 percent).

Length of Tenure. When considering how long they had been in the current positions, first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities who had served their institutions for three years or fewer were less likely to have earned their highest degree in education than presidents in their current positions for 14 or more years (25 percent vs. 41 percent) (see Figure 8). A similar pattern was displayed for presidents whose discipline was religion or theology (7 percent for newer presidents vs. 16 percent for longer serving presidents). However, presidents in the earliest stages of their first presidency were more likely than presidents who have served for 14 or more years to have earned their highest degrees in the humanities and fine arts (25 percent vs. 18 percent), social sciences (22 percent vs. 20 percent), law (13 percent vs. 4 percent), STEM (5 percent vs. 2 percent), and business (3 percent vs. 0 percent).

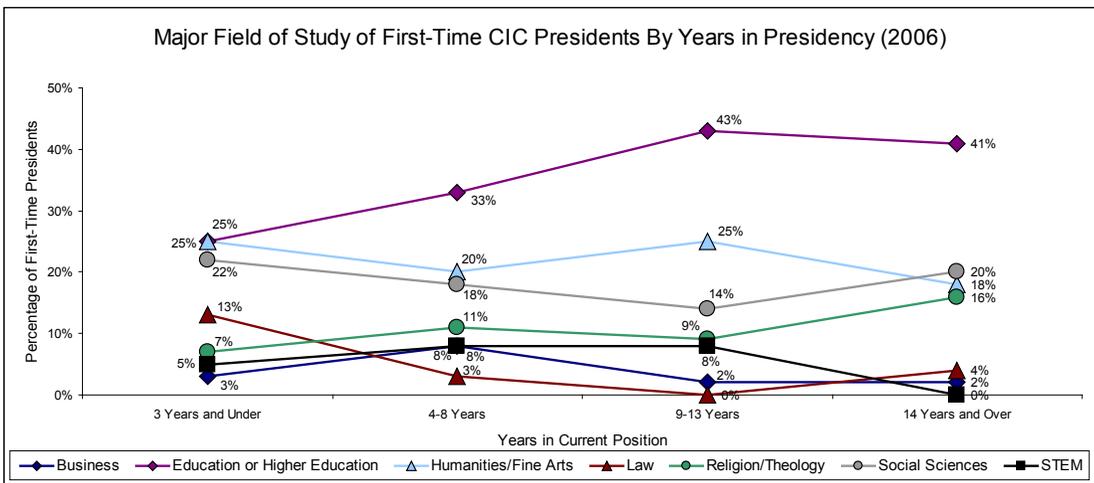


Figure 8.

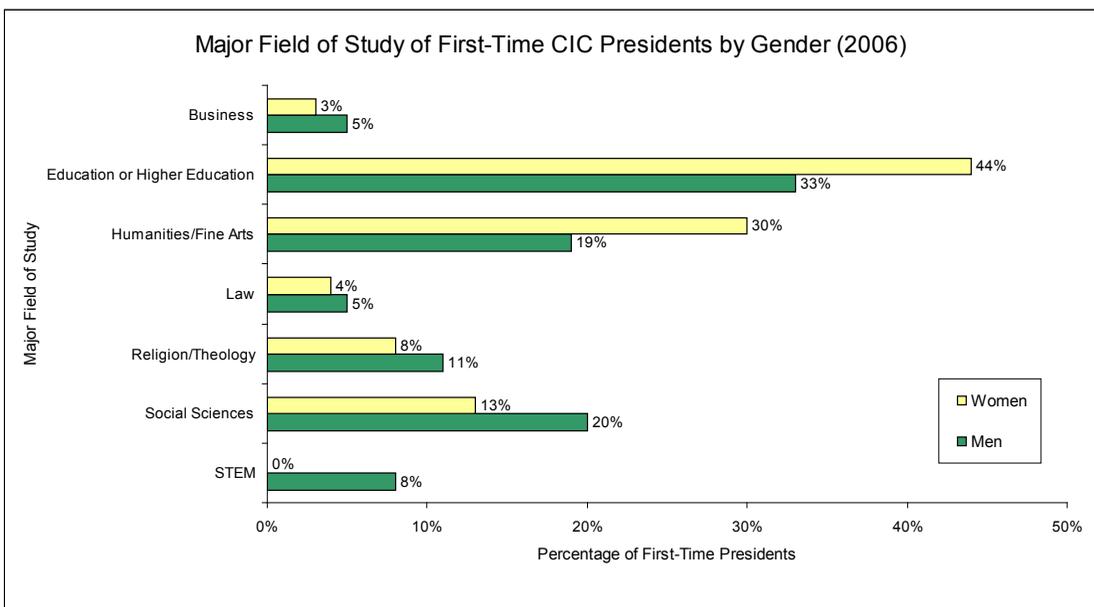


Figure 9.

Gender. Looking at the gender of first-time presidents, in 2006 education was the largest reported field of highest degree for both male and female CIC presidents, though a larger proportion of women (44 percent) than men (33 percent) held degrees in this field (see Figure 9). Following a similar pattern, 30 percent of women and 19 percent of men earned their highest degrees in the humanities and fine arts. The social sciences were the second highest field of study for male CIC presidents (20 percent) and third highest field for female presidents (13 percent). A larger proportion of men than women also reported having earned their highest degree in religion, law, and business. Finally, while 8 percent of men earned their highest degree in a STEM field, no women had done so in 2006.

Differences in Field of Highest Earned Degree among Types of Institutions

In 2006, first-time presidents of CIC colleges and universities reported their highest earned degree in the following fields: education or higher education (35 percent), humanities and the fine arts (21 percent), social sciences (18 percent), religion and theology (10 percent), STEM (6 percent), law (4 percent), and business (4 percent) (see Figure 10). In comparing the responses of CIC presidents to those of their peers in other types of institutions, only presidents of two-year colleges reported a higher percentage of degrees in education (75 percent); the next highest percentage was observed at public baccalaureate and master’s level institutions (31 percent). Out of all the groupings, CIC presidents also reported the highest proportion of degrees in the humanities and fine arts although a lower proportion of social science degrees than other four-year institutions. Only private institutions reported presidents with religion and theology degrees, with both CIC institutions and doctoral universities reporting 10 percent. Only 6 percent of CIC presidents reported having earned a degree in the STEM fields, a substantial difference compared with public non-doctoral four-year institutions (16 percent), and doctoral institutions (public and private doctoral universities both reported 33 percent). Presidents also reported few degrees in law or business.

