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A Profile of Chief Academic Officers at Four Year Colleges and Universities

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Abstract

Chief Academic Officer (CAO) is the most common position title before assuming the presidency of a college or university. Results from a national survey are used to develop a profile of the CAO in each respective Carnegie institutional classification. The typical CAO in four-year institutions is Caucasian, male, 54 years old, and married. He holds a doctoral degree, most likely in humanities or social sciences, and has held the CAO position for 5 or fewer years. Most often, the CAO served as a Dean or Associate Dean in the previous position. All CAOs have classroom experience, but 3% have never taught full-time. With

only slight variances among the percentages, these characteristics are similar for each of the respective Carnegie classifications. Comparisons are also made between the characteristics of presidents and CAOs.

Introduction and Background

A critical need of any organization is leadership (Martin & Strauss, 1956). There are a number of titles common to the position that provides academic leadership in colleges and universities, Provost or Vice President for Academic Affairs are common examples. In this article we use the term chief academic officer (CAO) to refer to all individuals who have overall responsibility for the academic component of an institution of higher education. The simple fact that the chief academic officer (CAO) has authority and influence over both the goals and objectives and the resources dedicated to the instructional program of a college or university points to the overall importance of this leadership position (Weingartner, 1996). Given the current state of declining resources and eroding public confidence, effective leadership of the academic program has become a key challenge facing higher education organizations (Martin & Samels, 1997). The challenge is so great that Birnbaum (1992) announced that in many instances the CAOs impact on an institution was as great, or even greater, than that of the president.

Who are the people primarily responsible for providing academic leadership in higher education institutions? Given the importance of the role, it is interesting that so little attention has been paid to them. Since 1980, only six studies of individuals in the CAO position have been reported in the literature. Three studies reported information on chief academic officers in two-year colleges (Hawthorne, 1994; Twombly, 1988; Vaughan, 1990), two studies included individuals at both two- and four-year institutions (Moden, Miller, & Williford, 1987; Warner, Brazzell, Allen, Bostick, & Marin, 1988) and one study was limited to CAOs in four-year institutions (Moore, 1983). As this investigation focuses on CAOs at four-year institutions, only applicable previous research is included to provide a background.

Moden, Miller, and Williford (1987) developed a stratified random sample based on the student FTE size of 3,328 higher education institutions and their branches. Of the 415 institutions surveyed, usable returns were received from 331 (73%). Two-year institutions employed 40% of the respondents. Slightly more than four-fifths (81%) of the positions were held by males. The ages of the CAOs ranged from 34 to 67, with a mean of 49 years. Slightly less than one-fourth (22%) of the CAOs had been in the position for one year or less and 35% reported 5 or more years in office.

Warner et al. (1988) surveyed a randomly selected sample of 800 administrators at the level of dean or above. The sample was not restricted by institutional type, with surveys sent to universities, colleges, community colleges, and technical schools. A usable response rate of 49% was realized. Of those responding to the query of title of current position, 41 (11%) were CAOs. Results of the survey, however, are presented for all administrative positions, ranging from assistant or associate dean to president and chancellor.

Moore (1983) surveyed a stratified random sample of 4,000 line administrators representing 1,600 accredited four-year institutions. Responses were received from 2,896 (73%) administrators in 55 positions. Of the respondents, 151 (5%) were CAOs. The vast majority of CAOs were male (86%), Caucasian (96%), and married (83%). The ages of the CAOs ranged from 37 to 68, with the majority (51%) between the ages of 45

and 55. Only 14% of the CAOs had been in the position for 11 or more years, with 59% reporting a tenure of 6 or fewer years. Almost all (99%) of the CAOs had earned a doctoral degree. A vast majority (88%) held academic rank, more than three-fourths (78.6%) were professors, and a majority (60%) were tenured.

The American Council on Education (ACE) has presented three profiles of the career experiences of presidents from data gathered in 1986, 1990, and 1995. Each of these profiles revealed that chief academic officer was the most common position title before assuming the presidency. In the most recent report (Ross & Green, 1998), CAO was the previous position of 26.5% of the respondents, followed by president at another institution (19.9%), and deans or their associates (11.9%).

Using data provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics for the years 1974-81, Rickard (1982) reported that CAOs had the highest rate of turnover of top level administrative offices (20%). This trend has not changed as the CAOs experienced an annual turnover rate of 19% for the years 1985-92, again a rate higher than chief business officers, chief student affairs officers, and presidents (Mooney, 1993).

