CEO TENURE & RETENTION STUDY

8th Update

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA

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CEO Tenure and Retention Study©
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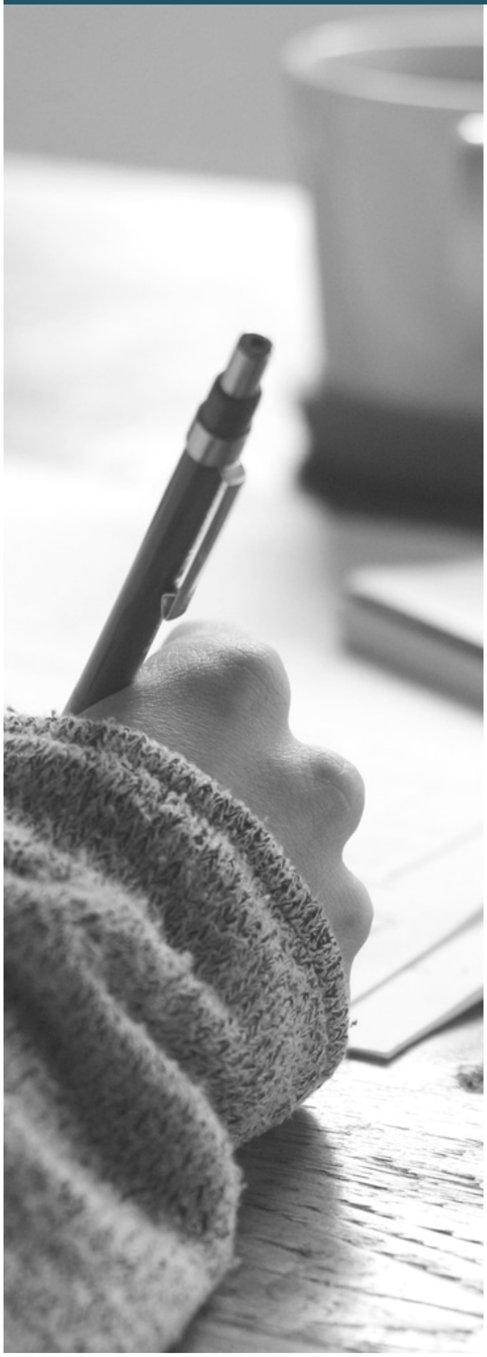

Summary

The *8th Update* of the Community College League of California's (League) CEO Tenure & Retention Study provides an overview of tenure rates across the California Community Colleges' history while also analyzing key changes in demographic trends. Specifically, the study reveals a more equitable distribution of male and female CEOs in the last 30 years, and also illustrates the effects the Great Recession has had on CEO retention.

The *8th Update* is the first version of the study to feature a dynamic dashboard with visual representation of over 100 years of California Community College chief executive officer tenure data. The dashboard is an interactive infographic that allows users to filter the data to observe changes across time among different regions, districts, colleges, and individual executives, stratified by gender and ethnicity. Through dynamic charts and tables, users can identify trends and outliers to gain additional insight into the data. The dashboard can be viewed at www.ccleague.org/CEOtenure.

Terms

In this study, *chief executive officer* (CEO) and *president* are used generically to identify the chief executive of a college. CEO titles can vary by institution depending on size and status as a single-college district or multi-college district. *Tenure* is used to describe the length of service of a CEO.

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BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY OF THE CEO TENURE & RETENTION STUDY

In Spring 1995, as the chancellor positions at Chabot-Las Positas, Contra Costa, Foothill-DeAnza, Los Rios, and San Francisco Community College Districts were either vacant or about to be vacated, the Chief Executive Officers of the California Community Colleges (CEOCCC) noted that many CEO positions in the California system had turned over between July 1, 1994 and April 21, 1995. In response to this information, the California Community College Trustees (CCCT) Board of the League held a mini-retreat to discuss these concerns with a panel composed of a new CEO (Tim Dong, Mira Costa College), a long-experienced CEO (George Boggs, Palomar College), and a CEO who moved from a presidency to a chancellorship (Jeanne Atherton, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District). As a result of this discussion, the CCCT Board initiated a staff study to determine the extent of turnover and its possible consequences, with a goal of improving the recruitment and retention of effective CEOs at all levels in the California Community Colleges.

For the initial study in 1995, League staff gathered information on the CEOs from the founding of each district and college. A survey was sent to each college and district CEO asking her/him to provide updated information. The directory data and the new data were entered into a League database and sent to every CEO to verify its accuracy. Results were then forwarded to a group of experienced active CEOs who provided their assessment of the reason(s) for each CEO leaving the district. The data were analyzed to determine the number of CEOs leaving their positions annually as well as tenure length. Since the initial study 22 years ago, League staff regularly contact districts, monitor news releases, track retirement notices, and review boards of trustee announcements for CEO changes statewide. Data collected includes names, starting and ending dates, gender, and since 2014, race and ethnicity. Due to continuing interest in CEO retention, the League has issued an update of this study biennially since 1995 so that the League has a complete set of names and dates of employment for every CEO from each college in the California Community College system since the opening of each college.

