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Understanding the Role and Organizational Value of Employing an Interim University of President During Presidential Transitions

Cameron Keith Martin
Brigham Young University - Provo

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLES, ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE, AND

PRACTICES REGARDING INTERIM UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS: A STUDY

EXAMINING INTERIM PRESIDENCIES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THOSE

WHO HAVE BEEN AN INTERIM UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT MULTIPLE TIMES

by

Cameron K. Martin

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GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

of a dissertation submitted by

Cameron K. Martin

This dissertation has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by a majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

_____   _____
Date   Scott Ellis Ferrin, Chair

_____   _____
Date   Julie M. Hite

_____   _____
Date   L. Joseph Matthews

_____   _____
Date   A. Legrand Richards

_____   _____
Date   David Williams

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_____   _____
Date   Scott Ellis Ferrin
                                          Chair, Graduate Committee

Accepted for the Department   _____
                                          A. Legrand Richards
                                          Graduate Coordinator

Accepted for the College   _____
                                          K. Richard Young
                                          Dean, David O. McKay School of Education

ABSTRACT

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A common method for colleges and universities experiencing a transition between permanent presidents is to employ an interim president. A dominant perspective in related literature discussing the role, organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim president has been based upon specific experiences of an institution or individual who had endured or fulfilled an interim presidency; absent, have been the insights of experienced interim presidents—individuals who have been a permanent president at least once and interim president multiple times at different institutions. Therefore, this research answers the following two questions: (a) what are the perspectives and insights of individuals who have been a permanent president at least once and interim president multiple times at different institutions pertaining to the role,

organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim university

president, and (b) how do their perspectives and insights complement or differ from

common beliefs and practices dominating related literature pertaining to the role,

organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim university

president?

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities throughout the United States regularly experience a change in central leadership style when their presidents change. On average, colleges and universities will experience a transition between permanent presidents once every six to seven years (Corrigan, 2002; Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Kerr & Gade, 1986). A common method for institutions experiencing this transition is to rely upon an interim president to bridge the organization's leadership gap (Everley, 1994, 1996; Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003). Surprisingly, even with such regularity of occurrence, little is understood and has been formally researched about interim college/university presidents (Dowling, 1997; Everley, 1993, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Henck, 1996; Trudeau, 2001; Waddington, 2001).

The literature review of Chapter Two highlights many articles and book sections that have generally addressed the function of an interim college/university president based on a singular presidential transition and perspective (e.g., reporting lessons learned from a specific institution's or individual's interim presidential experience). More often than not, interim presidents are appointed from within an institution's organization with no prior presidential experience (Eisinger, 2000; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Lively, 1999; C. Martin, 2005; McKinney, 1992). Given that literature has been based upon these specific and singular interim experiences, there appeared to be a gap in the literature dialogue, which this study addressed.

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The perspective of individuals who are former permanent presidents and who have been an interim president multiple times at different institutions was missing from the dialogue. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to help increase the literary understanding of the role, organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim college/university president from the perspective of those individuals who have been a permanent president at least once and an interim president multiple times. This research, through interviews, captured the distinct perspectives and insights of these individuals giving them voice into the literature dialogue pertaining to interim college/university presidents.

Definition of Terms

In preparation for the ensuing discussion, there needs to be a common foundation and understanding of terms that will be repetitively used throughout this research. The following terms are referred to in this document and shall be understood and defined as noted below:

1. *Interim president*; A college or university president referring "to an individual so designated by the trustees or the system chief and given the responsibilities and authority of the presidency in the period between the departure of one president and the assumption of office by another" (Everley, 1996, p. 18).

2. *Permanent president*; A sitting college or university president whose service as such is oriented to be long-term; "*President* means the chief executive of an institution, not the head of a state system" (Everley, 1996, p. 18).

3. *University or institution*; A general reference encapsulating public or private colleges and universities alike within the context of higher education; generally relating to two- and four-year institutions of higher learning.

4. *Key decision makers*; Individuals who directly influence, oversee, and implement governing policy and procedure that regulate the hiring and firing of university presidents; predominantly external persons to the institution—non employees—including, but not limited to, state officials, trustee members, and empowered local persons of political and educational influence (Fisher, 1991; Kerchner & Caufman, 1995; Kerr, 1984).

5. *Appointing authority*; The ranking authority among key decision makers who is authorized by an institution's governing policies to appoint presidents—including interim presidents—at the helm of the university; typically the commissioner or chancellor of the state higher education system for public institutions and the chairperson of boards of trustees for private institutions (Everley, 1994).

Discussion of Constructs

The main constructs or domains addressed and analyzed, as defined and discussed further in later chapters, are (a) the role of an interim university president, (b) the organizational value of an interim university president, and (c) the practices regarding the employment of an interim university president. These constructs were derived through a domain analysis that was conducted using current literature regarding interim university presidencies. As a result of the domain analysis process of this study, terms or characteristics related to each labeled domain have been identified and thus, a literary taxonomy was created. The following is a brief description of this taxonomy which introduces the basic structure and focus of this study.

Role of an interim university president. The role of an interim president, like a role in a theatrical play, can take many different forms, or characters, depending on the

organizational need of a university. According to the literature taxonomy, four roles or characteristics are discussed with this construct: (a) caretaker, (b) strategic leader, (c) consultant, and (d) preparer.

The caretaker and strategic leader are typically opposites; the caretaker seeks to maintain organizational status quo and avoids making any strategic decision unless forced to do so, while the strategic leader seeks to move the institution ahead in its mission and educational niche and is willing to make difficult decisions in the best interest of the institution. The consultant and preparer are more closely related. The consultant, for example, advises key decision makers regarding the institution's organizational needs and the personal traits or expertise to look for in the next permanent president that would best fit the identified needs. The preparer focuses on preparing the internal organization, resolving personnel, financial, and other problems, and the external community, donors, alumni, and civil leaders, for the new president and his or her leadership.

Organizational value of an interim university president. The organizational value of an interim president is outcome-based in focus. According to the literature taxonomy, the four characteristics discussed with this construct are (a) transitioning leadership, (b) assessment management, (c) breathing room, and (d) experience.

The mere fact that one permanent president is leaving office and another is filling that office forces an institution into a transition. The interim president can be the institution's overseer and manager of that process. During the transitioning period, for example, the interim president can manage any organizational self-study efforts, known as assessments, to identify the institution's level of effectiveness in fulfilling its mission and educational niche. Breathing room is a metaphor that can be likened to a person who needs time to breathe

between races. As one president's time to run the institution comes to an end, the time to catch a breath before running with the next permanent president's initial sprint is beneficial. Experience, for the purposes of this study, will be discussed as an individual's professional background and his or her level of presidential experience (e.g., has he or she been a permanent president and/or an interim president).

Practices regarding the employment of an interim university president. The characteristics for this third construct describe issues pertaining to different practices in employing an interim president as derived through the literature taxonomy discussed in Chapter Two. These characteristics are (a) incumbent interim presidents, (b) candidacy, (c) internal/external appointees, and (d) tool in the toolbox.

An incumbent interim president is a permanent president that announces his or her departure well in advance of the departure date, stays in office until the next permanent president takes office, and thereby assumes the role of interim president. Candidacy refers to an institution's or its associated system's policy or practice of allowing the interim president to be a candidate for the next permanent presidency. Internal/external appointees discuss the pros and cons of appointing an interim president from within the institution or going outside through placement firms or other professional networks to appoint an interim president. Finally, the tool in the toolbox is another metaphor used to describe the general benefit of employing an interim president for key decision makers to consider as *a tool to engage* from within their *toolbox of options* when faced with a presidential transition.

Research Goals

The academic and professional goal of this research was to produce a product that is (a) sound scholarly work in its research design, methodology, and findings; (b) of value to

those engaged in the higher education academy and, more specifically, those who may be directly involved in presidential transitions of a university and considering the employment of an interim president; and (c) distinctive enough to be accepted by practitioner-type publications and associations as research worthy of their audience's attention.

Sound scholarly work requires the research purpose and question to be clearly defined and then conducted according to its stated design and orientation (e.g., quantitative or qualitative research methodologies; Booth, Colomb, & Williams, 1995). This research is qualitatively oriented, which is discussed further in Chapter Three. Building upon the literature review and taxonomy of current understandings surrounding the role, organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim university president, this research was focused on discovering additional insights from individuals who have been a permanent president as well as an interim president multiple times at different institutions. These individuals were identified through professional networks, the most significant being the Registry, which was founded in 1992 and is a specialized firm that places interim university presidents at the helm of institutions experiencing a presidential transition (Registry, 1992). The value of these individuals' insights from their multiple interim president experiences, in terms of how they further the current understanding regarding the role, organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim university president, is discussed further in chapters four and five. However, the distinctiveness of being an interim president multiple times was a distinguishing factor from any other research conducted in the higher education context with a similar focus and has helped capture the attention of practitioner-type publications and associations to bring this research's findings to a broader audience.