Considering the role of the position in the career experiences of presidents, the rate of turnover by position holders, and the importance of the position to higher education organizations, the CAO position emerges as the “next step” in understanding career paths in higher education administration. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to add to the research on administrative careers in higher education by developing a profile of chief academic officers at four-year colleges and universities.

Methodology

Survey Instrument

We contacted Marlene Ross, principal author of the ACE reports, who granted us permission to adapt the ACE President’s Survey to gather data regarding chief academic officers (M. R. Ross, personal communication, October, 1997). There were three reasons we selected the ACE instrument as a base for our inquiry. First, the three presidential profiles are the most comprehensive data concerning administrative careers in higher education. Second, similarity in instrumentation would allow for comparisons between the experiences of chief academic officers and presidents. Third, we hoped to encourage other researchers to take a similar approach in examining other top-level positions in higher education.

Our revised survey instrument, therefore, is based on the same demographic and career experience questions as found on the ACE presidential survey with two modifications. First, we asked for the specific position title. Ross and Green (1990) stressed that beyond the general agreement that president or chancellor indicates the chief executive officer, there is little consensus concerning the specific responsibilities associated with administrative titles in higher education. Using data from the *1995 Higher Education Directory*, Martin and Samels (1997) found that the words vice-president and dean each occurred in the chief academic officer title of approximately 40% of the reporting institutions, with provost listed as the title of approximately 16% of the reporting institutions. Second, we were interested in the faculty experiences of the CAOs. One measure of connection to the academic component of the institution is whether or not the CAO holds faculty rank or tenure. While some institutions do not offer rank or tenure to administrators, the practice is still followed in many instances. Further, holding rank or tenure in the previous position and

the highest faculty rank achieved also provide insight to the academic connection. To gather information on faculty experiences, we asked about rank and tenure for the current and two previous positions. In addition we questions on the highest rank achieved and the total years of full-time faculty experience. The revised survey instrument was piloted to eight chief academic officers, representing the respective Carnegie classifications (1994).

Population, Survey Method, and Response

The survey was mailed in November of 1997 to the Chief Academic Officer at 1372 four-year colleges and universities. This population included all institutions listed in the 1994 Carnegie classifications of higher education, limited to accredited institutions as listed in the 1997 *Higher Education Directory*. An initial follow-up survey was sent in January of 1998. Finally, follow-up by fax and telephone was conducted during May of 1998. Overall, 1058 surveys (77%) were returned. After accounting for positions that were vacant or currently filled by individuals with the title of acting or interim and eliminating responses that did not come from the chief academic officer, 971 usable surveys (71%) were returned from the population. The usable rate for the respective classifications ranged from a low of 51% (Doctoral Universities I) to a high of 78% (Baccalaureate Colleges I). Table 1 presents information regarding the usable return rate.

Table 1
Usable Returns by Carnegie Classification

Classification	N	Return	%
Research Universities I	88	56	64
Research Universities II	37	23	62
Doctoral Universities I	51	26	51
Doctoral Universities II	58	42	72
Master's Colleges and Universities I	430	305	71
Master's Colleges and Universities II	89	68	76
Baccalaureate Colleges I	165	128	78
Baccalaureate Colleges II	454	323	71
Total	1372	971	71

Data analysis

We created eight databases for each respective Carnegie classification. Where possible, responses were coded numerically and a written guide of coded categories was created for reference. In an additional effort to assure reliability, we hired individuals independent of the study to enter the data and additional independent observers to substantiate the databases. For the Carnegie classifications with fewer than 150 responses (RI, RII, DI, DII, MII, BI) the observers verified all survey information to the databases. For the Carnegie classifications with responses above 300 (MI, BII) the observers selected a random sample of 50% of the surveys to compare to the databases. Overall 658 (68%) of the surveys were examined, with errors in the database identified for 12 instruments. This resulted in a 98% reliability rating for the data.