This study is intended to be read in conjunction with the CEO Tenure & Retention Dashboard© which provides opportunities for further analysis through an interactive format.

WHY CEO TENURE & RETENTION ARE IMPORTANT

Since the 1970s, as financial pressures increased for institutions of higher education, interest in hiring presidents for their administrative experience grew across the country (Center for 21st Century Universities, 2017). Today, presidents are expected to be multidimensional leaders able to navigate a range of challenges while also keeping abreast of the changing nature of work and learning. And, since the increased demands placed on the higher education sector are not expected to abate in the foreseeable future, the roles and responsibilities of chancellors and presidents will continue to be increasingly challenging.

In recognizing that significant demands on CEOs have at times come at the cost of longer tenures, the rate of turnover in California's community colleges continues to be a topic of concern. To further understand the implications leadership tenure has on students, faculty, staff and local and regional communities, the *8th Update* begins to briefly analyze a key question: why is CEO tenure and retention so important? While there are many perceived reasons, our literature review and findings explore two possible benefits of longer tenures: organizational stability and financial sustainability.

Organizational Stability: Analyses of the correlation between CEO tenure and college success are limited. What is available suggests a relationship between leadership changes and a college's environment. A new CEO may have impacts on the college, including its effectiveness, structure, and culture (Kirkland, T. P., & Ratcliff, J. L.,1994). Leadership transitions change existing operational practices, and while this may be in a welcome direction, the process may be disruptive for faculty and staff. While disruption is sometimes necessary, constant change can lead to a culture that simply "waits it out," therefore limiting prospects of effective advancement. Most notably, Robert Birnbaum (1989) highlights an interesting quagmire for colleges; presidential influence is limited by college stability yet presidents promote college stability. Organizational stability allows college leaders to focus on practices and initiatives that yield positive effects on student success. Instability can lead to financial woes, strife, and even accreditation issues, all of which distract from student success efforts.

Financial Sustainability: Tenure matters since leadership transitions are costly. A study by James Finkelstein, professor of public policy at George Mason University, found that a college presidential search at two- and four-year institutions can cost in the range of $25,000 to $160,000 (Finkelstein, J. & Wilde, J., 2016). He notes that the average service fee for a search firm was $78,769, plus travel and expenses. This estimate does not include indirect costs incurred by the district or college through staff interviews and planning. Changing CEOs is not a move that can be undertaken lightly by districts and colleges as choosing a new president can be a costly and certainly a consequential decision.

Further, the changing financial conditions of higher education have led to increased attention to fundraising. For community college chancellors and presidents, this is a growing aspect of their role. This feature of the presidency is coupled with the continued emphasis on financial management. Sixty-five percent of presidents cite spending most of their time on budget and financial management, followed by fundraising, at 58 percent (Gagliardi, J., Espinosa, E., Turk, J., Taylor, M., 2017). According to both the *2018 Survey of Community College Presidents* (Inside Higher Ed and Gallup) and *American College President Study 2017* (American Council on Education), 71 percent and 61 percent of respondents respectively stated financial matters were the biggest challenge presidents face. College leaders are expected to navigate internal fiscal matters with expertise while also building long-term relationships that yield support for colleges. This includes creating rapport with donors, legislators, and foundations to receive funding and grants. Resource development efforts benefit from the well-established relationships that presidents build with key constituent groups and with influential members of their communities. The importance of relationship-building to fundraising success is linked directly to a college's long-term goals as spelled out by its leadership (Hall, 2002).

Longer tenures alone cannot create stability within a college or address its fiscal challenges, however, extended tenures offer the prospect for comprehensive and focused implementation of the elements that build a successful college.

Prior League *CEO Tenure & Retention Studies* have found that one of the contributing factors to high turnover rates is the sheer quantity of CEO positions in California – a total of 136. While leadership turnover in California's colleges may be inevitable, with the right institutional response, each transition presents an opportunity to select, and effectively support CEOs that meet the diverse needs of students and the complex challenges of colleges.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE 8TH UPDATE

Since 1913, over 1,150 individuals have held permanent and interim executive leadership roles at California's community colleges and districts. While over 75 percent of those positions have been held by men, the gap has narrowed over the last 30 years towards a more equitable distribution. Nationally, though the rate of increase has slowed considerably in recent years (up 11.6 points to 21.1 percent between 1986 and 2001), we continue to see increases in the number of presidencies held by women, with 30.1 percent in 2016 compared to 23 percent in 2006 (Gagliardi, J., Espinosa, E., Turk, J., Taylor, M., 2017). California, however, continues to lead the nation with women at the helm of 39 percent of colleges and districts.