Looking further back to respondents to the 2001 ACPS survey, 36 percent of CIC presidents reported earning their highest degree in education or higher education, 21 percent in the humanities and the fine arts, 17 percent in the social sciences, 10 percent in religion and theology, 5 percent in STEM fields, 5 percent in law, and 4 percent in business (see Figure 11). Similar to 2006, CIC presidents ranked second to public two-year institutions in education degrees (78 percent) and had a slightly higher percentage of presidents with such degrees than their peers at public baccalaureate and master’s level colleges (33 percent). CIC presidents reported a lower percentage of degrees in the social sciences (17 percent)

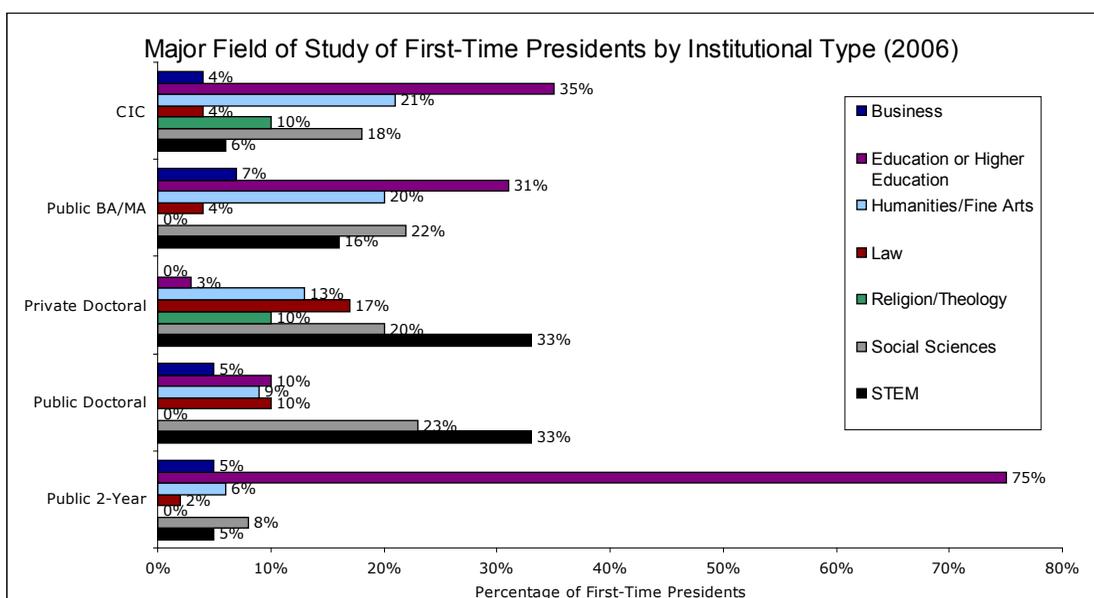


Figure 10.

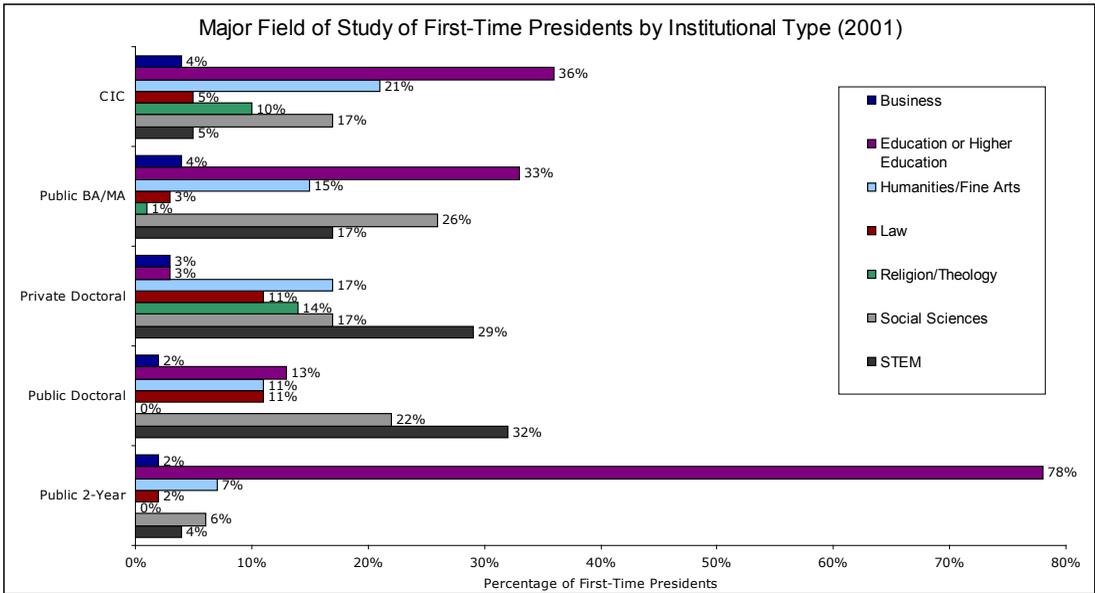


Figure 11.

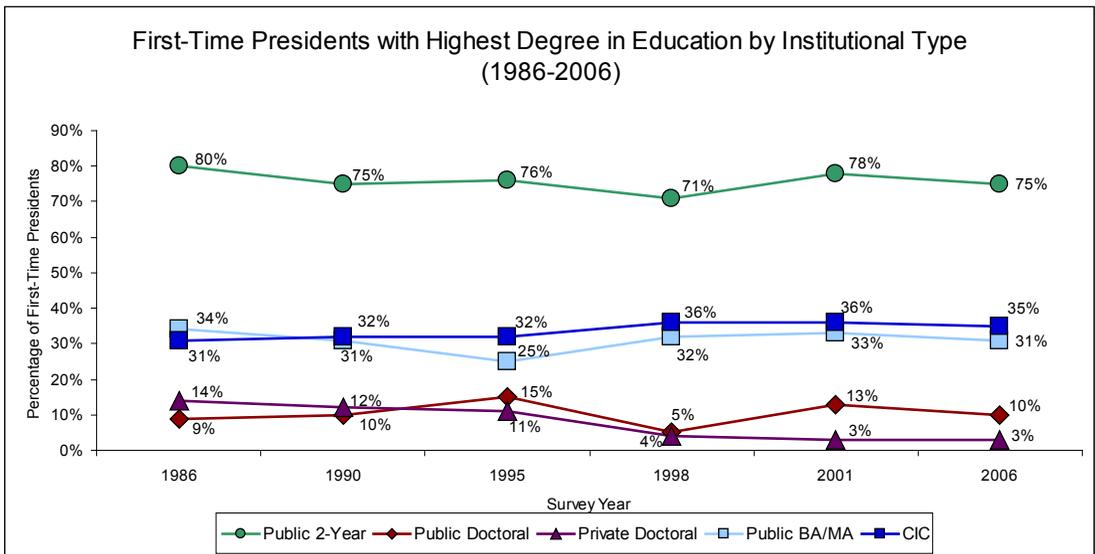


Figure 12.

than public four-year institutions (26 percent at BA/MA and 22 percent at doctoral institutions) and the lowest percentage of STEM degrees (5 percent) at four-year colleges and universities (17 percent at public baccalaureate and master’s level colleges, 29 percent at public doctoral universities, and 32 percent at private doctoral institutions). CIC presidents reported the same percentage of degrees in religion or theology as in 2006 (10 percent), with only private doctoral presidents reporting a higher proportion (14 percent). Once again, few CIC presidents reported degrees in law or business.

Education or Higher Education. Notable differences between groupings occurred among first-time presidents whose highest degree was in education or higher education. This field accounted for the largest percentage of CIC presidents across all surveys and ranked second highest among the five institutional type groupings over the past five surveys. There has been steady although modest growth in the proportion of CIC presidents with their highest degree in education, increasing from 31 percent in 1986 to 35 percent in 2006 (see Figure 12). Presidents of public baccalaureate and master’s level institutions reported levels similar to or slightly below those of CIC presidents across the surveys with 31 percent in 2006.

Across all surveys, first-time presidents of two-year institutions reported the highest percentage of education degrees, ranging from 71 percent to as high as 80 percent. In fact, presidents of community colleges were twice as likely to have their highest degree in education as CIC presidents in all survey years. Presidents of doctoral institutions with their highest degrees in education reported the lowest proportions among the groupings, as the percentage of presidents of private doctoral institutions decreased from 14 percent in 1986 to 3 percent in 2006, while the percentage of presidents of public research universities was 9 percent in 1986 and 10 percent in 2006.