Personal Characteristics

Information on the characteristics of sex, race, age and marital status is presented in Table 2. The characteristics of spousal employment and religious affiliation appear in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

Table 2
Demographic Profile by Carnegie Classification

Characteristics	RI	RII	DI	DII	MI	MI	BI	BII
Sex (percentage)	N=50	N=23	N=27	N=43	N=299	N=70	N=126	N=318
Male	78	87	67	88	75	73	71	74
Female	22	13	33	12	25	27	29	26
Race/Ethnicity (percentage)	N=51	N=23	N=27	N=43	N=296	N=70	N=128	N=320
Asian	--	--	--	--	--	3	1	1
African-American	6	--	4	5	7	6	4	6
Caucasian	94	100	96	95	90	90	95	91
Hispanic (non-black)	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	1
American Indian	--	--	--	--	>1	--	--	--
Multiracial	--	--	--	--	>1	--	--	1

Other	--	--	--	--	>1	--	--	--
Age (years)	N=48	N=22	N=25	N=41	N=279	N=67	N=119	N=318
Mean	55	56	64	56	54	55	52	53
Median	55	56	56	56	54	55	52	53
Mode	55	57	56	56	54	55	53	53
Range	43-66	46-70	41-63	45-70	37-68	41-68	37-67	34-73
Marital Status (percentage)	N=50	N=23	N=27	N=43	N=298	N=70	N=129	N=323
Never married	2	--	7	2	6	6	6	6
Religious Order	--	--	--	2	2	6	--	5
Married	96	96	59	86	84	81	86	80
Separated	--	--	--	--	1	1	2	1
Divorced	2	4	27	10	6	6	5	7
Widower/Widow	--	--	7	--	1	--	1	1