There are two additional reasons why this research focused on individuals who have been an interim president multiple times at different institutions. First, to the best efforts and knowledge of the researcher, a study with this focused population had never been done before. Second, the value of this research was in mining knowledge from individuals who have had a repeated experience playing the same role of interim president at different institutions and, thereby, had assumingly developed a practiced and refined approach to their duties. A group of five individuals who fit this study's criteria of being a permanent university president at least once and interim president multiple times, three or more, were identified and consented to being a part of this study.

Research Problem and Questions

The current understanding of the role, organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim president was based upon specific experiences of an institution or individual who had endured or fulfilled an interim presidency. Dominant were the perspectives and voices in related literature of former interim presidents who had limited experience being an interim president or a permanent president or both. Yet their perceptions had established norms of beliefs and best practices regarding the employment of interim presidents during presidential transitions. The perspective and insights of individuals who had been a permanent president in addition to being interim president multiple times at different institutions was lacking from the literary dialogue that discusses the role, organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim university president. It was therefore unknown if the insights of these experienced individuals concurred, refuted, or built upon any of the related literary assumptions—norms of common belief and current best practices. In other words, the problem lay in key decision makers

engaging a strategy to manage the transition between permanent presidents unaware of another option that could yield more productive and beneficial long term outcomes to their institution. Through the lens of experience, these individuals who have been an interim president multiple times offer another option of strategy, deeper insights beyond current understanding, of how key decision makers can improve the health of their institution organizationally and the success of their next permanent president.

Therefore, this research sought to address the following two questions: (a) what are the perspectives and insights of individuals who have been a permanent president at least once and interim president multiple times at different institutions pertaining to the roles, organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim university president, and (b) how do their perspectives and insights complement or differ from common beliefs and practices dominating related literature pertaining to the roles, organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim university president?

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The transition from one permanent president to another is part of a university's organizational life cycle, which, according to the American Council on Education (ACE), happens on average every 6.6 years (Corrigan, 2002). The reasons for presidents to leave their post are numerous and should not be assumed all negative. However, negative reasons do occur and generally include but are not limited to, being fired; death or illness; political or public blunders; mismanagement of institutional resources; conflicts with or votes of no confidence from the faculty, staff or members of the board of trustees; or the lack of organizational fit between institutional needs and the president's personal traits and expertise. Positive reasons for a presidential transition include but are not limited to, retirement, pursuit of other personal interests, and enhanced career opportunities (Fisher, 1991; Fisher & Koch, 1996; Kerr, 1984; Kerr & Gade, 1986; J. Martin & Samels, 2004; McLaughlin, 1996a; Padilla, 2004). The reality is that universities at one time or another will be faced with a presidential transition, and one common method of managing the transition is through the employment of an interim president.

The leadership style or paradigm of a university president is his or her constellation of beliefs, values, and techniques that are reflected throughout the organization (Fisher & Koch, 1996; Fisher, Tack, & Wheeler, 1988; Kuhn, 1962). When a university president changes, so does the institution's leadership paradigm (Fisher et al., 1988; Gaudiani, 1996; Kuhn, 1962; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2000). Key decision makers have a leadership paradigm, shared

beliefs, values, and techniques, that govern their modality within their institutional

stewardship (Fisher et al., 1988; Kuhn, 1962).

The paradigm of key decision makers, whether consciously or subconsciously

recognized as such, establishes the pattern or norm of action that guides them in their role as

stewards of an institution (Fisher et al., 1988; Kerr, 1984; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Kuhn,

1962; R. H. Martin, 1996; McLaughlin, 1996a; Perry & Koening, 1998; Scott, 1987). Their

norm of action is typically based upon the beliefs and practices featured in current

literature—writings of those who have experienced an interim presidency or who are

academic consultants with a professional expertise focused on university presidents in

general (Dowling, 1997; Fisher, 1984; Fisher et al., 1988; Kerr, 1984; Kerr & Gade, 1986;

Trudeau, 2001; Waddington, 2001). As discussed in Chapter One, the focus of this research

was aimed at increasing the understanding regarding the use of an interim president as seen

through the eyes of those who have been a permanent president as well as an interim

president multiple times at different institutions.

This chapter is divided into the three constructs discussed in Chapter One: (a) the role

of an interim university president, (b) the organizational value of an interim university

president, and (c) the practices regarding the employment of an interim university president.

These constructs, derived from the literature, are based upon single interim presidency

experiences. The following is a description of each construct and its four related

characteristics or included terms, as briefly defined in Chapter One. Each construct and its

associated characteristics will be addressed in greater depth through a literature review

discussion of the domain analysis which highlights current norms pertaining to interim

university presidencies.

Role of an Interim University President

An interim university president, like an actor in a monologue, can play different characters, or roles, depending on the organizational need of a university and the reason why the pervious permanent president left office. Knowing why a president leaves an institution helps orient the key decision makers to the proper course of action to pursue (e.g., the role they need the interim president to play) in managing the transition between permanent presidents (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004). As derived from the literature taxonomy, there are four roles or characteristics discussed with this first construct: caretaker, strategic leader, consultant, and preparer. The reasons why an interim president may be asked or forced to assume one or more of these roles are addressed in the following characteristic sections.

Caretaker. An interim president that takes on the role of caretaker subscribes to the practice that he or she is to merely maintain the institution's organizational momentum without making any significant or drastic organizational changes or moves; thus, leaving such changes to the next president to resolve or direct (Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Henck, 1996; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; C. Martin, 2005; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003; Weary, 2004; Zimpher, 2004). Because the interim president within this role takes no initiative to engage himself or herself into the strategic aspects of the university, he or she is also commonly labeled as a babysitter or one who assumes a passive disposition to maintain the basic order of the institution (Padilla, 2004).

Yet, if circumstances dictate, even a babysitter may have to resolve a problem if the consequences of no action are significant enough (Padilla, 2004). For example, if after assuming the role of interim president a circumstance of fiduciary impropriety dealing with a

particular vice president were to occur, the interim president, under the direction of the key decision makers, may be asked to terminate the vice president (C. Martin, 2005). But beyond taking a mandated action, the caretaker interim president would typically not engage in personnel issues at the cabinet level (e.g., vice presidents or other positions that report directly to the president; Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Fisher, 1991; Kerr, 1984; Perry, 2003; Zimpher, 2004). These types of decisions, as well as choices that impact the strategic direction of the institution, are left for the next permanent president to make and direct.

Most universities are reasonably well run organizations, which is perhaps a reason why key decision makers do not look at the presidential transition as a strategic opportunity. Many key decision makers look at transition merely as a time to maintain organizational inertia, the status quo, until the next permanent president can take office, and therefore, they appoint a caretaker interim president (Everley, 1996; Fisher et al., 1988; Weary, 2004; Zimpher, 2004). Most institutions are large organizations with many different enterprises, which for the most part, can run themselves in the day-to-day aspects of business (Scott, 1998). However, it is the points of interconnectivity of these enterprises within the larger organization that require presidential leadership (Fisher et al., 1988; Kerr, 1984; Scott, 1998). "Organizations are viewed as a system of interdependent activities. Some of theses activities are tightly connected; others are loosely coupled" (Scott, 1998, p. 28). The caretaker interim president, understanding the role of a permanent president to provide the motivation and vision to unify the institution's enterprises, will leave such actions to the next permanent president verses having the organization adapt to his or her leadership paradigm only to adjust again to another when the next permanent president takes office (Fisher et al., 1988; Padilla, 2004; Scott, 1998). In the absence of recognizing the strategic opportunity of a

presidential transition, coupled with a belief that the institution is reasonably healthy (e.g., absent of significant personnel, financial, etc. problems) key decision makers may be more prone to appoint a caretaker interim president to maintain the status quo until the next permanent president takes the helm (Everley, 1996; Fisher et al., 1988; Weary, 2004; Zimpher, 2004).

Strategic leader. An interim president who plays the role of strategic leader believes it is his or her responsibility to increase the institution's momentum within its mission and educational niche, thus advancing the primary roles and functions of the institution (Fretwell, 2004; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004). Fisher (1988) described strategic leaders as those who "do not wait for things to happen. Instead, they shape the future by creating, as well as capitalizing on, opportunities" (Fisher et al., 1988, p. 85). Even though an interim president carries the title of *interim*, they also bear the title of *president* with all its powers and authority and are positioned to take short-term organizational action for long-term institutional gain (Fretwell, 2004; Lagemann & Shulman, 1999; Perry, 2003). The strategic leader interim president, knowing he or she is president nonetheless, will not hold the institution organizationally hostage; rather, he or she will act as president and do whatever is within his or her purview and best judgment to advance the institution within its mission and educational niche (Farquhar, 1995; Fisher et al., 1988).