As of this *8th Update*, there is a gradual uptick in the composition of CEOs from diverse racial and ethnic groups serving as college presidents as compared to California's general population demographics. Changes in access to educational leadership programs may provide an ongoing opportunity to increase the diversity of future college CEOs.

For California Community College CEOs, overall tenure, excluding interims, is 7.1 years. Nationally, the average tenure of a college president was 6.5 years in 2016, down from 8.5 years in 2006. In the last 10 years, the mean tenure length of California chancellors, superintendent/ presidents, and presidents was 5.2 years, a decrease from the average tenure of 7.2 years for a similar 10-year period from 1998-2008.

39%

California Colleges Led by Women

7.1 years

Overall California CEO Tenure

The *8th Update* demonstrates differences in the tenure between CEOs who report to boards of trustees and those in multi-college districts.

- For California presidents in a multi-college districts, the average tenure is 6.3 years.
- The overall tenure for California CEOs reporting to boards of trustees is 7.7 years.
- Generally, interims serve an average of approximately one year.

The district with the longest average tenure for its CEOs is the Sonoma Community College District, which in its 100-year history has had only five permanent CEOs serving an average of 16 years. The college with the longest average tenure is De Anza College, which has had 3 permanent CEOs with an average tenure of 16.5 years.

The *8th Update* observed that across the state nearly half of CEOs who left their position either retired or passed away. About a third of CEOs left for another position within the California community colleges. Nearly a fifth were released from their position, and a small percentage left California entirely.

KEY FINDINGS

- Since 1913, over 1,150 individuals have held executive leadership roles at California community colleges and districts.
- In the last 10 years, the mean tenure length for California CEOs was 5.2 years.
- About a third of CEOs leave for another position with the California community colleges.
- Nearly a fifth of CEOs were released from their positions.
- The college with the longest average tenure is De Anza College, which has had 3 permanent CEOs with an average tenure of 16.5 years.
- The district with the longest average tenure for its CEOs is the Sonoma Community College District with CEOs serving an average of 16 years.

WOMEN AND THE CEO GENDER GAP

Women are a majority of all undergraduates in the United States, comprising 56 percent of all enrollments - a figure that is expected to grow to 58 percent by 2020 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018), yet less than a third of college presidents across the country are women (Gagliardi et. al, 2017).

In California, the gap continues to narrow towards a more equitable distribution, especially over the last 30 years. Currently, 39 percent of California's community colleges and districts are led by women. The historical peak in California was in 2016 when 58 CEO appointments, 45 percent of the total, were held by women.

There are two notable stretches where no woman held a CEO leadership position at a California Community Colleges; from 1950-1966 and from 1972-1974. The longest serving CEO at one college was Grace Van Dyke Byrd who led Bakersfield College for 38 years from 1913-1951. College of the Canyons CEO Dianne Van Hook has a notable tenure of 31 years, currently the longest service as a single-college district CEO. And while men have led in the number of CEO positions, the distinction of serving the longest in leadership roles at California Community Colleges belong to a woman, Constance Carroll, who has held positions at various colleges since 1977, including presidencies at Indian Valley, College of Marin, Saddleback, and San Diego Community College District Chancellor since 2004.

While women have led individual colleges since 1913, it took many years for women to ascend to the roles of chancellor or superintendent/president. Only men had led single-college districts until 1948 when a woman was first appointed to an interim role at San Joaquin Delta Community College District. In 1969, the Mt. San Antonio College Board selected Marie Mills, making her the first woman to lead a single-college district. At multi-college districts, it was not until 1978 that a woman was appointed to the role of interim chancellor. Six years later, in 1984, Yuba Community College District appointed the first woman to a permanent chancellor role. Now, across California, all but seven districts have at one point in time appointed a woman to lead as the permanent chancellor or superintendent/president. For colleges in a multi-college district, only three have yet to be led by a woman.