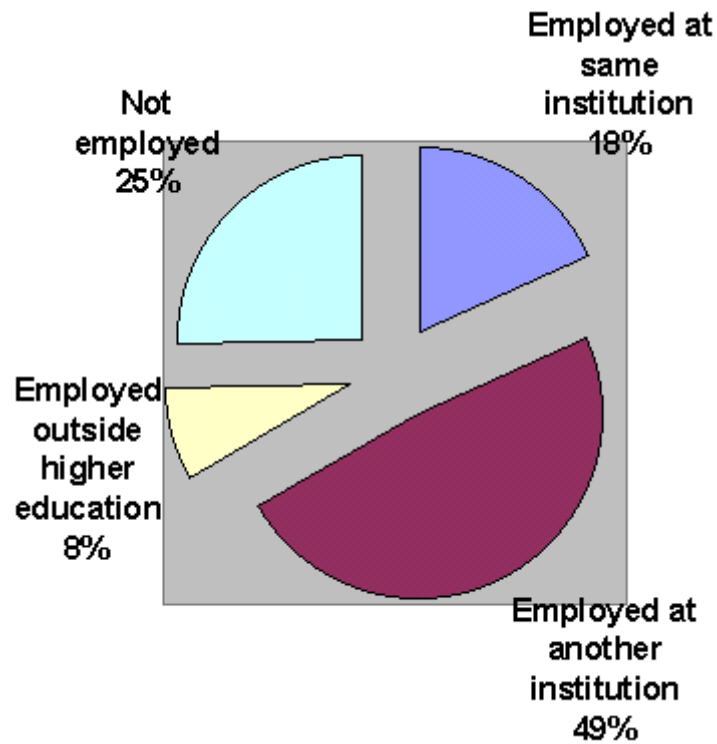


Figure 1. Employment of Chief Academic Officers Spouses

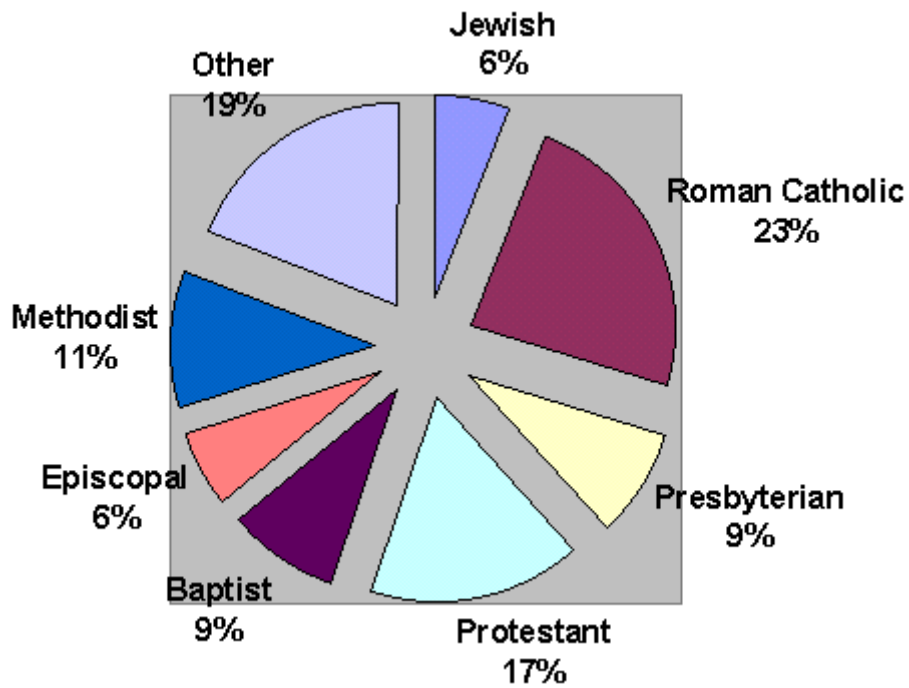


Figure 2. Religious Affiliation of Chief Academic Officers

Sex and race

Twenty-five percent of all CAO respondents were women. As indicated in Table

1, the representation of women in the CAO position ranged from a high of 33% in Doctoral I institutions to a low of 12% in Doctoral II institutions. Members of minority groups held 8% of the CAO positions. African-American CAOs constitute the largest minority group (5.8%), followed by Asian and Hispanic (.6% respectively), multiracial (.3%), and American Indian (.1%). Members of minority groups are most represented in the CAO position at MI and MII institutions. No respondents from RII institutions indicated that they were members of minority groups. Almost one-third (32%) of the minority respondents were female; 44% of African American respondents were female.

Age

The median and, after rounding, the mean age of the CAOs was 54 years. Both the youngest (34 years) and the oldest (73 years) respondents were at BII institutions. Slightly more than two-thirds (70%) of the CAOs were between the ages of 40 and 56. Among women, 73% were between the ages of 40 to 56. The mean age of women CAOs is lower than their male counterparts at research institutions (50 to 55 at R-I and 48 to 56 at R-II) and higher than the male CAOs at M-II institutions (59 to 55). Only 1% of all respondents were below the age of 40 and no respondents from Research (I and II), Doctoral (I and II), or Masters II institutions indicated they were less than 40 years of age. In terms of age, the responses of minority members were similar to the population as a whole. The mean age of minorities was 53 and 70% were 56 years old or younger.

Marital status, spousal employment, religious affiliation

The vast majority of CAOs are married (83%), ranging from a high of 96% in the RI and RII categories to a low of 59% in the DI category. Slightly more than 8% of the CAOs have never been married, 2.7% of these indicating they were members of religious orders. Among married CAOs, 76% had spouses who were employed. Almost two-thirds (64.5%) of the working spouses were employed in higher education, 17.5% at the same institution as the CAO. Virtually two-thirds (65.4%) of the spouses were employed on a full-time basis. Spouses of MII CAOs were most likely to work (83%) and were most likely to be employed in higher education (78%). Spouses of RII CAOs were least likely to work (50%). Slightly more than one-half (51%) of the CAOs identified themselves as Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian or other type of Protestant; 24% were Catholic; 6% were Jewish, and 1% listed themselves as Eastern Orthodox. Among the CAOs who reported memberships in religious orders, 38% were ordained ministers, 32% were Catholic sisters, and 26% were Catholic priests or brothers.

Professional Characteristics

Position Title

Table 3 presents words most often reported in the titles of chief academic officers. In order to develop these categories, specific adjectives such as senior, executive, academic, and instructional were removed. Vice President (32%) is the most common title of the CAO, followed by Vice President and Dean (17%), Vice President and Provost (16%), Provost (12%), and Dean (11%). Vice President, Vice President and Provost, and Provost are the only titles found across all of the respective Carnegie classifications.

Table 3
Generic Titles of Chief Academic Officer
(percentage by Carnegie Classification)

Title	RI	RII	DI	DII	MI	MII	BI	BII
Vice Chancellor	12.5	--	--	2.4	4.6	4.4	1.6	2.5
Vice Chancellor & Provost	10.7	8.7	--	2.4	5.2	2.9	--	--
Vice President	5.4	8.7	23.1	26.2	40.7	39.7	8.6	40.2
Vice President & Provost	41.1	60.9	30.8	42.9	25.6	5.9	5.5	6.2
Vice President & Dean	--	--	3.8	2.4	4.9	25.0	37.5	26.0
Provost	30.4	17.4	30.8	16.7	11.5	7.4	14.8	6.5
Provost & Dean	--	--	7.7	2.4	1.3	4.4	7.8	3.1
Dean	--	4.3	--	4.8	5.2	10.3	23.4	15.5
Other	--	--	3.8	--	1.0	1.5	0.8	--