Organizations are always experiencing some state of change at various levels due to various needs, conflicts, and opportunities (Drucker, 1999; Green, 1997; R. H. Martin, 1996; Senge, 1990; Zwell, 1999). However, strategic leaders should be wary of change for the mere sake of change. "Too much change can create uncertainty and morale problems and may solidify behaviors; too little change many contribute to a static environment where things

continue to be done as they have always been done" (Padilla, 2004, p. 40). Organizations

should act strategically when approaching change and focus on two objectives: (a) to

improve the quality of life for employees, and (b) to improve the quality of the organizational

function and performance (Schmuck & Runkel, 1994). Unfortunately, many institutions and

key decision makers mismanage the change process because they fail to take appropriate

measures to properly understand the strategic needs of the organization before acting. The

results are less than optimal for both the individuals involved and the institution as a whole

(Guskin, 1996; Kotter, 1973; Perry & Koening, 1998; Schmuck & Runkel, 1994). Perhaps

there is no greater time for change than when institutions change their head leader, the

president, which may occur under positive or negative circumstances. Regardless of the type

of institution or the reasons why a president leaves office, the change in president can be the

most significant change any organization endures because the president sets the vision that

drives the mission of the institution, and thus, the leadership paradigm, management style,

and culture of the organization (Bryman, 1996; Drucker, 1999; Fisher et al., 1988; Gaudiani,

1996; Hahn, 1996; Kerr, 1984; Kerr & Gade, 1986; Kirkland & Ratcliff, 1994; McCall,

1997; McLaughlin, 1993).

Actions of a strategic leader can involve consulting key decision makers about

difficult personnel and organizational restructuring issues and then acting upon them.

However, the strategic leader—like the caretaker and other roles yet to be described in this

study—should not permanently fill a vacant position at the cabinet level or make any long-

term commitments that needlessly bind the next permanent president (Everley, 1994;

Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003; Zimpher, 2004).

The strategic leader does not defer difficult tasks like eliminating programs or services to the next permanent president whose initial focus should be on building programs and relationships and not severing them or solving organizational issues (Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003; Zimpher, 2004). However, unlike the caretaker, the strategic leader will look for and act upon opportunities to move organizational functions ahead and build internal and external institutional relationships to help the next permanent president along when he or she assumes the office (Langevin & Koenig, 2004).

Consultant. Like the strategic leader role, the consultant role is applicable under negative or positive circumstances related to a permanent president leaving office. Regardless of the situation, two of the most important functions key decision makers fill are attracting the most qualified individuals to apply and hiring the right person to be the next permanent president (Fisher, 1991; Kerr, 1984). As a result, the consultant insights of the interim president are critical in identifying organizational needs and matching those needs to the personal traits and expertise of the next permanent president (Langevin & Koenig, 2004). Admittedly, even with reliable organizational self assessment data that are matched to the leadership style and personal traits of a presidential candidate does not guarantee organizational fit or a long presidential tenure (McLaughlin, 1996a; Padilla, 2004). However, the more clearly the institution's organizational needs are understood, the better the chance of finding a good fit between the organizational needs of the institution and the personal traits and expertise of the next permanent president (Fisher et al., 1988; Kerr, 1984; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004; Perry & Koening, 1998). Finding the right fit between the institution's organizational needs and the next permanent president's traits and expertise is

the key to a successful, long term relationship between the two. Padilla (2004) made the following observation:

> The length of the tenure of presidents is…ultimately a measure of the fit between the organization and its president and their mutual satisfaction. Higher survival rates of presidents would signal greater satisfaction of presidents and institutions with each other, and lower survival the opposite. (p. 42)

Perry and Koenig (1998) stated, "When more than one new president in ten fails to last a single year, and one in two serves five years or less, too many 'bad hires'—to use the lexicon of executive search consultants—are occurring" (p. 20).

Another explanation for the lack of fit between a president and the institution could be that key decision makers err by selecting their next permanent president based upon emotion and the desire for change. McLaughlin (1996a) explained,

> The president's departure typically occurs within the first eighteen months and is traumatic for all concerned. It results from an inappropriate selection, the appointment either of a person who should not be a president, or, more often, of a person who does not belong at the particular institution. (p. 9)

McLaughlin continued,

> Sometimes these mistakes are the result of faulty searches. In the courting process, the information gathered about the candidate, or the information shared with the candidate about the institution, was insufficient. If either party had known more, the disparities would have been apparent. But, ironically, not infrequently these mismatches were intentional—the new president was chosen precisely because he or she represented significant change. In the abstract, the change seemed highly

desirable; in reality, it was disastrous. The institution comes to appreciate the

aphorism: "Be careful what you ask for, for you may get it." (p. 10)

The consultant interim president is well positioned to render key decision makers the

necessary insight into the institution's organization and its needs. Additionally, the consultant

is well positioned to identify the desired traits and expertise among the many candidates for

the presidency and, therefore, should be able to help find a good fit between the institution's

needs and the next permanent president's personal traits and expertise (Farquhar, 1995;

Langevin & Koenig, 2004). Furthermore, the consultant can also help temper the key

decision makers' emotions during a transition to maintain their objectivity in finding the right

fit between the organizational needs of the institution and the personal traits and expertise of

the next permanent president (Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004).

Preparer. A properly prepared institution would be one that understands its

organizational needs and distinguishing educational factors, current and potential, within its

defined mission and educational niche (Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004). Further

clarifying the previously mentioned notion of the most significant function that key decision

makers fill is selecting the right person to be president, Kerr (1984) stated, "The second—not

the first—most important single responsibility of a board is to select a president; the first

most important responsibility is to have a presidency that is effective and thus potentially

attractive to highly qualified persons" (p. 3). A university fraught with personnel turmoil,

financial problems, or even executive scandals resulting in a presidential turnover is not

going to be immediately attractive to highly qualified candidates. In such cases, the key

decision makers can benefit from employing a *preparer* interim president to resolve

problems created by the former permanent president. For example, the *preparer* interim

president can get the institution into a more healthy state where it would be an attractive

option for would-be qualified presidential applicants before proceeding with the search and

hiring process (Farquhar, 1995; Kerr, 1984; Langevin & Koenig, 2004).

The transitional time between permanent presidents is an opportunity for the interim

president to establish a healthy organization that is fertile for the next permanent president's

leadership to take seed and hopefully enjoy long-term productive growth (Everley, 1994;

Langevin & Koenig, 2004; McLaughlin, 1996b; Perry, 2003). Most likely, the interim

president will need to make difficult decisions with which others may disagree but which are

necessary to make to ensure the future success of the next permanent president and the

institution (Everley, 1994, 1996; Footlick, 2000; Green, 1997; Hahn, 1996). Under such

circumstances, the next permanent president can benefit from the interim president's actions

and become the hero who brings a calming hand to the administrative affairs of the

institution (Everley, 1994, 1996; Footlick, 2000; Green, 1997; Hahn, 1996).

Much of the literature indicates that there is an expectation for interim presidents to

be actively engaged in organizational matters and that the interim president is inherently

charged to resolve as many organizational woes as possible prior to the next permanent

president taking the helm (Everley, 1996; Fretwell, 2004; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; C.

Martin, 2005; J. Martin & Samels, 2004; Zimpher, 2004). The idea behind such a belief is to

save the next permanent president from expending personal capital needlessly. Such actions

require clear communication between the interim president and the key decision makers to

ensure desired outcomes are achieved (Footlick, 2000). The end result should be an

organization ready to support a new leader, who should ideally be protected from expending

personal capital unnecessarily during his or her honeymoon period (Everley, 1994; Fretwell,

2004; Kerr & Gade, 1986). Presidential transitions, therefore, provide an opportunity for universities to identify, engage, and resolve any issues warranting immediate action and to better prepare the organization for new leadership (Everley, 1996; Fretwell, 2004; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; J. Martin & Samels, 2004; Zimpher, 2004). For example, Langevin and Koenig (2004) stated,

> An interim may also be a significant agent of change in preparing the college, sometimes still in a wounded, vulnerable condition, to accomplish the search for the permanent successor. There may be situations to resolve, not only out of necessity, but also because change will enhance the school's chances of procuring the best candidates for the new presidency. For example, if one or more senior administrators need to be terminated, the interim president can act and separate the individual(s) from the school. Also, an interim can take advantage of the temporary position to get widespread cooperation and involvement in matters such as curricular reform. Such initiatives relieve the new president of immediately expending "capital" on these types of activities. (p. 164)

Like the strategic leader, the preparer interim president takes advantage of the window of opportunity to assess organizational needs and to improve the organization accordingly. However, the preparer goes further and takes the necessary actions to resolve the volatile problems that caused the presidential turnover and organizationally prepare the institution for the next permanent president (Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Henck, 1996; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; C. Martin, 2005; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003; Weary, 2004; Zimpher, 2004). In fact, the interim president can propel the organization forward, if properly managed, "toward readying the organization for new leadership" (Farquhar, 1995, p. 55) and

is the means by which "the organization's response to new leadership" (Farquhar, 1995, p. 66) is shaped.