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NARROWING GENDER GAP

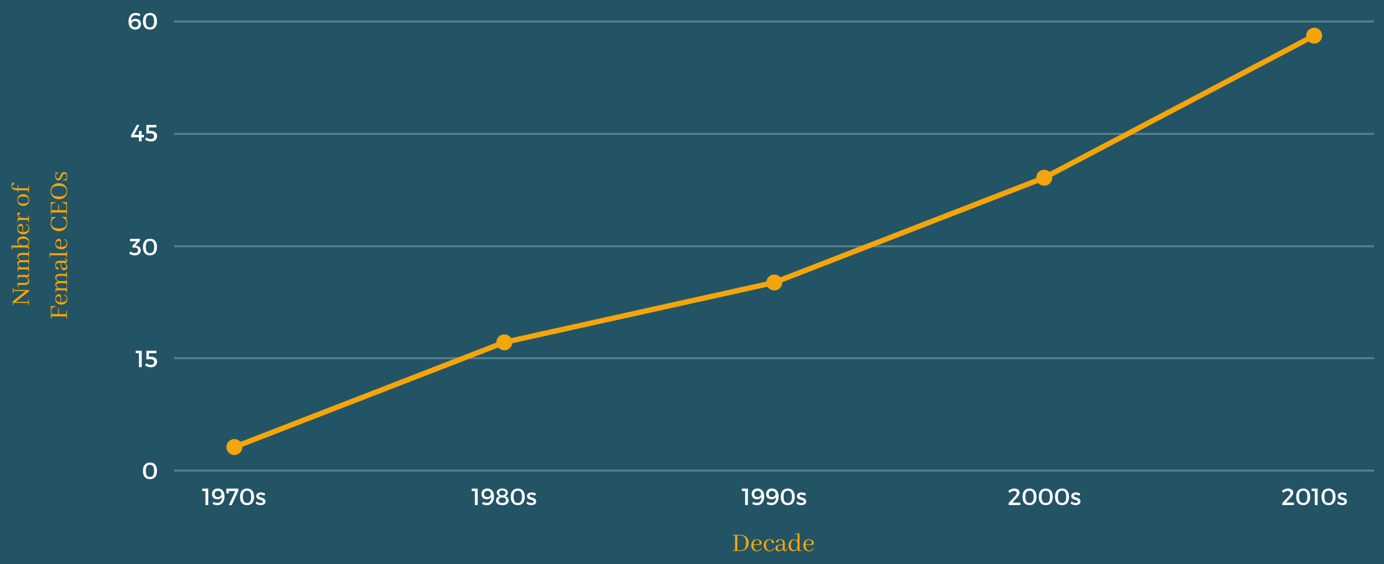
In California, the gender gap continues to narrow towards a more equitable distribution, with more women leading California's community colleges. The greatest increases occurred during the last 10 years.

56%

enrollments in higher education are women

45%

historical peak of women CEOs



Clovis Community College is the lone college to have been led solely by women since its inception in 2015.

In California, overall tenure for women CEOs is still lower than their male counterparts. The average tenure of female CEOs, excluding interims, is 5.5 years, compared to the average tenure of 7.5 years of male CEOs. Though, that margin narrows when you analyze mean tenure since 2000 which has an average tenure of 5.3 years for women compared 6.0 years for men.

The data suggest that California's community colleges have made significant strides in promoting women leaders to the ranks of CEOs over the last few decades. Nevertheless, improvements can be volatile as seen from a small decline since 2016. Women CEOs continue to be under-represented relative to California's female higher education population.

DIVERSITY SNAPSHOT

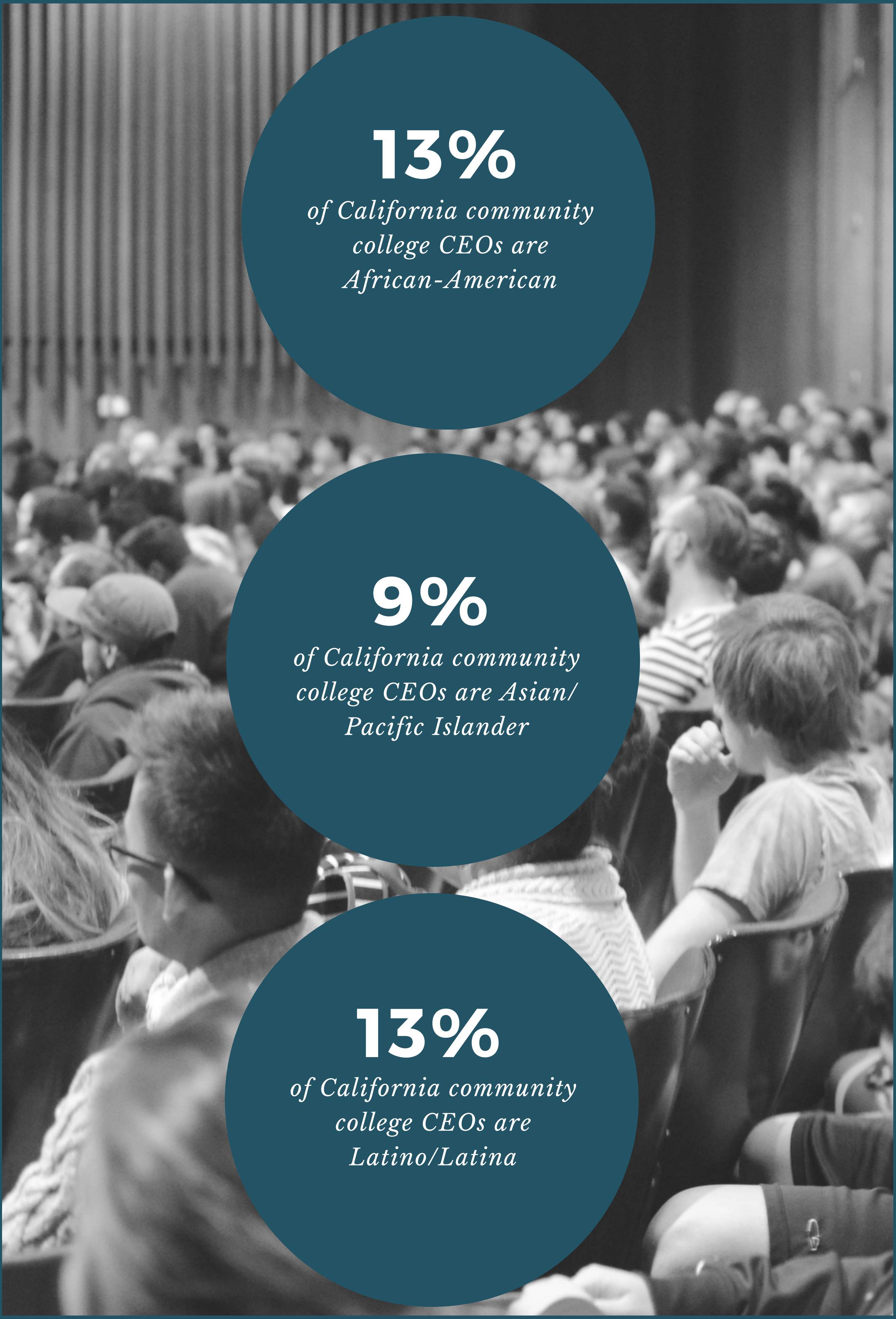
Since 2011, the proportion of presidents across the U.S. who were members of underrepresented groups climbed by about four percentage points to 16.8 percent (The Chronicle of Higher Education Almanac, 2017). Still, less than a fifth of all positions are filled by a member of a diverse racial or ethnic group.