Academic Background

The field of study of CAOs is presented in Table 4. Overall, more CAOs studied humanities/fine arts (30%), followed by social sciences (28%), education (15%), and physical/natural sciences (12%). Social sciences emerged as the predominant field of study for four of the respective classifications (RI, DI, DII, BII). Humanities/fine arts were the predominant field of study for three classifications (MI, MII, BI) and physical/natural sciences was the predominant field in the remaining classification (RII). The Ph.D. was earned by 86% of the CAOs, 9% had been awarded the Ed.D., 3% held professional degrees, and 2% reported the master's as the highest awarded degree.

Table 4
CAO Field of Study
(percentage by Carnegie Classification)

Title	RI	RII	DI	DII	MI	MII	BI	BII
--------------	-----------	------------	-----------	------------	-----------	------------	-----------	------------

Agriculture	3.6	--	--	2.4	--	--	--	--
Biological Sciences	9.1	8.7	--	4.8	4.7	6.0	3.1	4.9
Education	5.5	4.3	8.0	11.9	15.8	14.9	3.9	21.4
Engineering	9.1	4.3	4.0	11.9	0.7	--	--	--
Health Professions	3.6	--	--	4.8	0.4	3.0	--	--
Medicine	3.6	4.3	--	2.4	--	--	--	--
Humanities/Fine Arts	14.5	4.3	32.0	26.2	29.9	35.8	40.9	29.4
Religion/Theology	1.8	--	--	--	4.0	4.5	3.1	4.5
Physical/Natural Sciences	20.0	47.8	12.0	4.8	14.4	13.4	7.9	7.8
Social Sciences	25.5	26.1	44.0	30.8	25.8	19.4	40.2	29.8
Law	3.6	--	--	--	0.4	--	--	--
Other	--	--	--	--	4.0	3.0	0.9	2.3

Rank and Tenure

Information concerning faculty rank and tenure is presented in Table 5. It is more common for CAOs to hold rank than to hold tenure. Of the CAOs responding to this query, 89% held faculty rank with 64% also holding tenure. This difference comes primarily from the MII and BII classifications, each with more than a 35% difference between the number of CAOs holding rank and the number holding tenure. Full professor is the most common rank, reported by 73% of the CAOs.

In the immediate prior position, the same percentage held faculty rank (89%), but a greater percentage (70%) also held tenure. Again, the greatest difference in numbers holding rank and numbers holding tenure are in the MII and BII classifications. Full professor was the rank held by 63% of the respondents. In response to the question about highest faculty rank ever held, 74% reported full professor, 20% reported Associate Professor, and 5% reported Assistant Professor.

Table 5
Rank and Tenure Characteristics
(percentage by Carnegie Classification)

Characteristic	RI	RII	DI	DII	MI	MII	BI	BII
CAO Position	N=52	N=23	N=27	N=43	N=303	N=70	N=127	N=319
Hold Tenure	98.1	100	85.2	93.0	66.3	52.9	72.4	47.0
Hold Rank	98.1	100	92.6	100	87.1	90.0	96.1	84.0
1st Prior Position	N=52	N=22	N=26	N=42	N=302	N=70	N=128	N=313
Hold Tenure	98.1	95.5	88.5	85.7	74.2	58.6	76.6	55.6
Hold Rank	98.1	100	92.3	92.9	87.4	91.4	95.3	83.1
2nd Prior Position	N=49	N=23	N=25	N=41	N=282	N=67	N=99	N=276
Hold Tenure	95.9	100	96.0	90.2	88.7	85.1	90.9	80.0
Hold Rank	98.0	91.3	88.0	70.7	78.0	62.7	68.7	55.8
Highest Rank Held	N=51	N=22	N=26	N=41	N=286	N=64	N=118	N=279
Professor	100	100	88.5	87.8	76.9	75.0	74.6	60.6
Associate Professor	--	--	7.7	9.8	19.2	21.9	20.3	29.0
Assistant Professor	--	--	--	2.4	3.1	3.1	3.4	10.0
Instructor	--	--	--	--	0.4	--	1.7	0.4
Lecturer	--	--	3.8	--	--	--	--	--
Emeritus Professor	--	--	--	--	0.4	--	--	--

Years in Positions

As shown in Table 6, there were new CAOs in six of the eight classifications. In four classifications (RI, MI, BI, BII) there were individuals who have 25 or more years of experience. The majority of CAOs, however, have not occupied the position for an extended period of time. Using 1997-98 as the current year, 61% of all CAOs have spent five or fewer years in office. Among the RII institutions, 87% of the CAOs have been in the position for 5 or fewer years, the highest percentage of the respective classifications. In the MII category, 57% of the CAOs have been in the position for 5 or fewer years, the lowest percentage of the respective classifications.