The underlying similarity between the caretaker, the strategic leader, the consultant, and the preparer interim president roles is that the governing paradigm of key decision makers that guides key decision maker's modality in managing the interim president and the presidential transition process. Weary (2004) stated,

> The board is the key to a successful presidential transition. No matter what the kind of institution or the circumstances of the transition, no group but the board has the power and the perspective to manage the overall process right. Moreover, a transition offers the board multiple strategic opportunities to strengthen the entire institution. (p. 61)

With the oversight authority of the presidential transition process, key decision makers control how the transition process is managed and, thereby, control the roles an interim president plays that directly influence the candidate pool and ultimately the selection of the next permanent president (Farquhar, 1995; Fisher, 1991; Kerr, 1984; Weary, 2004). The roles an interim president plays is to be balanced between the reasons—positive or negative—why the former president left office and the desired approach of the key decision makers in employing an interim president to manage the transition process.

Organizational Value of an Interim University President

As stated in Chapter One, the organizational value of an interim president is outcome based; meaning, an institution can organizationally benefit from employing an interim president to provide (a) transitioning leadership, (b) assessment management, (c) breathing room, and (c) experience during the transitional process between permanent presidents. The

following is a discussion of these four characteristics that impact an institution's

organizational well-being during and after the transitional process.

    Transitioning leadership. Because the change in president affects every

organizational aspect of the university, as soon as it is known that the incumbent president is

leaving, key decision makers "should create a transition structure and strategy for the entire

institution" (Guskin, 1996, p. 13). Optimally, key decision makers would already have a

transition strategy or plan intact and adaptable to any given transitional situation or need

before any arise (Weary, 2004). Regardless of having a plan or not, leadership through the

transition is needed if the organization is to have clarity in its continued function until the

next permanent president can be hired. Employing an interim president is a common strategy

to provide that leadership (Everley, 1994; Henck, 1996; Langevin & Koenig, 2004).

    A transition plan does not have to be elaborate to be effective; however, the structure

of a plan is determined by an institution and its associated system's philosophy regarding

presidential transitions and the employment of an interim president (Langevin & Koenig,

2004; Weary, 2004). For example in Martin (2005), the appointing authority of the state

system studied had a transition plan in place, which was simple in nature. Her plan involved

predetermining individuals from within each of the system's institutions who were well

positioned and had the organizational and leadership skills to serve as an interim president

should the need ever arise. When such a need arose—seven times in her tenure as the

appointing authority—she would select the individual that she felt best fit the organization's

needs at that time and then offer him or her the opportunity to be interim president. The

appointed interim president then provided the institution the necessary day-to-day leadership

to keep the organization appropriately functioning through the presidential transition. The

more forethought and planning put into a transitional plan (e.g., key decision makers determining a strategy to manage the transitional process, which includes knowing how they will select an interim president) typically, the more positive the outcomes and easier the transition because there is clarity in expectations of how the process will be managed (Weary, 2004).

Henck (1996) stated in her research that "the use of an interregnum between permanent appointments was typically thought to occur only in times of non-routine departures or institutional crisis" (p. 33). However, this once perceived "necessary evil" (Henck, 1996, p. 33), is now being seen by key decision makers as a valued opportunity in "helping a college or university to reevaluate its longer-term leadership needs" (Langevin & Koenig, 2004, p. 160). "Leadership transitions reveal a good deal about how colleges and universities are structured and how their leadership is organized" (Padilla, 2004, p. 40). Presidential transitions present organizations with the opportunity to make the difficult and unpopular personnel and strategic decisions to ensure the organization's future vitality (Dangelo, 2002; Everley, 1996; Farquhar, 1995; Footlick, 2000; Fretwell, 2004; Greenberg, 1997; Guskin, 1996; Henck, 1996; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; McCall, 1997; McLaughlin, 1996a; Perry, 2003).

Assessment management. The process of becoming aware or coming to understand organizational needs is generally referred to as assessment (Drucker, 1999; Fisher, 1991; Routhieaux & Gutek, 1998; Senge, 1990). During a presidential transition, the assessment process, as determined by key decision makers, should be in accordance with the situation and conditions by which the former permanent president departed (Fisher, 1991; Kerr, 1984). Whether the former permanent president left under negative or positive circumstances, Fisher

believed that key decision makers should not "undertake a presidential search without a thorough assessment of its present condition in order to intelligently determine its needs for the next presidency" (Fisher, 1991, p. 95). Key decision makers, who stand to greatly benefit from an assessment process because it yields them a better, more accurate perception and understanding of the institution's leadership needs at the time of transition, should oversee the assessment process (Langevin & Koenig, 2004). The interim president can play an integral role in the assessment process as the institutional leader and in advising key decision makers in what personal traits and areas of expertise the next permanent president should have in order to meet the institution's organizational needs. With this insight and understanding, key decision makers increase the possibility of attracting the right presidential candidates and finding organizational fit between their institution and its next permanent president (Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; McLaughlin, 1996a; Padilla, 2004).

Unfortunately, some permanent presidents are hired blind to the institution's organizational state of health, even when the organizational health status is known by key decision makers (McLaughlin, 1996a; Perry, 2003). For example, McLaughlin (1996a) found the following:

> Sometimes, the bad news—for it is invariably bad news that wasn't shared!—was not conveyed to the new president prior to his or her arrival on campus because the institution wanted to present its best face in the courting process so as to attract the most attractive prospect. This is not uncommon but unfortunate behavior, which results in the new president, quite understandably, feeling misled or outright deceived. (p. 8)

Perry (2003) further explained the reason for the intentional blindness, stating:

Rationalizing that such candid information will scare away top talent, the search

committee plays up the positive points and suppresses the severity of any problems.

Such problems may include the need to terminate senior administrators, staff, or

faculty—something new presidents rightfully are reluctant to do. (p. 30)

In such circumstances, the newly hired permanent president realizes "there had been

less than full disclosure, that hidden agendas were at play, and that they were hired for the

wrong reasons" (Perry, 2003, p. 31). However, sometimes the blindness of knowing the state

of the institution's organizational health by the key decision makers is because, as Perry

stated, they,

Fail to conduct sufficient due diligence on the institution…. In such cases, the process

[of hiring a permanent president] was successful in the sense that it resulted in the

appointment of a new president. But in fact, the process was flawed, and what

appears to be a successful search will likely be a failure because it was based on

deception. In such cases, the new president almost certainly will become another

turnover statistic. (p. 30-31)

The process of conducting due diligence can be met through the assessment process, which is

best led by the interim president who is well positioned to lead the charge (Langevin &

Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003).

The interim president has the institutional authority and access to explore

organizational issues and the support and attention of key decision makers to improve the

organizational health of the institution (Everley, 1994, 1996; Overman, 1993). In

consultation with the key decision makers, the interim president can resolve the necessary

issues identified through the assessment process and help determine the personal traits and

expertise needed in the next permanent president to lead the institution effectively (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003).

Bypassing any kind of assessment process during a presidential transition would be risky (Fisher, 1991). Such non-action may keep key decision makers from knowing any deep-rooted organizational needs as they proceed, though in good faith, in the hiring process of the next permanent president (Fisher et al., 1988; McLaughlin, 1996a; Padilla, 2004). Nonetheless, not all institutions require significant organizational adjustments and are relatively healthy, well-run organizations that happen to be faced with a departing president (McLaughlin, 1996a, 1996b). The assessment process, led by an interim president, can be strategically beneficial to any institution regardless of its state of organizational health (Fisher, 1991). A well-managed assessment process yields an understanding of a university's organizational needs from multiple perspectives, not only from the interim president, the key decision makers, or the appointing authority. These other perspectives include but are not limited to students, faculty, staff, parents, local civic leaders, alumni, and donors. However, it is the more inclusive mode of assessment that is sometimes overlooked, rushed or skipped all together before or during the interim period because of the desire to fill the vacancy as soon as possible (Fisher et al., 1988; Greenberg, 1997; C. Martin, 2005). For example, in Martin (2005), the appointing authority believed she knew each institution in her system, their central administration, and organizational needs well enough that there was no reason to engage in an organizational assessment as part of the interim period; therefore, she did not charge her appointed interim presidents to engage in an organizational assessment.

Opposition to the assessment process during a presidential transition is rooted in the belief that such actions expose past practices of top management in a way that can be openly

debated, which is admittedly an experience many key decision makers and those in top

management positions find uncomfortable and want to avoid (Farquhar, 1995). The

perception and fear of being vulnerable to public scrutiny fuels opposition to the assessment

approach of interim leadership and gives rise to the desire for a *caretaker* interim presidency.

However, advocates of the assessment process may argue that any hesitancy on the part of

key decision makers or top management is all the more reason to engage in an assessment

exercise and to employ a *consultant* interim president (Kerr, 1984; Langevin & Koenig,

2004; McLaughlin, 1996b).

     Breathing room. The interim period allows institutions the opportunity to breathe

between permanent presidents and their leadership paradigms (Hahn, 1996; Lively, 1999).

Organizationally, to breathe is a part of the preparing process and a metaphor consistent with

the assessment process discussed earlier. The introspective nature of an assessment process

can help the institution heal if the nature of the presidential transition was negative as well as

to identify organizational needs in leadership without being forced to immediately adapt to a

new leadership paradigm (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Lively, 1999).