Ethnicity for California CEOs Since 2005 vs. National					
	CA 2018	CA 2015	CA 2010	CA 2005	National
African-American	12.6%	12%	14.7%	13.3%	7.9%
Asian American or Pacific Islander	8.9%	8.0%	5.9%	5.2%	2.3%
Latino/Latina	13.3%	14.0%	18.4%	20.0%	3.9%
Other/Unknown	6.7%	—	—	3.8%	—
Caucasian	58.5%	66.0%	61.0%	57.7%	87.5%

California's rates are generally higher than national trends. However, compared to the 2015 California Census data, current California Community College CEOs are both over and underrepresented in different ethnic categories. Caucasian CEOs are represented at a proportion 50 percent greater than California's average, and African-American CEOs are represented at approximately double the average. Nationally, the proportion of African-American presidents at two- and four-year institutions has increased two percentage points to 7.9 percent since 2011.

Latinos and Asian American or Pacific Islander CEOs are underrepresented relative to state averages with Latinos being the most underrepresented group as a whole. Further, service by Latino CEOs continues to decline, down 6.7 percentage points since 2005. Though at 13.3 percent, California representation of Latino CEOs remains much higher than the national rate of 3.9 percent.

Service by Asian American or Pacific Islander CEOs is gradually climbing both in California and across the country. In the U.S., the percentage of Asian-American presidents grew slightly, rising to 2.3 percent from 1.5 percent (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Since 2005, the percentage of Asian American or Pacific Islander CEOs has grown from 5.2 to 8.9 percent.