The length of time spent in the two prior positions is also shown in Table 6. As with the CAO position, there is a wide range in the number of years of experience. It is important to note that not all respondents held two positions prior to the CAO

appointment. For example, 89 CAOs moved to the position directly from a faculty appointment. Many of these individuals represent the greater number of years spent in the immediate previous position. In terms of average years of experience, there is not much difference between the first and second prior positions among the CAOs. As with the first prior position, those CAOs with the greater numbers of years held a faculty appointment in the second prior position.

Table 6 also reveals differences in the CAOs full-time teaching experience across the respective Carnegie classifications. In fact, 28 CAOs had no full-time faculty experience prior to the CAO position. All of the respondents in the RI and RII classification had full-time teaching experience. These two classifications also included the greatest length of full-time faculty experience, with 21 years serving as the midpoint for the majority of respondents in each respective R classification. On the other hand, 12 to 15 years marked the midpoint of full-time faculty experience for the remaining Carnegie classifications. Further analysis of full-time faculty experience indicates that in three classifications, more than three-fourths of the CAOs had greater than 10 years of full-time faculty experience; BI (79%), RII (78%), and RI (93%).

Table 6
Years in Position by Carnegie Classification

Characteristic	RI	RII	DI	DII	MI	MII	BI	BII
Current Position	N=51	N=23	N=27	N=43	N=302	N=70	N=128	N=319
Mean		62	5	5	4	6	5	5
Median	4	1	3	4	5	3	3	4
Mode	3	0	3	4	1	1	2	1
Range	1-30	0-10	0-13	0-18	0-29	0-23	1-31	0-32
1st Prior Position	N=51	N=22	N=26	N=42	N=299	N=70	N=125	N=308
Mean	6	5	5	5	6	6	8	7
Median	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mode	3	3	5	6	3	2	3	2
Range	1-30	1-14	1-10	1-10	1-28	1-25	1-30	1-44
2nd Prior Position	N=49	N=23	N=24	N=40	N=279	N=65	N=101	N=273
Mean	6	5	6	8	6	6	8	6
Median	5	4	5	6	5	5	5	5
Mode	6	3	2	5	5	4	4	3
Range	1-25	1-17	1-20	2-31	1-27	1-21	1-31	1-37
Full-time Faculty	N=52	N=23	N=26	N=42	N=290	N=67	N=118	N=288
Mean	21	19	13	16	14	13	16	13
Median	21	21	12	15	13	12	15	12
Mode	14	4	16	15	10	*	15	10

Range	7-38	4-34	0-30	0-36	0-34	0-30	0-37	0-38
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* Multiple modes

Career Paths

Tables 7 and 8 present the title of the first and second previous position. Dean is the most common title of the position prior to CAO (36%), followed by CAO at another institution (17%), full-time faculty (14%), and university administration (12%). Full-time faculty is the most common title of the second position prior to CAO (26%), followed by unit administration (21%), college/school administration (18%), and university administration (16%). It is important to note that not all CAOs had two previous positions. For example, 33% of the CAOs at BI institutions followed a simple career path moving from full-time faculty to CAO.

Lateral movement, from CAO at one institution to the same position at another institution, was found in each respective Carnegie classification. The greatest extent of lateral movement from the first prior to the current position was in the MII classification (34%). For a small percentage of respondents (5%), the current position represents the third CAO appointment.