     One of the most prevalent obstacles search committees are faced with is "the lack of

time under the pressure of getting a new president in place" (Kerr, 1984, p. 18). Employing

an interim president minimizes the time pressure obstacle without jeopardizing the

administrative function of the university (Dangelo, 2002; Everley, 1996; Footlick, 2000;

Greenberg, 1997; Henck, 1996; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003). Farquhar (1995)

elaborated further on this notion:

     Although there are pressures to hire a new permanent executive quickly, the short-

     term leader can provide repair, stability, and focus to a traumatized or disrupted

organization, helping it to make a wise and strategically guided choice for the next

era of leadership. (p. 69)

Having the time to make the right decision in hiring the next permanent president is

invaluable (Fisher, 1991; Footlick, 2000; Green, 1997; Kerr, 1984; Overman, 1993; Perry &

Koening, 1998; Schmuck & Runkel, 1994; Sessa & Taylor, 2000). The transition between

presidents "almost always calls for a buffer or cushion between the old and the new"

(Langevin & Koenig, 2004, p. 162) to give the institution's constituencies time to prepare for

the change in leadership (Lively, 1999). Langevin and Koenig (2004) further explained,

The interim period provides distance in time and space for both the previous president

and the new one. An experienced interim person can demonstrate a new style and

prepare the institution to expect and more readily accept a different style of leadership

in the future. (p. 162)

Too often the selection process of a new president is rushed because of the self

imposed need by key decision makers to fill the position on a permanent basis as quickly as

possible (Kerr, 1984; C. Martin, 2005). However, a permanent president is not the only one

that can give an institution organizational balance; a skilled interim president can provide the

organization the necessary central guidance during a presidential transition allowing key

decision makers the appropriate time to methodically find the right person for the job

(Everley, 1996; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; McKinney, 1992; Overman, 1993).

Experience. When faced with a presidential transition, key decision makers might ask

themselves a philosophical question: Who is the best person for the institution to resolve the

existing organizational issues and manage the institution during the transition…the interim

president with no experience being a president, or a former president who is also an

experienced interim president? Or, should the organizational issues be ignored through the transition period until the next permanent president takes office? The answer depends on the condition of the institution and the circumstances surrounding the former president's departure (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003). However, before answering these questions, key decision makers would do well to remember that holding the office of the president is a demanding enough job without having to deal with organizational issues that could have been resolved with an interim leader, (Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003).

Issues ideal for an interim president to address can include personnel terminations, financial turmoil, labor union disputes, or even making difficult and unpopular business decisions (e.g., eliminating an academic program that has dwindled in demand)that are necessary for the institution's future viability (Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Fisher & Koch, 1996; Kerr, 1984; Kerr & Gade, 1986; Perry, 2003; Zimpher, 2004). Langevin and Koenig (2004) stated,

> As the presidential transition process becomes viewed more as a strategic opportunity for an institution to review its mission, programs, budget, advancement, and long-term goals, an interim president who is experienced enough to know what to do and not to do during the vulnerable period of transition can play a decisive role in helping that institution to reevaluate itself and set appropriate expectations for its next leader. (p.170)

Key decision makers, persons external to the institution and most often unfamiliar with the business standards and methods of academia, manage presidential transitions with limited experience in such duties; yet, they are entrusted to oversee the presidential transition

and hiring process (Fisher, 1991; Kerchner & Caufman, 1995; Kerr, 1984). However, key decision makers are not necessarily the only inexperienced persons involved in the transition process; the interim president, usually appointed from within the organization, is also typically inexperienced in his or her role (Everley, 1994).

The absence of experienced leadership related to presidential transitions can increase the chance of rushing the hiring process and selecting a president based upon the wrong criteria (Kerchner & Caufman, 1995; McLaughlin, 1996a; Padilla, 2004; Perry & Koening, 1998). The lack of organizational fit between an institution's organizational needs and the personal traits and area of expertise of its president can hinder the institution's momentum and ability to stay competitive in its educational niche (Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; McLaughlin, 1996a). While hiring a president based upon the wrong criteria can lead to a lack of organizational fit and ultimately another turnover in leadership, Perry (2003) argues an even worse fate would be selecting a president that turns out to be only marginally effective, but not inept enough to be terminated. Even if key decision makers and the interim president recognize the opportunity before them, their lack of experience in managing academic presidential transitions, employing an assessment process to identify organizational needs, preparing the institution for new leadership, or finding the right fit between the institution and the next permanent president's personal traits and expertise, is limited (Fisher, 1991; Kerr & Gade, 1986; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004).

McKinney (1992) suggested that an advantage of hiring a highly skilled interim president is that he or she can play the role of a transforming change-agent, if empowered to do so by the key decision makers to

Come in, make those difficult changes and then leave, taking all of that emotional

baggage with him or her. This makes it possible for the key manager [next permanent

president] to lead the company [university] on to the next stage in its growth. (p. 89)

An inexperienced interim president may not afford transitioning institutions the depth of

leadership and understanding of how to organizationally take advantage of the interim

period; thus, the institution is not as prepared for new leadership as it otherwise could have

been (Dangelo, 2002; Everley, 1996; Farquhar, 1995; Footlick, 2000; Fretwell, 2004;

Greenberg, 1997; Guskin, 1996; Henck, 1996; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; McCall, 1997;

McLaughlin, 1996a; Perry, 2003).

Practices Regarding the Employment of an Interim University President

The four characteristics of the third construct stemming from the literature taxonomy

deal with issues pertaining to the hiring practices of an interim president: (a) incumbent

interim presidents, (b) candidacy, (c) internal/external appointees, and (d) tool in the toolbox.

The following is a discussion of these characteristics and how they relate to the different

practices commonly explored when employing an interim president.

Incumbent interim president. Some institutions will deliberately choose not to use a

new interim leader in a time of presidential transition (Everley, 1996; Fretwell, 2004;

Langevin & Koenig, 2004; C. Martin, 2005; J. Martin & Samels, 2004; Zimpher, 2004). In

such circumstances, when the current president announces his or her departure, he or she may

do so far in advance, with the intention of functioning as the interim leader himself or

herself; thus, becoming the incumbent interim president (Langevin & Koenig, 2004;

Registry, 1992). However, this method of interim leadership may not be as effective to the

organization as naming someone else to the interim post. Whenever an out-going president

functions as the interim president, stays on with the institution as president-emeritus, or assumes a faculty position at the same university, situations of uncertainty and confusion inevitably follow (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003). According to Perry (2003), the out-going president

> May have good intentions, but rather than enhancing the process, they may make it more problematic. At a time when the institution needs to become introspective, the chief executive's presence often prompts guarded rather than open discussions. Even worse, an outgoing president may be reluctant to "let go" and, likely on a subconscious level, works in ways that are counterproductive to the process. (p. 29)

A lingering former president can create "significant identity problems" (Langevin & Koenig, 2004, p. 162) for the new president, who is already challenged enough in establishing credible relationships with employees and the community.

When an out-going president plays the role of interim leader, there is a tendency by some within the organization to view the president as a lame duck—a perception that can be crippling to an organization (Everley, 1994; Greenberg, 1997; Perry, 2003; Registry, 1992). But the lame-duck perception is not limited to just the out-going president acting as interim leader. It can also be applicable to interim presidents who limit their interim role to that of caretaker. Greenberg (1997) elaborated on this notion when he said,

> The lame duck tradition in academe results in an attitude of "The king is dead! Long live the yet-to-be-identified king!" The departing lame duck receives fulsome praise, followed by isolation. Though he or she still has authority, its exercise is frowned upon. The same goes for the temporary replacement lame duck, who is committed to a holding pattern. Woe unto the lame duck who exerts any significant power. (The

exception is when a board appoints an outside temporary president to do some hatchet

work and clear the decks for the next leader.) (p. 28)

Greenburg alluded to the narrow notion that the only time an interim president should

be called in is when there is "hatchet work" (Greenberg, 1997, p. 28) to be done, which is a

limited understanding of the strategic potential interim presidents can play in presidential

transitions. An interim leader actively engaged in improving the organization can be of great

organizational value far beyond firing people (Everley, 1996; Farquhar, 1995; Langevin &

Koenig, 2004; Lively, 1999; Perry, 2003). However, personnel issues are inescapable and

dismissing employees may be the best course of action to solve organizational problems and

to prepare the organization for new leadership. The incumbent president may be reluctant to

act accordingly for it would be a negative reflection upon his or her administration (Everley,

1994; Greenberg, 1997; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003).

Not every announced departure of an out-going president happens with forewarning

or with a transition to occur at some future date. Some institutions have named the

succeeding permanent president at the same time of announcing the departure of the current

president, skipping the interim period all together (Fisher, 1991; Fisher et al., 1988; Kerr,

1984). While such immediate transitions do occur and are within key decision makers'

purview, they can make the transition more challenging by having no preparation time

between leaders and leadership styles (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Lively, 1999). Although,

an immediate transition does mute the argument that an interim leader, especially when it is

the out-going president, is nothing more than a lame duck figurehead and offers no

organizational value (Greenberg, 1997).

Candidacy. Upon further examination of the literature, the process of determining who should be the interim president yields some basic policy factors that help make the determination of who can be, who should be, or even who is eligible to be interim president. In essence, the answer of *who* is a policy question.