Humanities and Fine Arts. The proportion of first-time presidents with humanities and the fine arts as their major field of study decreased over time within all four-year institutions, with CIC presidents consistently having the highest percentage, from 26 percent in 1986 to 21 percent in 2006 (see Figure 13). The largest decrease occurred at private doctoral institutions, falling from 25 percent in 1986 to 13 percent in 2006. Although presidents of public doctoral institutions reported a 10 percentage point increase in presidents with fine arts and humanities degrees from 1986 to 1990 and presidents of public baccalaureate and master’s level institutions reported a large decrease of 12 percentage points from 1995 to 1998, over the 20-year period both showed modest decreases overall. Finally, presidents of two-year institutions consistently reported the lowest percentage of highest degrees in the humanities and fine arts, ranging from 6 to 8 percent across all surveys.

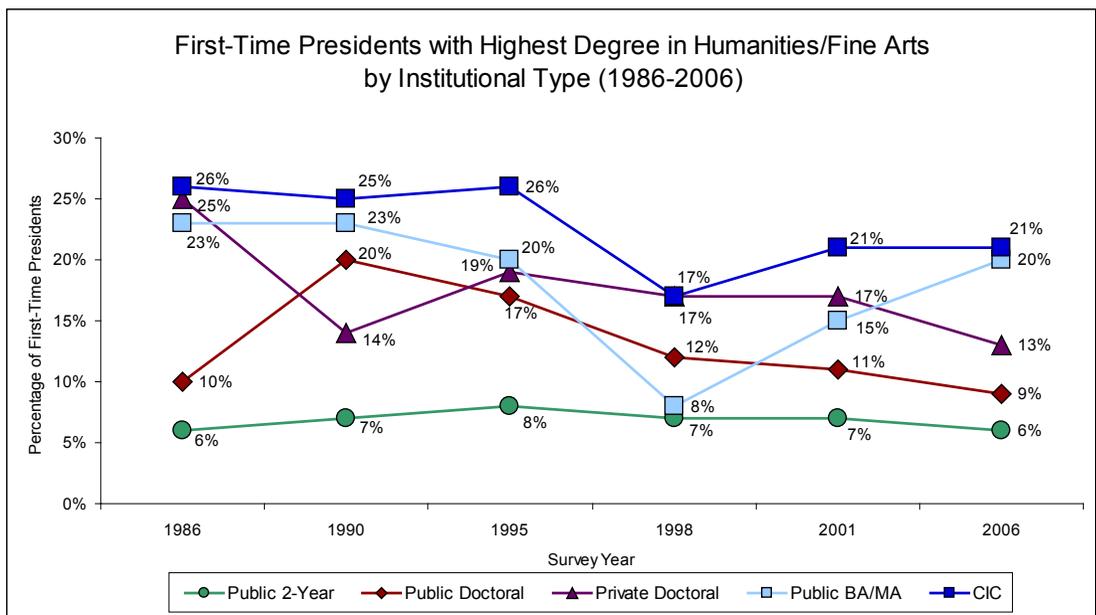


Figure 13.

Social Sciences. Public institutions had a greater proportion of first-time presidents with their highest earned degrees in the social sciences compared with private institutions, with public doctoral universities the highest in both 1986 (27 percent) and 2006 (23 percent) (see Figure 14). Public baccalaureate and master’s level institutions were nearly as high (20 percent in 1986 and 22 percent in 2006). The gap between the private and public four-year colleges and universities, however, decreased over the 20-year period, largely as a result of the increase in the private sector. The proportion of presidents of private institutions with the social sciences as their major field of study increased from 13 percent in 1986 to 18 percent in 2006 for CIC presidents, and 11 to 20 percent for presidents of private doctoral institutions over the same time span. Similar to the pattern of presidents with degrees in the humanities and fine arts, presidents of community colleges reported the lowest percentage of presidents with their highest degrees in the social sciences, ranging from 3 to 8 percent across all surveys.

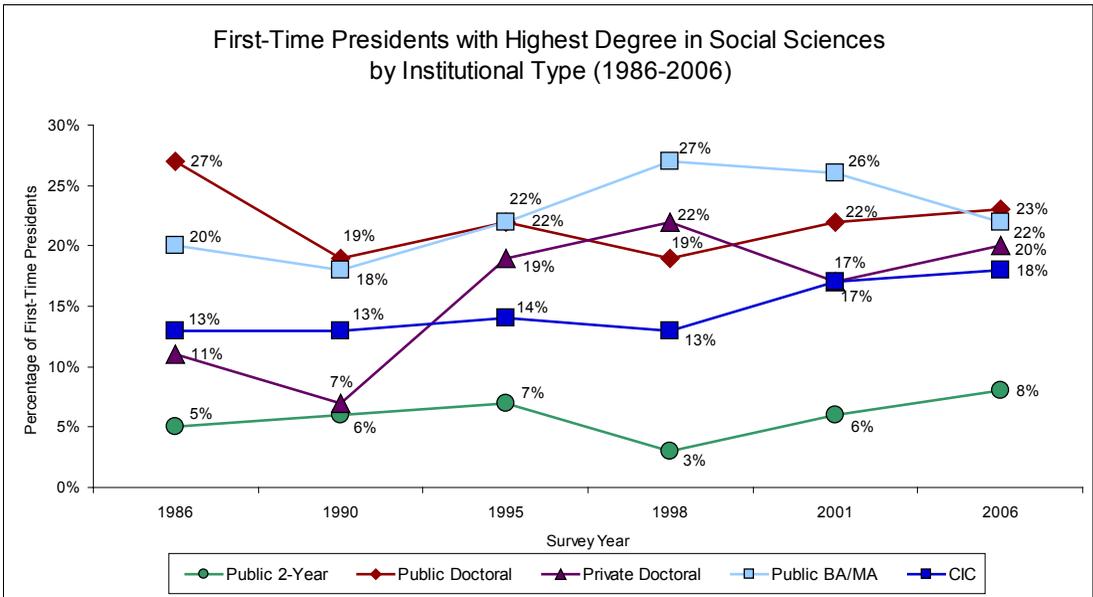


Figure 14.

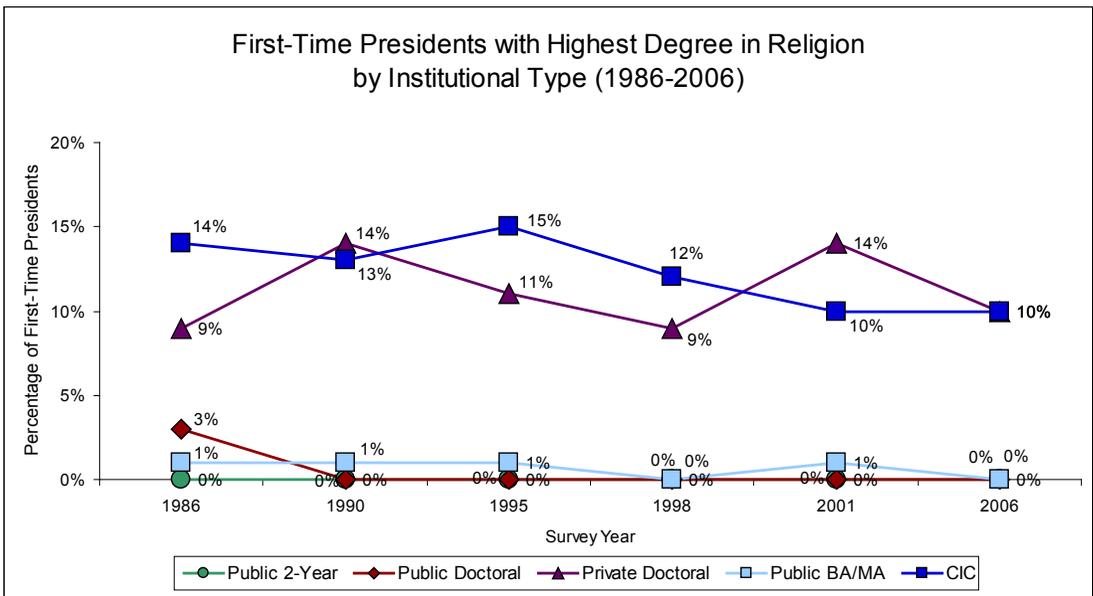


Figure 15.