13%

of California community college CEOs are African-American

9%

of California community college CEOs are Asian/Pacific Islander

13%

of California community college CEOs are Latino/Latina

EFFECTS OF THE GREAT RECESSION ON CEO TENURE & RETENTION

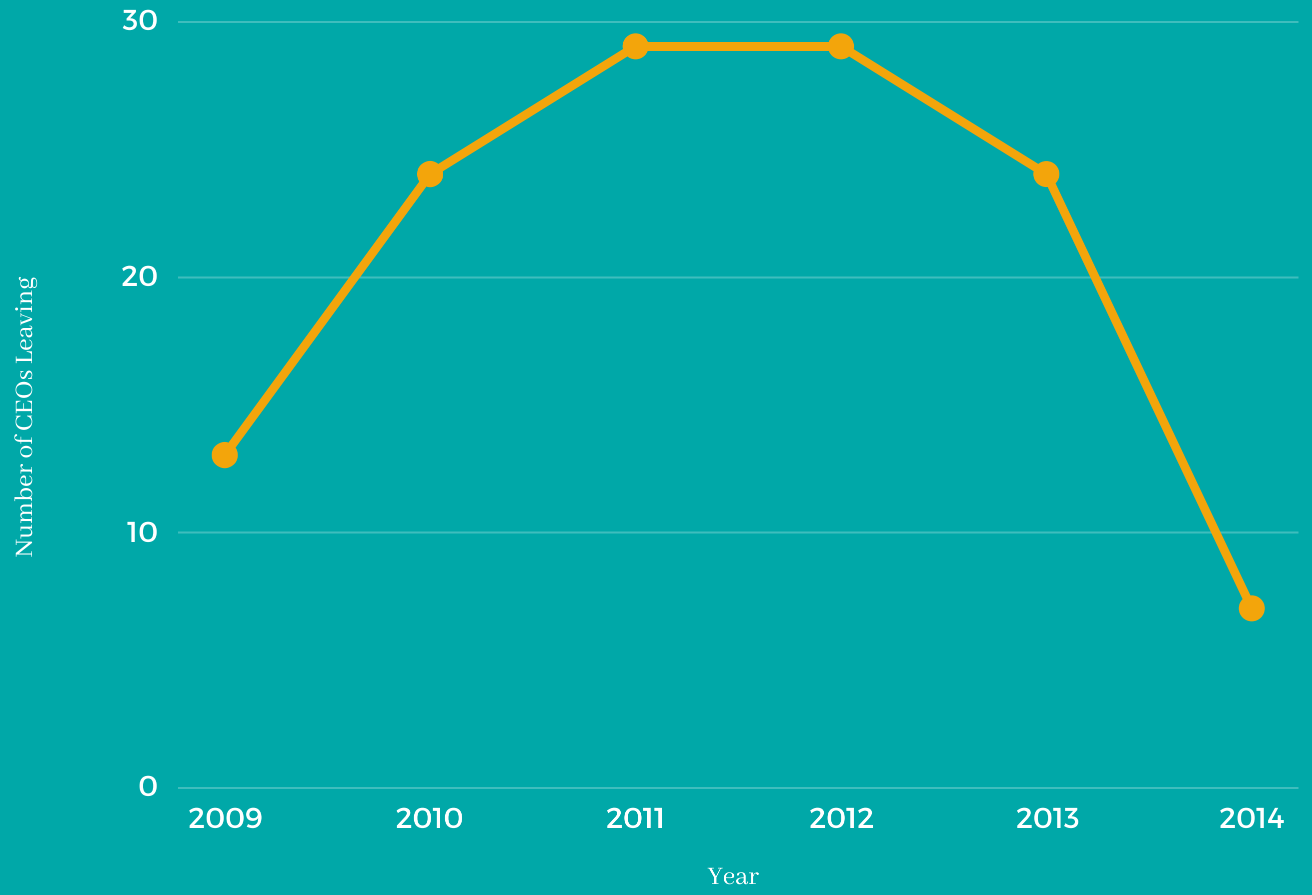
Retention and attrition are important considerations in maintaining consistent leadership across colleges and districts. The *8th Update* provides an opportunity to examine the effects of the Great Recession and the ensuing recovery on CEO turnover.

Though we observe that during the last decade turnover among CEOs (excluding interims) has experienced a slight downward trend, California did experience a spike in turnover between 2009-2012. In 2009, 13 CEOs left their position. That number jumped to 24 in 2010, 29 in 2011, and 29 in 2012. Conversely, in 2014, following the first year of California Community College budget increases since 2008, only 7 CEOs left. Overall, tenure was 7.2 years during the period of the Great Recession (2007 through 2009). Interestingly, the years following the Great Recession saw a tenure of 5.1 years. This may be partially explained by the slow recovery that followed the Great Recession. While in economic terms the recession ended in June 2009, community colleges still experienced budget declines for another three years. By the time Proposition 30 was approved by voters in November 2012, community colleges had lost a total of $1.5 billion (PPIC, 2013). These cuts were substantially larger than those that have occurred during past economic downturns in California. The mean tenure suggests that districts reacted differently to the fiscal challenges, with some choosing to maintain steady leadership, and others opting for change. Overall, since the Great Recession in 2007, CEO tenure average is now 5.3 years.

The data show the length of service has dropped over a 50-year period, with a mean length of service of 9.5 years for 1970-79; 8.8 years for 1980-89; 8 years for 1990-1999; 6.9 years for 2000-09; and 5.2 years for 2010-2018. The post-1970 50-year mean of 6.7 years differs by approximately 30% from the pre-1970 mean of 9.7 years suggesting likely changes in ongoing factors between the two periods that influenced the drop in length of tenure.

There are many possible reasons for the variability in the turnover rate. No one reason is the sole contributor to turnover. Difficult fiscal times may however be a factor in motivating CEOs to retire or leave their positions, or for boards to choose to not renew a CEO’s contract.