The foundation upon which any given policy or organizational practice rests is its governing paradigm—its basic beliefs, values and ideologies of a community's or organization's culture (Ellis, 1998; Green, 1997; Kirkland & Ratcliff, 1994; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Kuhn, 1962; Owens, 1998; Schein, 1968; Scott, 1987; Senge, 1990). Identifying the core belief structure is an integral part of understanding the policies and practices that guide a university in times of presidential transition. Within every policy or practice, there are implied meanings and intents to govern organizations in accordance with the core belief structure and governing paradigm (Ellis, 1998; Kuhn, 1962). Ellis (1998) states,

> Since all such policy beliefs include or imply the belief that something *ought* to be done or that something *ought not* to be done, or that something is desirable (good) or undesirable (bad), it would seem that no policy belief can be logically justified unless it is supported by (a) at least one *value belief* and (b) at least one *factual belief* concerning how the value in question can effectively be achieved. A value belief is the belief that certain kinds of things are desirable or that certain kind of actions ought to be taken.… A policy belief, then, is really a compound belief composed of both a factual and a value belief. (p. 7)

The factual beliefs tend to be more quantitative in nature, while the value beliefs are more qualitatively oriented. These two approaches are not dichotomous, but rather, should be

harmonious in function. For example, it is impossible to evaluate a policy solely based upon quantitative merits when the less tangibles, the qualitative variables, ideologically influence the governing objective of the policy or practice (Ellis, 1998; Phillips & Burbules, 2000).

A policy or practice warranting exploration in the context of this research is whether the interim president is allowed to be a candidate for the permanent presidency. Pending the role of an institution's central coordinating administrative body (e.g., for public institutions, the board of regents or board of governors, and for private institutions, the board of trustees) they may have a policy or practice specifying whether or not an interim president can be a candidate for the presidency (Everley, 1996; Fisher, 1991; Kerr & Gade, 1986; C. Martin, 2005). For example, some state Board of Regents prohibit an interim president from being considered as a candidate, but in other states the decision is left to each institution's central coordinating administrative body (C. Martin, 2005). Each option carries with it pros and cons worth exploring to better understand the different variables related to selecting an interim president.

One of the greatest challenges key decision makers face is finding the right organizational fit between the university's needs and the personal traits and expertise of the next permanent president (Kerr, 1984). Allowing the interim president to be a candidate affords the key decision makers and the institution's constituencies the time and chance to see first-hand whether or not there is a healthy fit between the interim president and the needs of the institution (Fisher et al., 1988; Kerr, 1984; Padilla, 2004; Perry & Koening, 1998). If there is not a good fit, the institution can dismiss the interim by appointing another person as the permanent president from the candidate pool with minimal loss of personal credibility to the interim president and at a nominal cost to the institution (Everley, 1996; Footlick, 2000;

Greenberg, 1997; R. H. Martin, 1997; McKinney, 1992; Perry & Koening, 1998; Wiesendanger, 2000). However, if there is a good fit but the interim president is not eligible to be a candidate due to policy, then the institution is forced to find the next best person from the candidate pool or to break policy, which is never a sound legal maneuver (Ellis, 1998). Because such policies are limiting, some states have adopted a *practice* (not a policy) of not letting the interim president be a candidate for the permanent presidency. This approach allows key decision makers the latitude to hire the interim president in cases where he or she is the best fit for the institution (C. Martin, 2005).

Unfortunately, the interim president candidate is often perceived by those outside the institution as an insider or a president-in-waiting and that the announced presidential opening and advertisement is a mere formality (Dangelo, 2002; Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004). Qualified outside candidates may be deterred from applying knowing that the interim president is also a candidate because of the implied meaning by some that the key decision makers already know who they want as the next permanent president, meaning the interim president (Everley, 1994, 1996; Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004). For some would-be qualified external candidates, the interim president as a candidate is a great deterrent, which goes against "the first most important responsibility to have a presidency that is effective and thus potentially attractive to highly qualified persons" (Kerr, 1984, p. 3). This responsibility to ensure a qualified candidate pool is that of the key decision makers.

Another drawback to consider regarding an interim president candidate is that he or she is perceived as brokering information and organizational issues to his or her favor and thereby not acting in the best interest of the institution (Dangelo, 2002; Everley, 1996).

Whether true or not, the perception is that the interim president candidate tends to be concerned with keeping his or her job than doing his or her job and the strategic purpose for which they were hired as the interim leader (Greenberg, 1997; McLaughlin & Riesman, 1990). For example, as a candidate and understanding the volatility of employment issues, the interim president may be less likely to make the difficult personnel decisions like firing people or making difficult strategic decisions for fear of alienating some constituents and hindering his or her candidacy to be the next permanent president (Dangelo, 2002; Everley, 1996; Footlick, 2000; Greenberg, 1997; R. H. Martin, 1997; McKinney, 1992).

     Perhaps the most popular viewpoint among institutions experiencing a presidential transition is for the interim president to not be a candidate for the permanent presidency. The reasons are many and include but are not limited to (a) being able to make the difficult personnel and strategic decisions without fear of long-term personal attacks and administrative stonewalling; (b) high credibility in offering unbiased perspectives and recommendations to key decision makers regarding the current condition of the university's organization and subsequent needs; (c) being a resource to prospective presidential candidates and aiding in finding the right organizational fit between the candidates and the institution; (d) allowing qualified and interested internal candidates, aiding a successional leadership option, to be considered for the presidency without any of the negative perceptions; (e) inducing qualified and interested external candidates to apply that would otherwise pass because of the perception that the search process is a mere formality; and (f) providing the needed organizational break or breathing room between permanent presidents' leadership styles (Everley, 1996; Footlick, 2000; Greenberg, 1997; Langevin & Koenig,

2004; Lively, 1999; C. Martin, 2005; R. H. Martin, 1997; McKinney, 1992; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003; Wiesendanger, 2000).

The choice by key decision makers to allow the person serving as interim president to be a candidate for the presidency should be made before it arises and it should be clearly articulated and understood by all involved in the process—especially prospective candidates and the interim president (C. Martin, 2005). Clarity of expectations upfront will reduce frustrations later. Although it can be a challenging decision to make, given the many advantages and disadvantages, the most common position is to have the practice—not policy—of not allowing the interim president to be a candidate for the permanent presidency (Everley, 1996; Greenberg, 1997; Henck, 1996; C. Martin, 2005; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003; Perry & Koening, 1998).

Internal/external appointees. This characteristic refers to a choice key decision makers make when employing an interim president: to appoint a person from within the organization or from outside the organization. Key decision makers tend to first look within the organization for likely interim president candidates and discount the effectiveness of interim presidents appointed from outside the institution or system because they are unfamiliar with the institution or its associated system (Everley, 1994; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; C. Martin, 2005; Padilla, 2004). However, pending the circumstances necessitating the need for the presidential transition, the best and most qualified interim candidate to strategically lead the university through the interim period may be someone external to the current structure and circumstances (Dangelo, 2002; Fretwell, 2004; Lively, 1999; C. Martin, 2005; McKinney, 1992; Registry, 1992; Wiesendanger, 2000). Regardless, the decision of who the interim leader will be is not an easy task and may be rushed into because of a false

sense of urgency to fill the position as soon as possible (Fisher et al., 1988; Greenberg, 1997; C. Martin, 2005).

Some key decision makers admit hesitancy to appointing external persons as an interim president because they are still president with the associated powers of that office, which can be misused from their perspective—especially if the interim president is unfamiliar with the institution's culture and history (Everley, 1996; Fisher, 1991; Footlick, 2000; Green, 1997; Kerr, 1984; McLaughlin, 1993; Perry & Koening, 1998; Schmuck & Runkel, 1994; Sessa & Taylor, 2000). However, counterpoint to that perspective, many believe selecting an external interim president with a proven track record and area of expertise that matches the organizational need of the institution is the better option because he or she brings a fresh pair of eyes to assess the organizational needs (Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Lively, 1999; Perry, 2003; Registry, 1992). Yet, if the interim president is an external appointment, typically he or she is perceived as *not one of us* by the institution's constituencies, which can hinder his or her ability to effectively manage the organization appropriately (Everley, 1994; Fisher, 1991; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Lively, 1999). Additionally, there is a perception that it takes too much time for an outsider to get to know the institution's system and operations to be effective (C. Martin, 2005).

There is a general belief by some engaged in the interim president dialogue that when institutions are organizationally ill, an external interim leader should be appointed by matching his or her proven expertise to the university's current organization needs (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003; Registry, 1992). An advantage to an externally appointed interim president is that he or she is able to bring with him or her a different perspective and best practices from his or her past experiences that could help improve the institution

organizationally in ways an internal appointee could not (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003; Registry, 1992). Additionally, if difficult and politically volatile decisions have to be made, the externally appointed interim president can absorb any hostility, taking that baggage with him or her as he or she leaves town (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003).