Religion and Theology. The level of first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities with their highest degrees in religion or theology has seen a slight decline over the past two decades, from 14 percent in 1986 to 10 percent in 2006 (see Figure 15). The proportion of presidents of private doctoral institutions with the same degrees fluctuated over this 20-year time period, but the overall change has been modest, increasing from 9 percent in 1986 to 10 percent in 2006. Not surprisingly, within the public sector, few presidents reported earning their highest degree in religion or theology, with no first-time presidents in 2006 reporting this as their major field of study.

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). First-time presidents of research universities reported the highest proportion of degrees in the STEM fields, revealing substantial differences from presidents of CIC member institutions (see Figure 16). In particular, while the percentage of CIC presidents with STEM degrees has decreased over time, from 10 percent in 1986 to 6 percent in 2006, presidents of research universities reported increases over the past 20 years, with private doctoral presidents rising from 23 percent in 1986 to 33 percent in 2006 and public doctoral presidents gaining

from 29 to 33 percent across the six surveys. Presidents of public baccalaureate and master's level institutions consistently showed percentages between 16 and 18 since 1990, while presidents of public two-year institutions were between 4 and 6 percent across the surveys.

Law. Only a small proportion of first-time presidents of non-doctoral institutions earned their highest degree in law, with presidents from all three non-doctoral groupings reporting 5 percent or fewer across all surveys (see Figure 17). In contrast, presidents of doctoral institutions reported an increase in having earned their highest degree in law. While both private and public doctoral institutions saw decreases between 1990 and 1998, over the 20-year period presidents of private institutions reported an increase from 11 to 17 percent and presidents of public institutions reported a 7 to 10 percent increase. The proportion of CIC presidents with law as their highest earned degree rose slightly, from 2 percent in 1986 to 4 percent in 2006. ♦

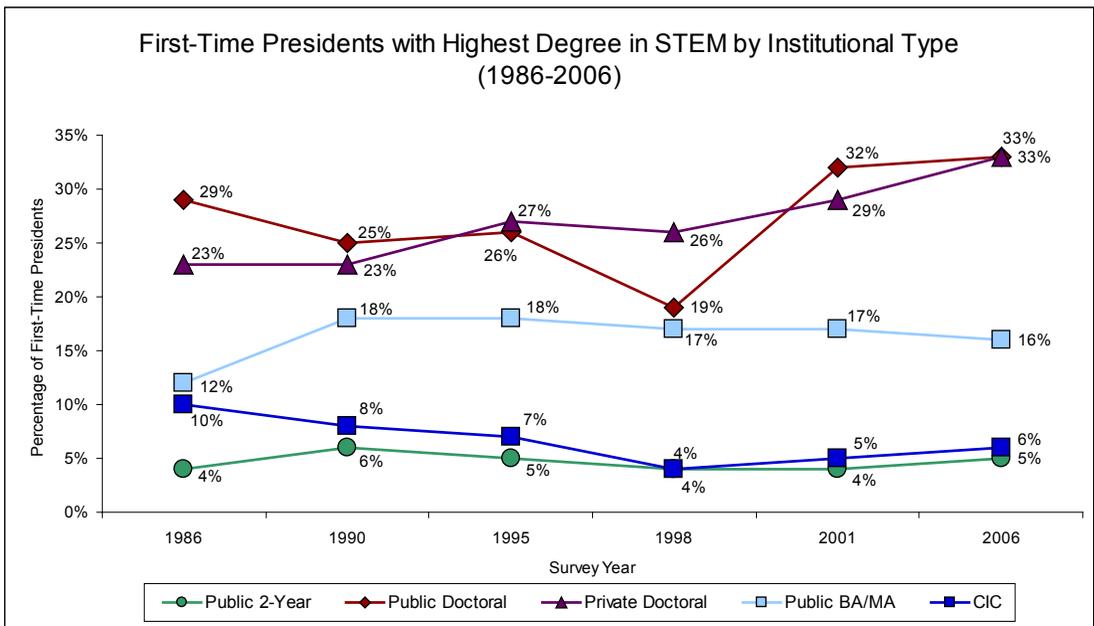


Figure 16.

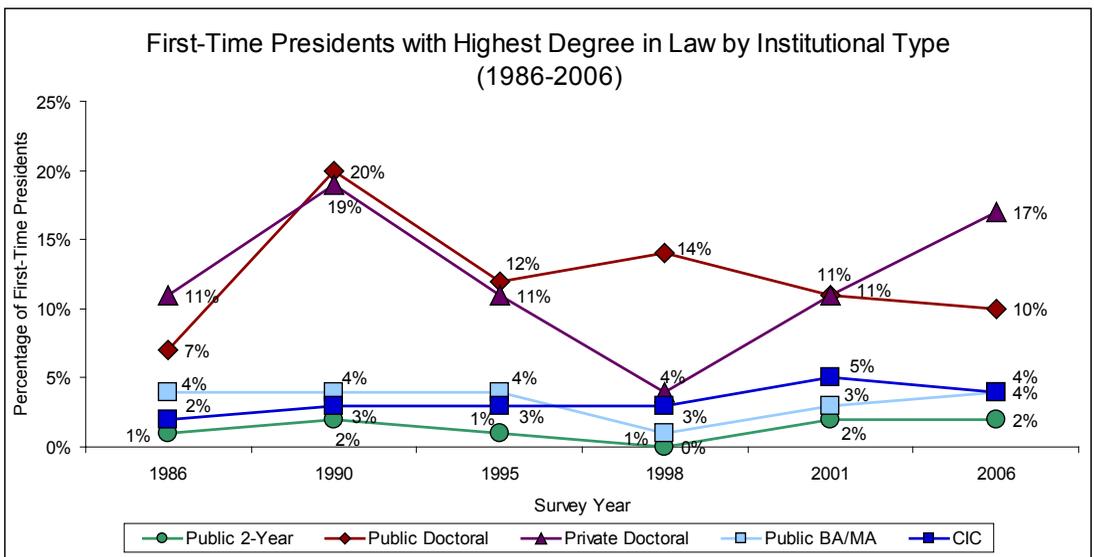


Figure 17.

Demographic Characteristics of First-Time Presidents

The Council of Independent Colleges was also interested in knowing what relationship existed, if any, between demographic characteristics and the career trajectories of college presidents. The possible effects of age, gender, racial/ethnic identity, and marital status on the career pathways for first-time presidents were considered. Comparisons were made between presidents of CIC institutions and presidents of other types of institutions, and changes in these comparisons over time were examined.

Age

The graying of the college presidency has been widely noted (ACE, 2007). CIC wanted to determine if the trend toward older presidents held true for CIC member colleges and universities. In 2006, the average age of a first-time CIC president was 59, and as a group, CIC institutions had the highest proportion of younger presidents. Twelve percent were under 51, 43 percent were between 51 and 60, and 46 percent were over 60 (see Figure 18). When examining other groupings of four-year institutions, only public baccalaureate and master’s level institutions had presidents under the age of 50 (2 percent). Presidents of public four-year institutions also reported the highest proportion of presidents over 60 and were the only sub-sectors with over half of their presidents in this oldest age category.