CEO TURNOVER DURING THE GREAT RECESSION



TURNOVER

A look at the data on California CEO departure patterns shows parallels between the 70's, the early 90's, late 2000's through the Great Recession – each difficult fiscal times for higher education in California. The late 70's ushered in Proposition 13 and the California "tax revolt" which severely cut local property taxes, the primary funding base for schools and community colleges. The early 90's saw a severe recession in California which lingered far longer than in other states. The Great Recession proved to have possibly more crippling effects with an estimated loss of enrollment of nearly 600,000 students (PPIC, 2013). These types of fiscal deficiencies create protracted struggles with some CEOs choosing to retire or boards choosing to make sweeping changes. In each of these periods, the challenges were not unique to higher education or community colleges, but rather a reflection of the time and with similarly disconcerting results.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE CEO ROLE AND TENURE

The dynamics of higher education across the nation are driving the demand for a new set of skills and capabilities among those chosen to lead colleges. Virtually all aspects of community college operations are under strain: colleges must contend with institutional expenses outpacing revenues, student-felt impacts of rising food and housing scarcity, stagnant incomes, a changing regulatory environment, and growing pressure to deliver more credentials of greater value to a more diverse population at a lower per-pupil cost (Aspen Institute, 2014). The range of leadership skills required is vast: student services, academics, finances, marketing, fundraising, and advocacy to name just a few.

But how can a college president be successful through these changing demands? Judith Eaton, President of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, believes one of the most important traits for a college president's success is flexibility. "To be flexible, presidents should be nimble intellectually and politically," Eaton says (EAB, 2016). College presidents also must be able to adapt to campus' changing priorities by being transformational leaders, a theoretical framework increasingly used to describe the leadership skills needed to succeed in colleges' complex environments. College priorities change rapidly, and *transformational leaders** can embrace these shifting missions. The *2017 American College President Study* also makes the case that a unique opportunity exists for transformational change in higher education, noting that change will require creative and innovative leadership (American College President Study, 2017).

THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE CEO PIPELINE

The *American College President Study* found that beyond the challenges community college presidents are facing on their campuses, many leaders are also concerned about the pipeline to the presidency and the support available once appointed to the

* A theory where leaders empower individuals to fulfill their contractual obligations, meet the needs of the organization, and go beyond the 'call of duty' for the betterment of the institution. (Nevarez & Wood, 2011)

role. One trepidation relates to data suggesting a higher level of presidential turnover in the near future due to retirements. Nationally, the average age of college and university presidents is 61.7 years, just slightly older than their counterparts from five years ago. Consider also that the percentage of presidents age 71 and older more than doubled, from 5 percent in 2011, to 11 percent in 2016. While the League does not currently collect age data for its study, if national trends hold true, California must avail educational opportunities to a new crop of diverse leaders while also ensuring new CEOs are supported toward long-term success.

When the League launched the CEO Tenure & Retention Study in 1996, few options existed that supported the education pipeline to the community college presidency. One major gap was the limited access to educational leadership doctoral programs, especially those which include a focus on community colleges. Across California, access to these programs at public four-year universities has increased. In 2005, the California State University (CSU) was authorized to offer the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) degree as a result of SB 724 (Chapter 269, Statutes of 2005), authored by then-Senator Jack Scott. Now, 15 of the 23 CSU campuses offer these programs. The University of California (UC), whose campuses have long offered an education Ph.D., also offers Ed.D. programs at three of its campuses; UC Davis, UC Los Angeles, and UC San Diego. The increasingly diverse enrollment in these programs presents an opportunity to nurture leadership that is more reflective of California's population. Enrollment in CSU's programs is up from 142 in 2007-08 to 914 in 2017-18 and its students are more diverse: 31% are Latino, 15.5% are African-American, and 12% are Asian/Pacific Islander (California State University, 2018). While this still constitutes a small fraction of the potential community college CEO pipeline, these modest increases can represent significant change over time.

Organizations have increasingly focused on leadership development for recently appointed community college CEOs. One of the major goals of the Community College League of California is to provide leadership in the education and development of community college governing board members, chief executive officers and staff to ensure the continued strength, diversity, vitality and effectiveness of the colleges' educational programs and services. Over the years, the League has adopted a number of initiatives to accomplish its leadership mission of providing assistance and support to our chief executive officers.

1. In 2005, the League took over primary oversight of the Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar (which began in 1984 and was created by leaders of the American Association of Women in Community Colleges and the Yosemite Community College District.) This seminar is an intensive four-day experience that focuses on issues facing women who have made a commitment to community college administration.

2. In 2006, the League began sponsoring and staffing the "Vineyard Symposium" to provide chief executive officers with a professional development opportunity tailored to experienced California Community College leaders.

3. The League offers multiple opportunities for CEOs to connect and engage with colleagues from across the California, including the CEO Symposium and Statewide CEO Business Meeting. Further, the Annual Convention includes a seminar conducted by current and emeritus CEOs for new CEOs entitled, "New CEOs Workshop."

4. The League provides technical assistance and consulting services to CEOs and boards. The *League on Call* Consulting Service provides consultants to member-districts on a variety of topics including boardsmanship and other topics upon request. Our Collegiality in Action partnership continues to provide sessions (upon request and with the assistance of the president of the Academic Senate of the CCCs) on local decision-making and shared governance.