Table 7
First Previous Position
(percentages by Carnegie Classification)

Title	RI	RII	DI	DII	MI	MII	BI	BII
Chief Academic Officer	8.9	30.4	19.2	21.4	15.7	33.8	14.8	16.1
President or other VP	5.4	4.3	3.8	-----	1.9	1.5	-----	3.4
Dean and Asst/Assoc	53.6	34.8	50.0	38.1	41.3	26.5	27.3	33.1
University Administration*	12.5	21.7	19.2	16.7	08.4	5.9	8.6	6.5
College/School Admin**	5.4	-----	-----	9.5	7.5	8.8	5.5	5.9
Unit Administration***	5.4	-----	3.8	9.5	7.2	10.3	7.0	14.9
Full-time Faculty	7.1	8.7	3.8	4.8	5.5	13.2	35.9	16.4
Outside Higher Education	1.8	-----	-----	-----	2.3	-----	0.9	3.7

. *Positions grouped as University Administration includes assistant to president, assistant to chancellor, and director of institutional research.

**Positions grouped as College/School Administration includes director of graduate studies (for a specific college or school) and director of field experiences.

***Positions grouped as Unit Administration include chair, director, coordinator, or head of a department or program.

Table 8
Second Previous Position
(percentages by Carnegie Classification)

Title	RI	RII	DI	DII	MI	MII	BI	BII
	N=56	N=23	N=26	N=42	N=305	N=65	N=78	N=239
Chief Academic Officer	-----	-----	3.8	4.8	3.9	9.2	5.1	10.0
President or other VP	1.8	4.3	3.8	-----	1.3	-----	-----	3.3
Dean and Asst/Assoc	21.4	21.7	23.1	11.9	9.2	16.9	6.4	9.6
University Admin.*	8.9	13.0	15.4	19.0	22.0	15.4	9.0	16.3
College/School Admin.**	16.1	17.4	15.4	19.0	22.0	15.4	9.0	16.3
Unit Administration***	19.6	30.4	7.7	28.6	20.3	20.0	29.5	18.4
Full-time Faculty	28.6	13.0	30.8	26.2	18.4	26.2	44.9	31.4
Outside Higher Educ.	3.6	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

*Positions grouped as University Administration include assistant to president, assistant to chancellor, and director of institutional research.

**Positions grouped as College/School Administration include director of graduate studies (for a specific college or school) and director of field experiences.

***Positions grouped as Unit Administration include chair, director, coordinator, or head of a department or program.

As shown in Table 9, slightly more than the majority of CAOs (53%) were internal candidates for the position. In terms of the respective classifications, internal candidates are most prevalent at RII institutions (74%) and least prevalent at DI institutions (38%).

The vast majority of CAOs (88%) stayed within the respective Carnegie classifications in moving to the CAO position. Only 2% came to the position from outside higher education and only 1% moved to the CAO position from a two-year institution.

Table 9
Movement by Carnegie Classification

Classification	External		Internal	
	N	%	N	%
RI	18	32	38	68
RII	6	26	17	74
DI	16	62	10	38
DII	17	40	25	60
MI	33	49	162	53
MII	33	49	35	51
BI	68	53	60	47
BII	153	47	170	53
Total	454	47	517	53

Discussion and Conclusions

Developing a profile of the CAO was the primary purpose of this study. The typical CAO in four-year institutions is Caucasian, male, 54 years old, and married. He holds a doctoral degree, most likely in humanities or social sciences, and has held the CAO position for 5 or fewer years. Most often, the CAO served as a Dean or Associate Dean in the previous position. As expected, the vast majority of CAOs have held faculty appointments, although a few (less than 3%) have never taught full-time. With only slight variances among the percentages, these demographic characteristics are similar for each of the respective Carnegie classifications.

As mentioned earlier, one of our purposes in adapting the ACE Presidential Survey was to allow for comparisons between CAOs and presidents. A demographic description of the typical office holder for both positions is quite similar—a married, Caucasian male in his mid-50s who identifies himself with a Protestant religion. We did find demographic differences between female and minority presidents and CAOs. In addition, differences in spousal employment patterns between the positions of president and CAO were noted.

In 1995, females constituted 17.2% of the presidents at four-year institutions. Their largest representation is found at baccalaureate (BI and BII) and master's (MI and MII) institutions, females comprising 18.8% of each. In 1997, females comprised 25.0% of the CAOs at four-year institutions. The representation of female CAOs is also greatest at baccalaureate and master's institutions, but the percentages are substantially higher, 27.0% at baccalaureate and 25.5% at masters.

The representation of women in faculty and administrative positions has been a concern of higher education for a number of years (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Barrax, 1985). The percentage of female CAOs provides two conclusions from differing perspectives. On one hand, the fact that a greater percentage of females are represented among CAOs leads to the conclusion that progress in representation is being made and that there is the possibility of a greater number of female presidents. On the other hand, the greatest proportion of female CAOs are found in the Carnegie classifications with the greatest proportion of female presidents: baccalaureate and master's institutions. Thus, it can also be concluded that there remains a "ceiling" for female inclusion in top-level administrative positions at doctoral and research institutions.