Since 1986 the average age of college and university presidents has steadily increased across all groupings (see Figure 19). The average age of first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities has increased from 52 in 1986 to 59 in 2006. Presidents of research universities reported the highest average ages in 1986 (54 years old), with presidents of public four-year institutions reporting the highest average ages in 2006 (61 at BA/MA and 62 at doctoral), although the differences between types of institutions was minimal.

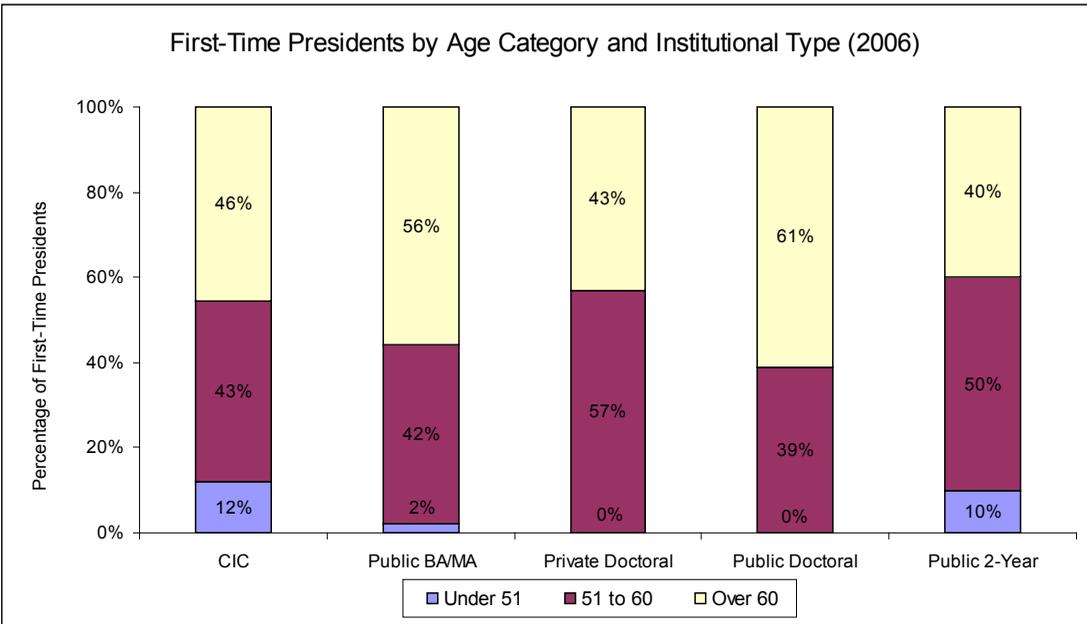


Figure 18.

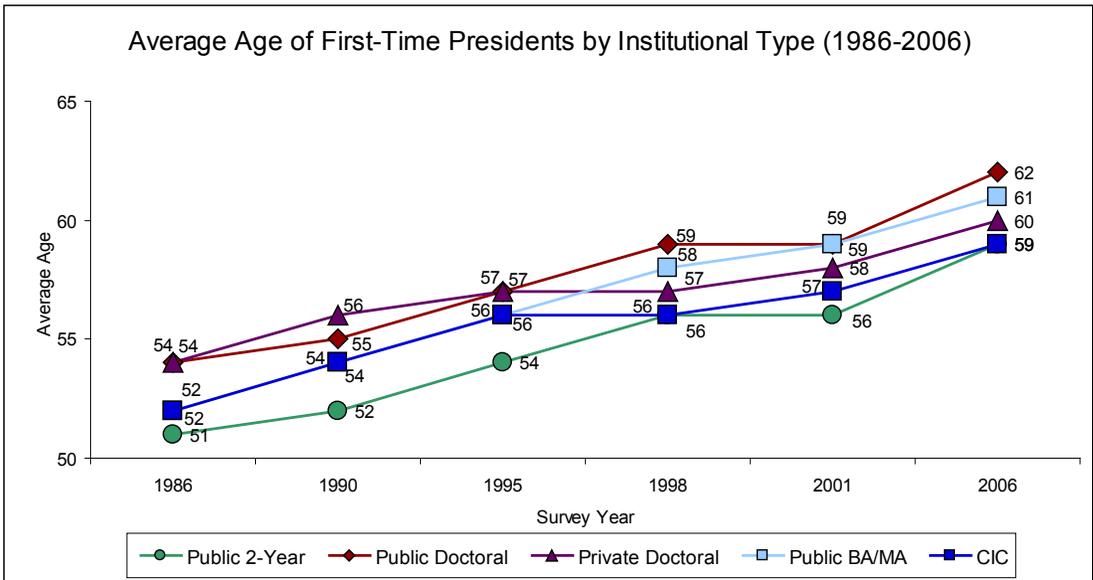


Figure 19.

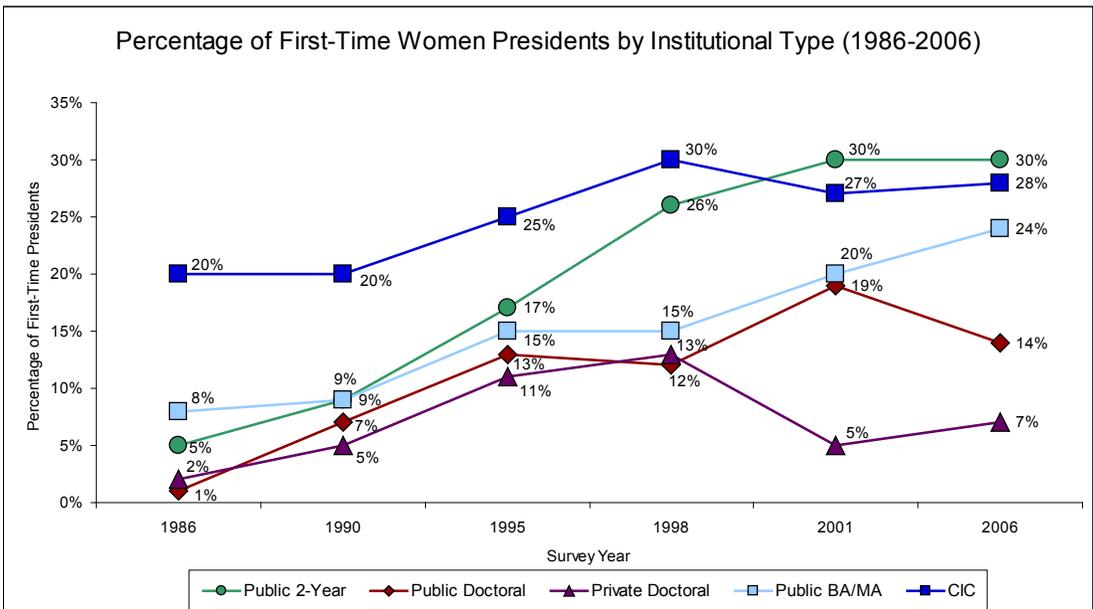


Figure 20.