However, if the interim president is an internal appointment, he or she may bring with him or her baggage—predisposed opinions regarding employees or institutional initiatives for good or bad—that hinders his or her effectiveness and credibility in the eyes of some constituents (Eisinger, 2000; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Lively, 1999; McKinney, 1992). Additionally, there is concern regarding what campus life will be like for the interim president internally appointed after his or her service as president (Kerr, 1984; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003). It may be awkward and alienating for the person because of the difficult and possibly unpopular decisions he or she may have made as the interim president. Some individuals in these circumstances have ultimately moved on to other institutions because of an altered or even hostile work environment following their interim presidency stemming from the decisions they made as the institutional leader (Kerr, 1984; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003).

While the selection of an internal interim leader has been historically more common, there appears to be a movement among institutions to look for external interim presidents as the best strategic option to manage presidential transitions (Registry, 1992). It is generally understood that if the circumstances necessitating the presidential transition are severe (e.g., the organization is in crisis and in need of fixing) the more common action is to hire the interim president external to the organization, but with the specific background and expertise in solving the dominant organizational woes and bringing the institution back in line with its

educational mission and niche. However, the growing sentiment is that even healthy organizations can benefit from an external perspective of an interim president and his or her understanding of industry best practices (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; C. Martin, 2005; Perry, 2003; Registry, 1992).

Tool in the toolbox. This, the final characteristic of the third construct, is a general category that discusses how interim presidents are an option, a tool, among others for key decision makers to consider using when faced with a presidential transition. For example, a private institution's key decision makers could choose to appoint a new permanent president at the same time they announce the departure of a sitting president; thus, skipping the interim period all together (C. Martin, 2005). Employing an interim president is not the only option for key decision makers to consider; however, it is an effective option to manage the organizational change that a presidential transition presents to an institution.

Some organizations avoid the perceived conflict of making organizational changes because "the managers involved were afraid that they were simply incapable of successfully implementing them" (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979, p. 107). Systemic to this fear and perception, many former "interim presidents [have] contended that they often were an untapped resource" (Everley, 1996, p. 20) because of key decision makers' hesitancy to act and the organizational resistance from within that lead to a lost opportunity for the institution to move in a healthy direction (Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004). Increasingly, interim presidents are being used to lead institutions through the presidential transition process, to strengthen market position, to prepare organizationally for new leadership, and to afford key decision makers the time necessary to find the right fit with the next permanent president (Dangelo, 2002; Diorio, 1991; J. Martin & Samels, 2004; Overman, 1993). Not

employing an interim president limits an organization's opportunity to take advantage of a

presidential transition to accomplish such initiatives.

Farquhar (1995) stated, "The most successful interim leadership educates and

prepares the organization to make appropriate choices in selecting new leaders and to be

ready to move with them to make appropriate changes" (p. 68). The future success of the

next permanent president and his or her relationship with the university and its people is

directly impacted by how the key decision makers, who make a conscious decision based

upon the governing paradigm to appoint an interim president or not, manage the transitional

process (Everley, 1993; Kerr, 1984; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; McLaughlin, 1996b).

Regardless of the organizational health of the institution, the presidential transition period is

an opportunity for organizational self-reflection, assessment, and adjustment, which, if led by

an experienced interim leader, can better ensure the future of the university and its ability to

fulfill its mission (Fretwell, 2004; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Registry, 1992).

A critical step in the process of appointing the right president, however, is knowing

the university's administrative, organizational, political, and academic needs, which are the

basic and most fundamental needs of the institution (Everley, 1994, 1996; Fisher, 1991; Kerr,

1984; Zimpher, 2004). It is the responsibility of the key decision makers to oversee the

assessment process, if one is engaged, to identify the organizational needs and thereafter

matching them to the skill set of the next permanent president (Black & Whipple, 2003;

Fisher, 1991; Fisher et al., 1988; Green, 1997; Kotter, 1973; McLaughlin, 1993; Perry &

Koening, 1998; Zwell, 1999). The interim president is a tool for key decision makers, used to

lead the institution through these processes as well as to provide necessary organizational

leadership to prepare the institution for a new president. The identified organizational needs

provide criteria on which to base the hiring of the next permanent president. It also provides

a clear agenda and plan of action for the interim president to follow to ensure the strategic

directions desired by the key decision makers are met, the institution's mission is fulfilled,

and its educational niche is appropriately leveraged during the interim period (Everley, 1996;

Fisher, 1991; Greenberg, 1997; Guskin, 1996; Kerchner & Caufman, 1995; Kirkland &

Ratcliff, 1994; R. H. Martin, 1997; Meyerson & Johnson, 1993).

Taxonomy of Literature

In the literature review of this chapter, three constructs and several related

characteristics were discussed. This research will compare these constructs and associated

characteristics against the results of a similar domain analysis based upon the answers given

by the participants interviewed. This comparative analysis comprises Chapter Four and leads

into Chapter Five and its etic theory analysis. Table 1 illustrates the taxonomy of the three

constructs and associated characteristics stemming from a domain analysis of related current

literature related to interim university presidents.

Conclusion

The issues, strategies and ideas discussed in this chapter are based upon the current literature

regarding institutional or individual experiences that have endured or fulfilled an interim

presidency (Dowling, 1997; Everley, 1993; Fretwell, 2004; Henck, 1996; Langevin &

Koenig, 2004; Trudeau, 2001; Waddington, 2001). While some authors cited herein have

described hiring experienced interim presidents based upon organizational needs (Langevin

& Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003; Registry, 1992), it is this very voice of

experienced individuals who have been a permanent president and an interim president

multiple times at different institutions that have been missing from the literature dialogue and

Table 1

Constructs and Associated Characteristics to be Analyzed against Participant Input

Regarding the Employment of an Interim University President

Construct	Characteristic	Definition
Role of an interim university president	Caretaker	An interim president whose objective, by choice or key decision maker mandate, is to maintain the status quo of an institution's organization, regular daily functions, and services; babysitter; opposite of *strategic leader*
	Strategic leader	An interim president who is personally motivated and/or empowered by key decision makers to strategically advance an institution organizationally in function and quality of services within its mission and educational niche; opposite of *caretaker*
	Consultant	An interim president who advises key decision makers and central administration regarding (a) organizational functions and quality of institution services compared to industry best-practices and where functional quality improvements are needed; (b) organizational fit and the personal traits and expertise to look for in the next permanent president; and (c) how to conduct a search for the next permanent president, which may include assisting in the hiring process
	Preparer	An interim president that acts upon the *consultant* recommendations and resolves personnel, financial, legal, and other organizational issues to prepare the institution for the next permanent president—minimizing the chance of the next permanent president expending personal capital needlessly to resolve issues—and to establish an institution that is appealing to highly-qualified presidential candidates

Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Characteristic	Definition
Organizational value of an interim university president	Transitioning leadership	An interim president that manages the logistical process of organizationally transitioning from one permanent president to the next while providing presidential leadership in the routine functions of the institution
	Assessment management	An interim president that leads an organizational self study of the institution and its processes, services, and ability to meet its mission and educational niche identifying areas of concern that need to be addressed or resolved for future viability and improved quality of services
	Breathing room	An interim president that provides presidential leadership while giving institutional constituencies the time to prepare for positive support of a new permanent president and his or her leadership style
	Experience	An interim president appointed for his or her leadership skills; may or may not have the ability to (a) assist the institution through the transitional process; (b) advise key decision makers of organizational needs and how to match those needs to the personal traits and expertise of the next permanent president; (c) recommend ways key decision makers can strengthen their institutional roles; and (d) resolve any current or unforeseen problems during the interim period; may or may not have pervious presidential experience
Practices regarding the employment of an interim university president	Incumbent interim presidents	The departing permanent president announces his or her resignation far enough in advance that he or she assumes the role of interim president
	Candidacy	A policy or practice prohibiting or allowing the interim president to be a candidate for the permanent presidency

Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Characteristic	Definition
	Internal/external appointees	The pros and cons of appointing an interim president from within the organization verses hiring him or her from outside the institution through firms such as the Registry
	Tool in the toolbox	The benefits of selecting the *tool* of employing an interim president (from the *toolbox* of options) who is an experienced permanent and interim president to strategically lead an institution through a presidential transition

not formally researched. This research gives such individuals voice in the related literature and discussion pertaining to the employment of interim university presidents.

The literature taxonomy discussed in this chapter is the basis for comparison against the findings of the ensuing participant interview domain analysis. Where the literature and participant perspectives match, the norms discussed in this chapter's literature review are affirmed; thus, the participants believed the identified norms are effective interim strategies to manage a university's presidential transitions. Where the literature and participant perspectives differ, there is cause for those who are involved in the transitional process of university presidents to revaluate their management approach to the interim period between permanent presidents and how they employ an interim president. Either way, given the richness of the participant's experiences, the final outcome has increased understanding regarding the role, organizational value, and practices regarding the employment of an interim university president.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Historical Background

In 1993, Mary Lou Everley reported her study which mined information from 134 institutions regarding the number of interim presidents they had since the year 1900 (Everley, 1993). Everley surveyed "Public Research Universities I, Research Universities II, Doctorate-Granting Universities I, and Doctorate-Granting Universities II," according to the 1987 edition of the Carnegie Foundation's "A Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education" (p. 8). Additional data were gathered regarding the utilization of the interim presidencies since 1980—a year selected "for reasons of feasibility and because presidential tenure stabilized around that time" (Everley, 1993, p. 8). In her findings, Everley discovered "individuals may be interim president more than one time. Since 1900, 26 people were interim presidents two times and three people were interim presidents three times. Of these individuals holding multiple interim presidencies, 11 served at least one of their terms since 1980" (Everley, 1993, p. 14). The significance of only finding three individuals who had served as an interim president no more than three times by the year 1993 will be discussed hereafter.