5. The League recognizes the roles and responsibilities of CEOs are changing rapidly. This complexity makes it harder to prepare for all of the demands that will come with the presidency. In 2017, the League launched the CEO Leadership Academy to support individuals new to their specific CEO role. With the support of experienced leaders, new CEOs acquire insight and knowledge that moves beyond theoretical concepts and applies practical and tested practices to real challenges.

As Josh Wyner, Vice President of the Aspen Institute and Director of the College Excellence Program, stated in an interview for Inside Higher Ed, "The complexity of the job makes it harder and harder to be prepared for the presidency." Supporting new and continuing CEOs is key as the demands on colleges increase. Wyner added, "It's about preparation and making sure our selection processes are equitable and fully consider the wide range of candidates." Ultimately, it is boards of trustees that play one of the most critical roles in both appointing diverse leaders and supporting new CEOs.

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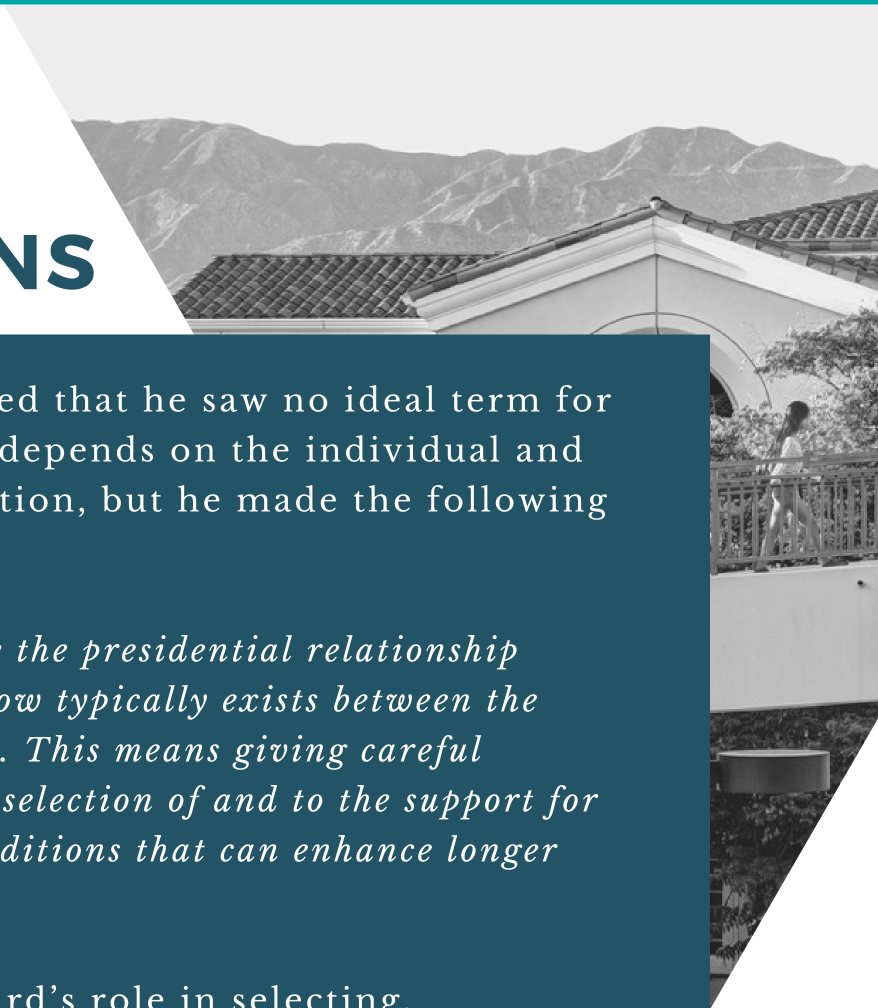
CLOSING OBSERVATIONS



In 1984, Clark Kerr observed that he saw no ideal term for a president, noting that it depends on the individual and the situation of the institution, but he made the following comment and suggestion:

"Each board should structure the presidential relationship toward a longer term than now typically exists between the president and the institution. This means giving careful attention particularly to the selection of and to the support for the president, but also to conditions that can enhance longer tenure of positions."

The importance of the board's role in selecting, supporting, and positioning their institution and new presidents to thrive and excel cannot be overstated. No organization can lose its leader without losing some sense, even temporarily, of its direction (Farkus, C. & Wetlaufer, S., 1996). By recognizing the value of longer tenures, boards of trustees can provide yet another opportunity for colleges to thrive through stable leadership focused on a long-term student success agenda.

Visit the League CEO Tenure & Retention Dashboard at: www.ccleague.org/CEOtenure

Using and Understating the CEO Tenure & Retention Dashboard

Interim CEOs are included in the first two charts and excluded from the remaining charts for two reasons: (a) they are more likely to skew the distribution because by its nature and purpose, the position is short-term and (b) the concerns about CEO turnover focused on those hired as permanent CEOs.

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