Gender

Over the past 20 years, all five groupings of institutions have seen increases in the proportion of female presidents, with the size of the increases ranging from 2.5 to 14 times the 1986 share (see Figure 20). Private institutions, however, saw the smallest increases, with private doctoral universities increasing by 5 percentage points to 7 percent in 2006. In 1986, 20 percent of first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities were female, significantly higher than all other groupings and more than double the proportion of the group with the next highest percentage, public baccalaureate and master's level presidents at 8 percent. By 2006, the proportion of women increased to 28 percent, maintaining a first-place position among four-year institutions. According to the most recent data, public community colleges now have the highest proportion of first-time female presidents at 30 percent, after a climb from just 5 percent in 1986. The public four-year institutions also saw large increases, with female presidents representing 24 percent of presidents of public baccalaureate and master's level colleges and universities and 14 percent at public doctoral institutions 2006.

Race/Ethnicity

Over the past 20 years, CIC member colleges and universities have seen moderate growth in the proportion of first-time minority (non-white) presidents, increasing from 5 percent in 1986 to 8 percent in 2006 (see Figure 21). Due to the small numbers of presidents of color, the analysis was limited to an aggregated category of minority or non-white. While the share of presidents of color at private doctoral institutions has dropped to zero since 1998, significant increases in minority presidents can be observed at public institutions with baccalaureate and master's level institutions consistently having the largest proportion of non-white presidents. The proportion of minority presidents of public BA/MA institutions has increased from 16 percent in 1986 to 22 percent in 2006 and the share of minority presidents of public doctoral institutions has increased from 6 percent in 1986 to 15 percent in 2006. Presidents of color at community colleges have increased from 5 percent in 1986 to 8 percent in 2006.

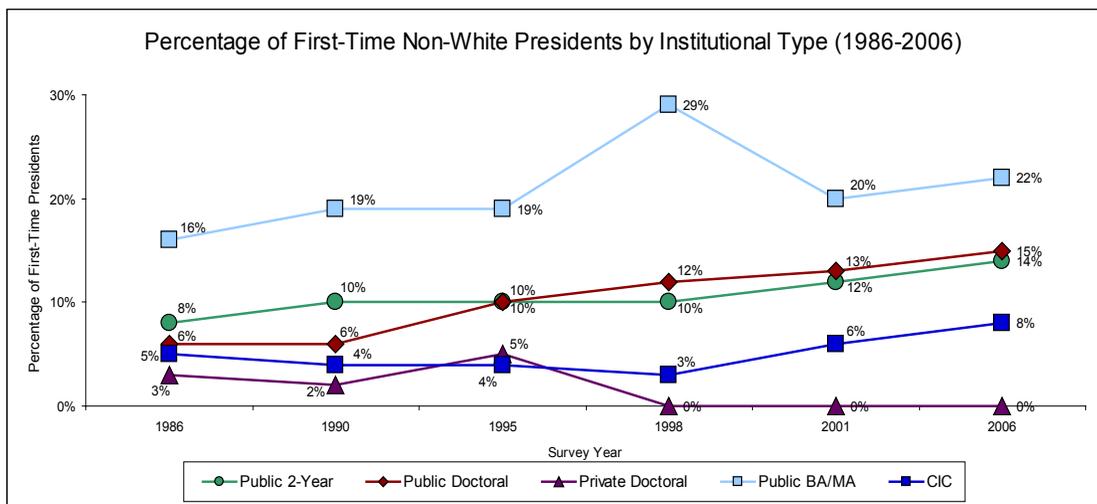


Figure 21.

Married Presidents

The proportion of married presidents has declined among all five institutional groupings since 1986 (see Figure 22). The analysis was limited to those first-time presidents married at the time of each survey and excluded presidents who were members of religious orders and thus not eligible to be married. Presidents of private institutions tended to report lower marriage rates over the past 20 years; however, the overall decrease at CIC (87 to 86 percent) and private doctoral (87 to 85 percent) institutions was modest. The result is that CIC institutions at 86 percent had the second highest marriage rates in 2006; only public research universities had a higher rate (89 percent). Further analysis revealed that in 2006, among CIC first-time presidents, 63 percent of women were married, compared with 94 percent of men. The most substantial changes occurred at the public non-doctoral institutions, as the proportion of currently married presidents of both public baccalaureate and master's and community colleges dropped 10 percent from 1986 to 2006 (from 95 percent to 85 percent at BA/MA, and 93 percent to 83 percent at 2-year institutions). ♦

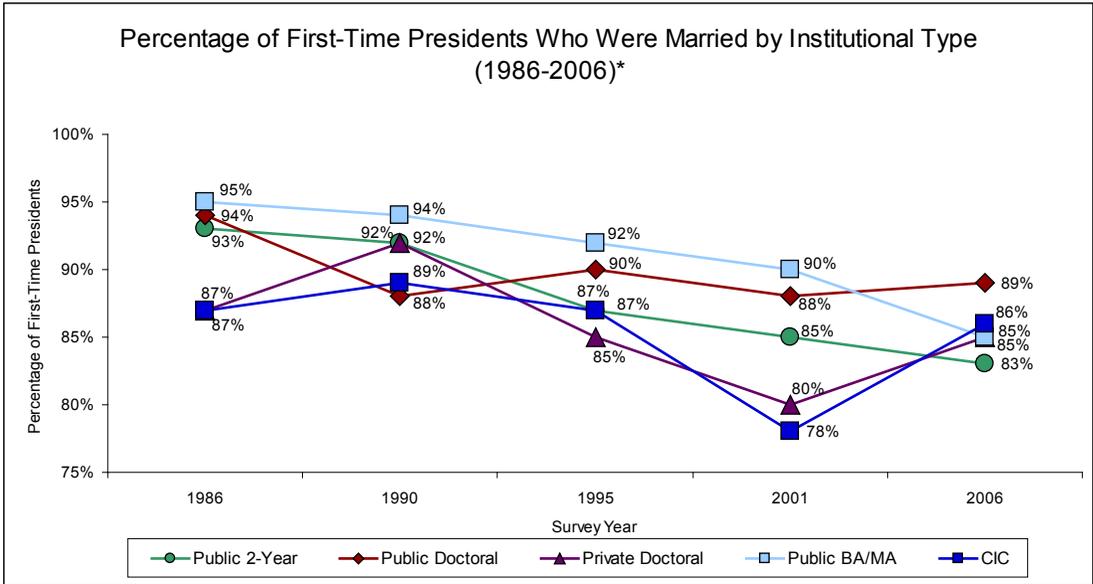


Figure 22. *excludes members of religious orders

Preparation for Presidential Responsibilities

In addition to examining descriptive characteristics of the career patterns of college presidents, CIC also considered attitudinal factors, such as presidents' perceptions of their readiness for the responsibilities of the office. Identifying particular managerial and leadership areas for which presidents identified as being particularly underprepared could help target training and orientation programs for new presidents, as well as for those seeking a presidency for the first time. Data from the 2006 ACPS survey provided responses to 17 areas of responsibility. CIC first considered the responses of first-time presidents according to type of institution served, then examined variations in responses among CIC member colleges and universities by the positions held before assuming the presidency.

Differences by Type of Institution Served

When first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities were asked to identify presidential responsibilities for which they felt insufficiently prepared, the following were most frequently noted: fundraising (19.9 percent), risk management and legal issues (18.3 percent), capital improvement projects (17.9 percent), budget and financial management (17.6 percent), and entrepreneurial ventures (16.3 percent) (*see Table 1*). In comparison with presidents of other types of institutions, CIC presidents appear to be less prepared for presidential tasks, citing nine areas more frequently than other presidents: academic issues (11.3 percent), accountability and assessment of student learning (14.0 percent), budget and financial management (17.6 percent), capital improvement projects (17.9 percent), enrollment management (15.6 percent), faculty issues (12.0 percent), government relations (15.9 percent), personnel issues (excluding faculty) (9.3 percent), and risk management and legal issues (18.3 percent). Presidents of private research universities appeared best prepared for their roles, marking 12 of the 17 areas of responsibility less frequently than their peers in other institutional settings. In no case did presidents of CIC institutions indicate that they were best prepared among the five groupings. Although first-time CIC presidents indicated that they were more underprepared for fundraising than any other area (19.9 percent), they seemed better prepared for this responsibility than presidents of public baccalaureate and master's level institutions (28.0 percent) and community colleges (31.2 percent).