Minorities represented 10.3% of four-year college presidents in 1995. Their largest representation is at master's institutions (48.7% of all minorities). Almost three-fourths (72.3%) of the minority presidents are African-American. In 1998, minorities made up 8% of the four-year CAOs. Their largest representation is at master's institutions (46.7% of all minorities). Virtually three-fourths (74.7%) of the minority CAOs are African-American.

The representation of minority groups in faculty and administrative positions has also been a higher education concern (Frances & Mensal, 1981; Moore, 1982). Our findings do not indicate that this concern is being addressed. As there are fewer minorities in the CAO position, an increase in the number moving from CAO to the presidency is not likely. Almost one-half of the minorities are employed at master's institutions, indicating a need for efforts to identify and facilitate potential minority academic leaders at the other institutional types. Moreover, African-Americans are the predominate minority representative. The need to promote representation from other minority groups is obvious.

A difference in the employment patterns of CAO and president spouses was also identified. The vast majority of presidents (84.9%) and CAOs (83.0%) are married.

Among those married, substantially more spouses of CAOs work (76.0%) compared to working spouses of presidents (52.7%). Roughly two-thirds of the working spouses work full-time, 65.4% of CAO spouses and 68.8% of president spouses. More CAO spouses are employed in higher education (64.5% to 44.2%), but more president spouses are employed at the same institution (35.2% to 17.5%). It is quite possible that factors related to spousal employment influence the selection of college and university presidents. CAOs who aspire to the presidency would be wise to recognize this possibility and discuss ramifications with their spouse before actively entering the job market.

There are three key differences in the professional characteristics of presidents and CAOs. One difference is the number of years in office. In 1995, Presidents averaged 7 years in office. More than one-third (38%) had been in the position 5 or fewer years and one-half (51%) had held the position for 6 years or more. In 1998, CAOs averaged 5 years in office. Almost two-thirds (61%) had been in the position 5 or fewer years. This finding supports previous research indicating the CAO position has a high rate of turn-over (Mooney, 1993; Rickard, 1982).

A second important difference between presidents and CAOs is in their movement into the position. Almost three-fourths (72%) of the presidents were external candidates for the position. Slightly more than one-half (53%) of the CAOs were internal candidates for the position. This finding suggests that institutions have established different boundaries for candidacy as a president or a CAO. Organizational theorists indicate that when specific needs or connections are desired, candidates will most often be external (Scott, 1998). It appears that the boundary for the CAO position is more narrow than that for presidential candidates.

The greatest difference in professional characteristics, however, was faculty experience. Slightly more than one-fourth (27%) of the presidents had spent no time in the classroom. Those with teaching experience averaged 7 years as faculty members. All of the CAOs had teaching experience, although 3% had not served in a full-time faculty position. These individuals averaged 15 years of faculty experience. Martin and Samels (1997) note that, over time, the role and responsibility of the CAO has changed. Our conclusion, however, is that there continues to be an extremely close connection between faculty experience and the position of CAO. Although we can find no research for support, a number of colleagues have indicated that fundraising rather than academic experience has become the most desirable characteristic of presidential candidates. If this observation is correct, we expect to see a decrease in the number of presidents who were previously CAOs.

Our final reason for adapting the ACE Presidential Survey was to encourage a similar approach in other studies of top-level administrative positions in higher education. We found both similarities in and differences between the characteristics of presidents and CAOs. Realizing that there are differences in career experiences, Twombly (1990) pointed out that an important characteristic of higher education is the existence of multiple administrative hierarchies. There is an academic administrative hierarchy responsible for the central mission of the institution (i.e., teaching, research, service) and other administrative hierarchies responsible for functions that support the central mission (i.e., students affairs, finance, institutional advancement).

Leadership in higher education continues to be an important topic. Developing profiles of individuals who occupy the top-level administration of colleges and universities and identifying specific career experiences will provide insight to institutions searching for leaders as well as individuals who aspire to administrative appointments. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is not a single

administrative hierarchy in higher education. Continued, longitudinal research on the presidency and CAO will identify changes in demographic characteristics and career experiences. Additional research on other top-level positions is warranted and will add to the body of knowledge concerning higher education administration.

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