Differences among CIC Presidents by Previous Position

To understand better the preparation for the presidency of first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities, their responses by previous positions were also examined. In particular, CIC presidents who were previously chief academic officers reported being underprepared for capital project management (26.0 percent), fundraising (25.0 percent), risk management and legal issues (24.0 percent), entrepreneurial ventures (19.2 percent), and athletics (16.3 percent) (*see Table 2*). Moreover, these former CAOs were more likely to indicate insufficient preparation for the top four areas than any of their peers entering the presidency from different positions. Not surprisingly, CAOs seemed best prepared for presidential duties in such areas as academic, accountability and assessment, budget and financial management, and enrollment management issues. Former nonacademic officers reported budget/finance management and accountability and assessment of student learning as the top areas for which they felt least prepared (18.8 percent each), with risk management/legal issues (17.7 percent), and government relations (16.7 percent) following. First-time presidents from outside higher education indicated that they were insufficiently prepared for faculty issues (30.8 percent), enrollment management (28.2 percent), academic issues (25.6 percent), and

issues of budget and financial management, and accountability and assessment of student learning (23.1 percent each). While presidents from outside higher education seemed least well equipped to deal with academic and faculty issues, their responses indicated that they were better prepared than their campus-based colleagues to address entrepreneurial ventures, fundraising, media and public relations, personnel issues (excluding faculty), and strategic planning. It is perhaps for these areas of relative expertise or confidence that as candidates they are most appealing to board search committees. ♦

| Areas Insufficiently Prepared for First Presidency | CIC | Public BA/MA | Private Doctoral | Public Doctoral | Public Two-Year |
|--|------|--------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Academic Issues | 11.3 | 9.7 | 3.3 | 7.5 | 6.3 |
| Accountability/Assessment | 14.0 | 8.0 | 0.0 | 12.5 | 9.4 |
| Athletics | 14.3 | 16.0 | 16.7 | 32.5 | 10.0 |
| Budget/Financial Management | 17.6 | 10.3 | 6.7 | 7.5 | 12.1 |
| Capital Improvement Projects | 17.9 | 15.4 | 6.7 | 11.3 | 16.5 |
| Community Relations | 5.0 | 4.6 | 3.3 | 3.8 | 5.8 |
| Crisis Management | 11.0 | 13.1 | 6.7 | 10.0 | 12.9 |
| Enrollment Management | 15.6 | 4.6 | 3.3 | 15.0 | 8.7 |
| Entrepreneurial Ventures | 16.3 | 20.0 | 3.3 | 15.0 | 15.0 |
| Faculty Issues | 12.0 | 4.6 | 10.0 | 7.5 | 7.3 |
| Fundraising | 19.9 | 28.0 | 10.0 | 7.5 | 31.2 |
| Governing Board Relations | 13.0 | 7.4 | 6.7 | 17.5 | 12.6 |
| Government Relations | 15.9 | 13.7 | 10.0 | 8.8 | 9.2 |
| Media/Public Relations | 10.0 | 5.7 | 3.3 | 12.5 | 8.7 |
| Personnel Issues (excluding faculty) | 9.3 | 5.1 | 6.7 | 7.5 | 6.6 |
| Risk Management/Legal Issues | 18.3 | 17.1 | 13.3 | 15.0 | 18.1 |
| Strategic Planning | 8.0 | 8.6 | 3.3 | 5.0 | 9.4 |

Table 1. Percentage of presidents who reported being insufficiently prepared for selected presidential responsibilities by type of institution.

| Areas Insufficiently Prepared for First Presidency | CAO/Provost | Other Academic Officer | Non-academic Officer | Chair/Faculty | Outside Higher Education |
|--|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Academic Issues | 4.8 | 6.7 | 15.6 | 9.1 | 25.6 |
| Accountability/Assessment | 7.7 | 11.1 | 18.8 | 18.2 | 23.1 |
| Athletics | 16.3 | 15.6 | 11.5 | 9.1 | 17.9 |
| Budget/Financial Management | 15.4 | 17.8 | 18.8 | 18.2 | 23.1 |
| Capital Improvement Projects | 26.0 | 13.3 | 13.5 | 18.2 | 15.4 |
| Community Relations | 4.8 | 4.4 | 7.3 | 0.0 | 2.6 |
| Crisis Management | 9.6 | 8.9 | 12.5 | 0.0 | 17.9 |
| Enrollment Management | 10.6 | 22.2 | 13.5 | 18.2 | 28.2 |
| Entrepreneurial Ventures | 19.2 | 17.8 | 15.6 | 18.2 | 10.3 |
| Faculty Issues | 4.8 | 8.9 | 15.6 | 0.0 | 30.8 |
| Fundraising | 25.0 | 26.7 | 15.6 | 18.2 | 12.8 |
| Governing Board Relations | 15.4 | 8.9 | 13.5 | 18.2 | 10.3 |
| Government Relations | 11.5 | 20.0 | 16.7 | 36.4 | 17.9 |
| Media/Public Relations | 11.5 | 15.6 | 8.3 | 18.2 | 2.6 |
| Personnel Issues (excluding faculty) | 8.7 | 11.1 | 10.4 | 18.2 | 5.1 |
| Risk Management/Legal Issues | 24.0 | 13.3 | 17.7 | 9.1 | 15.4 |
| Strategic Planning | 8.7 | 11.1 | 7.3 | 18.2 | 2.6 |

Table 2. Percentage of CIC presidents who reported being insufficiently prepared for selected presidential responsibilities by immediate prior position.

Conclusion

Several conclusions are suggested by these findings. First, given the importance of teaching and learning in CIC member colleges and universities, particularly at the undergraduate level, the lesser likelihood of presidents coming from the academic ranks, especially from the position of chief academic officer, is striking. When considered in concert with the greater prevalence of presidents with a nonacademic officer or outside higher education background and the presidential responsibilities for which first-time presidents felt unprepared, these findings suggest that trustee search committees of CIC institutions may believe that chief academic officers do not have the fundraising and managerial skills they assume are needed to be successful presidents (a new ACE survey of chief academic officers found that only a quarter of CAOs at CIC institutions were interested in pursuing a college presidency).

Second, although as a group the first-time presidents of CIC member colleges and universities have become more diverse over the past two decades, these gains have fallen behind those of presidents in other sub-sectors. In particular, over the past two decades the modest gains in the proportion of female presidents were surpassed by a margin of two to one by presidents of public BA/MA institutions. A similar pattern was exhibited when tracking the modest increase in presidents of color.

Third, while slightly younger than presidents of other types of institutions, the average age of first-time CIC presidents—59 years—has risen just as swiftly over the past 20 years. In 2006, first-time CIC presidents, like their counterparts in other institutional settings, are older today by an average of at least seven years than first-time presidents in 1986.

Based on analysis of these data, several recommendations follow:

1. Greater emphasis should be placed on preparing chief academic officers to assume the presidency, particularly in fundraising, risk and financial management, and other administrative and leadership skills often called upon in the presidency.
2. Equally, more opportunities should be provided to orient new presidents from nonacademic backgrounds to faculty, curricular, and shared governance issues, as well as to orient new presidents from outside higher education to the dynamics of academe, especially the particularities of independent higher education.
3. Women and persons of color should especially be encouraged to apply to CIC programs that prepare prospective presidents.
4. The graying of the presidency suggests that programs to prepare potential presidential candidates and orient new presidents will continue to be of importance to the health and vitality of the presidency for some years to come.
5. CIC should consider ways to share the implications of these findings with trustee search committees and presidential search consultants.

Recommendations for Further Research

The data analyzed in this study provide a more nuanced understanding of the career pathways leading to the presidency of colleges and universities that are members of the Council of Independent Colleges. In particular, the approach of identifying the responses of CIC member presidents and making comparisons with other presidents by the four additional institutional groupings revealed important differences not observed in prior analyses. While critical questions were addressed in this study, there are additional areas where further inquiry would augment understanding of presidential career trajectories,

expanding the base of knowledge about this subject and providing useful information to CIC in the development of its programming. To this end, the following recommendations for further research are offered:

1. Using these same data, it would be useful to examine more carefully the responses of new presidents (those in their first three years of their first presidential positions) to determine whether there are systematic differences by length of service and whether these differences change over time.
2. The value of the type of analysis conducted in this study—grouping responses by CIC membership and the four other major institutional categories—suggests that a similar approach to analyzing data from ACE’s CAO Census would further enhance understanding of the career patterns and aspirations of chief academic officers, who represent a significant pipeline to the academic presidency.
3. Given the importance of mentoring in the career preparation of college presidents (noted anecdotally and in the literature), it would be useful to include items in future surveys of presidents in order to empirically assess this leadership cultivation activity.
4. Similarly, an inquiry into the role of participation in the several training experiences to prepare candidates for the presidency would also be useful and items to assess these activities should be included in future surveys of college presidents. ♦

Appendix

Background

A number of studies have sought to identify common career pathways among college presidents (Birnbaum and Umbach, 2001; Cohen and March, 1974; King and Gomez, 2008; Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, and Bragg, 1983; Wessel and Keim, 1994), and early studies were elementary in their understanding of presidential career trajectories. One of the first studies recognized that many presidents arrived at their current positions by being promoted through the academy, moving from professor to a department chair or dean position, academic vice president, and finally to the presidency (Cohen and March). A later report concluded that Cohen and March's study was too simplistic and instead identified 15 variations of career pathways to the presidency (Moore et al.). The authors also noted that only when variations are permitted in the standard career trajectory is Cohen and March's study accurate. Building on these two previous studies, a third categorized career trajectories into two pathways: the academic career pattern and the administrative career pattern (Wessel and Keim). The academic career pattern, which 69 percent of the presidents fit, consisted of 14 different variations while the administrative career pattern, which included the remaining 31 percent of presidents, consisted of seven variations. A fourth study identified four categories of career patterns, recognizing that academics may have more experience teaching or in administrative positions (traditional pathways), whereas some presidents may have little to no higher education experience or have moved back and forth between positions in higher education and outside higher education (nontraditional pathways), and this study also found that most presidents (87 percent) followed the traditional academic trajectory (Birnbaum and Umbach). The most recent study mapped the career patterns of first-time college presidents over their first prior and second prior positions to assuming the presidency, illustrating the complexity and breadth of pathways undertaken (King and Gomez).

In addition to career pathways, leadership development and mentors can also play significant roles in one's career (Brown, 2005; Holmes, 2004). Of particular interest are the roles that these activities can have to support underrepresented groups. For example, Brown's study of female presidents found that 73 percent of presidents attended at least one professional development program and 79 percent had at least one mentor. Most notable was that of those who had a mentor, 71 percent reported that the mentor actively sought them out, suggesting that outside influences may have significant effects. Holmes also notes the importance of mentors in the personal and professional development of African American presidents, as well as the benefits of leadership development programs.

Now in its sixth edition, the American Council on Education's American College President Study has surveyed college and university presidents since 1986, acquiring information on their career patterns, demographic characteristics, and experiences (American Council on Education, 2007; Corrigan, 2002; Green, 1988; Ross and Green, 1998; Ross and Green, 2000; Ross, Green and Henderson, 1993). The most recent edition, conducted in 2006, contains data from 2,148 college and university presidents. Of these respondents, 441 (21 percent) were presidents of CIC institutions, and over two-thirds of those individuals were first-time CIC presidents. Providing valuable information about the changing characteristics of college and university presidents for 20 years, the American College President Study surveys presidents from all sectors of higher education.

The academic presidency is more multifaceted and demanding than ever before. "Today's academic presidents must have the flexibility and skill to lead in times of affluence, in times of adversity, and

in unimaginable circumstances,” writes Bornstein (2003, p. 11). Furthermore, the number of possible applicants is perceived as smaller than it was only a decade ago. As the national association for small and mid-sized private colleges and universities, CIC is well positioned to enhance the preparation of future college presidents.

Methods and Data

The purpose of this study was to understand better the career pathways, educational preparation, and other demographic characteristics of presidents of colleges and universities that are members of the Council of Independent Colleges. Because CIC was interested in the preparation of college and university presidents and the professional routes they took to the presidency, the analysis was limited to first-time presidents, thus excluding from the study those who had previously served as president of another college or university. To determine whether important differences existed between presidents of different types of institutions, comparisons were made between first-time presidents of CIC member institutions and presidents of four major groupings, namely public baccalaureate and master’s (BA/MA) level institutions, private doctoral—or research—universities, public doctoral universities, and public two-year or community colleges. Previous studies examined respondents by sector (a combination of control and level) and by 2005 Carnegie basic classifications (see ACE, 2007, and King and Gomez, 2008). CIC’s analysis used a hybrid approach combining these two institutional characteristics into “sub-sectors” since CIC membership is largely comprised of private, not-for-profit, baccalaureate and master’s level institutions.

Data for this study came from the American Council on Education’s (ACE) American College President Study (ACPS) surveys. ACE surveyed presidents of all American higher education institutions in 1986, 1990, 1995, 1998, 2001, and 2006. Using the criteria described above, CIC limited its analysis to first-time presidents of the five major groupings of institutions. *Table 3* displays the number of first-time presidents for each grouping by survey year. CIC membership was based on those institutions that were members at the time of the 2006 survey administration (n = 567). Respondents to the previous studies were matched to this membership criterion.

Data analysis was descriptive and bivariate, consisting of frequencies and cross-tabulations for comparative purposes. In addition to comparisons by type of institution, CIC also made comparisons by previous position, based on an approach developed by King and Gomez (2008). The five major response categories were (1) chief academic officers (CAO) or provosts, (2) other academic administrators, such as associate or assistant vice presidents or deans, (3) nonacademic officers, such as advancement, finance, or student affairs administrators, (4) faculty members or department chairs, and (5) those in positions outside of higher education, such as public officials, corporate executives, or other nonprofit leaders. ♦

| Sub-Sector | 1986 | 1990 | 1995 | 1998 | 2001 | 2006 |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|
| CIC | 411 | 390 | 356 | 200 | 337 | 301 |
| Public BA/MA | 191 | 189 | 170 | 92 | 198 | 175 |
| Private Doctoral | 57 | 44 | 38 | 24 | 37 | 30 |
| Public Doctoral | 78 | 69 | 70 | 42 | 93 | 80 |
| Public 2-Year | 494 | 482 | 447 | 247 | 440 | 381 |
| Total | 1,231 | 1,174 | 1,081 | 605 | 1,105 | 967 |

Table 3. Number of first-time presidents by institutional type and year of survey.

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