In 1992, one year prior to Everley's 1993 report, Thomas H. Langevin and Allen F. Koenig, two consultants and authors in higher education leadership, founded the Registry. The Registry is a specialized firm that places interim university presidents at the helm of institutions experiencing a presidential transition (Registry, 1992). Through the aid of the Registry and related networks, five individuals were identified as having been a permanent

president at least once and who had served as interim president multiple times at different

institutions since 1993. These individuals have critical insights into the presidential transition

process as well as the role and organizational value interim presidents can afford institutions

in transition—a perspective never before researched or introduced into the literature dialogue

regarding interim university presidents. The insights of these individuals—their stories,

lessons learned, and refined approaches through the repetitive nature of their experiences—

will hopefully be of value to institutions, key decision makers, and first-time interim

presidents in helping them frame their transitional process.

      With each interim experience, these individuals refine their management philosophy

and approach to being an interim president, which provides greater clarity regarding the role,

organizational value, and practices surrounding interim university presidencies. While others

have researched interim university presidencies, presidential transitions, and have surveyed

and interviewed past interim presidents, university administrators, and key decision makers

(Dowling, 1997; Everley, 1993; Henck, 1996; Trudeau, 2001; Waddington, 2001), none had

gathered a population to study as distinctive and experienced as the one addressed in this

research.

Research Design

      Unlike quantitative research designs, qualitative research methodologies are not as

finite in ascribing hypotheses to prove or disprove. Qualitative research allows for a more

open-ended approach in anticipating the outcomes from the research question (Eisenhardt,

1989; Gibbs, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The primary research design and criteria of this

study was to interview persons who have been a permanent president at least once and had

also been interim university president multiple times at different institutions. The data

collected from all interviews were analyzed through a domain analysis to identify taxonomies and to develop theory.

Scope. Given the nature of Everley's report in 1993 and her findings—since 1900 only three people had served no fewer than three times as an interim president—locating individuals who fit this research's criteria can be considered an anomalous find. Through the assistance of the Registry, founded in 1992, and other networks, five individuals were identified who fit the research criteria. Each participant was asked to refer other individuals whom they knew from their experience that may fit this study's criteria. The researcher then followed up with those referred to see if they met the criteria of this research. If they fit the criteria and were willing or able to be a part of the research, they would have been added to the participant pool. Given the open-ended nature of this study, it was not feasible to predict how many more interviews, if any, would be initiated.

Process. Whenever possible, the interviews were conducted in person. However, because most of the five participants were located across the United States—one was currently serving as a permanent president outside of the United States—the cost of travel to conduct in-person interviews was prohibitive. Therefore, when in-person interviews were not feasible, telephone interviews were conducted. Two of the five initial interviews were conducted in person, the remaining three over the telephone. When the need for follow-up questions arose, e-mail was used, which occurred with each participant three to four times. The participants identified consented to this level of access and were quick to respond for the most part. All interactions with the participants were appropriately recorded. In-person and telephone interviews were recorded with a digital recorder and e-mails were saved electronically on the researcher's computer until the study was completed. At the completion

of the study, all data collected was deleted from the researcher's computer, archived on CD, and stored in a secure location.

While in-person interviews are optimum, they were not essential to the purpose of this research. Given that the participants had been interim presidents at multiple institutions, the argument to explore the physical environments at which they presided was muted because the value was in the amalgamation of what they had learned from each interim experience. The focus of this research was issue- and function-based and not geographically or chronologically dependant. For example, one of the participants first served as an interim president more than 20 years ago, which logically negated the need for a site visit because many of the persons directly involved in that particular interim experience were no longer at the institution or available. This participant's experience in this particular instance, though long ago, was still relevant to the focus of this research because it was part of his overall interim presidency experience. Given the years that some of the participant's interim experiences span, memory distortion—correctly remembering names or specific organizational issues—was controlled through the methodologies described later in this chapter under *trustworthiness*. Again, the main focus of this research was issue- and function-based and not geographically or chronologically dependant.

In preparation for the interviews, all participants were given the same list of questions to help focus their thoughts into a meaningful and useful format (see Appendix A). The interviews were audibly taped with each participant's consent and pursuant to the Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB) standards and the requirements of Brigham Young University. The audible data collected were saved, maintained, and transcribed by the researcher into a textual format compatible with the qualitative data

analysis tool, NVivo. The objective of using NVivo was to systematically organize the data into a format that could be queried according to topic, cross tabulated per idea, and understood according to meaning and insight shared by each participant.

Theoretical orientation. While there are many variations, or acceptable methods, for research methodologies that fall under the qualitative research umbrella, this research is a plural description of related cases. Each participant represented a separate case study and the intent of these studies was, as Ryan and Bernard (2000) stated, "To understand people's experiences in as rigorous and detailed a manner as possible" (p. 782). The researcher wanted to "identify categories and concepts that emerge from text and link these concepts into substantive and formal theories" (p. 782). The *text* for this research was generated through interviews in addition to documents collected from participants—all of which were maintained in a detailed audit trail to be analyzed through a domain analysis consistent with qualitative research methodology (Williams, 2006).

Case studies are a popular approach to qualitative research and analysis and use ethnographic research techniques to develop meaningful theories and thick descriptions to explain the studied phenomena (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gibbs, 2002; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The developed theories from such studies, while hopefully meaningful to a broader audience, do not infer or assume to be applicable or replicable in other situations given the nature and nuance of qualitative research. The mere fluidity, individuality, and evolutionary nature of the human condition prohibit the exact replicability of any qualitative study; for in its core design, a qualitative study only assumes the right to inductively describe what was going on in the prescribed phenomena and context (Gibbs, 2002; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Miles &

Huberman, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Yet, through a detailed audit trail and thick descriptions of participant experiences, some findings of this study may be transferable to similar contexts, but judgment pertaining to the level of applicability can only be made by the reader (Williams, 2006).

Analysis Process

Consistent with the academic and professional goal of this research—to produce a product that was sound scholarly work—critical standards were followed in the research design, methodology, and analysis processes to ensure the outcomes or findings were credible. While there are numerous standards to employ, a researcher must select the ones that best fit his or her research model. Table 2 illustrates categories and their associated standards and sources that were the blueprint of this study's research methods. The following is a discussion of the categories and their associated standards listed in Table 2 (Spradley, 1980; Williams, 2006).

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is more than a category; it is a construct that directly impacts the nature of any qualitative study because it addresses the core of a study's methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Williams, 2006). If the methodology is structured to induce trustworthiness, it will adequately meet the four standards or criteria as Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1989) described, namely, (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability.

There are many different strategies a researcher can engage to test his or her research methodology against these four standards. This study engaged the following strategies to ensure trustworthiness:

Table 2

The Analysis Methodology and Critical Standards

Category	Standard/Criteria	Method
Trustworthiness	Credibility	Member check
		Peer debriefing
		Negative case analysis
	Transferability	Peer debriefing
		Thick description
	Dependability	Audit trail
	Confirmability	Audit trail
		Triangulation
Analyses	Domain	Literature
		Interview notes
		Journal
		Documents
		Researcher thoughts
	Taxonomic	Literature
		Interview notes
		Journal
		Documents
		Researcher thoughts
	Audit trail	Interview notes
		Journal
		Chronological index
		Documents
Outcomes	Story telling	Participant quotes
	Findings (distinctive)	Taxonomy of data
	Etic theory	Literature review
	Meaningful ("so what")	Peer review

1. *Credibility*; Credibility was ensured by engaging a member check, peer debriefing, and negative case analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Williams, 2006). For the member check, participants in the study were given the opportunity to review results, findings, and conclusions to make sure their experiences had been accurately portrayed. The feedback that was received was implemented into the final document and again verified with the participants for accuracy. For the peer debriefing, the researcher met with his doctoral chair and committee, who are not directly involved in the research but understand the purpose of the study and asked questions to check for biases, identify emerging theories, and research focus through the defense process of this doctoral research. For negative case analysis, the researcher tested his hypotheses against the case data for any points of contradiction; none being noted, the researcher presented a new theory in the final chapter (Williams, 2006).

2. *Transferability*; Transferability refers to the applicability of findings from one context onto another (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Williams, 2006). Transferring findings is dependent upon detailed or thick descriptions of the research context so that persons reading the findings can appropriately conclude whether or not the contexts and findings discussed are compatible and applicable to their circumstance (Williams, 2006). The process of peer debriefing was an important step in guarding against unintentional assumptions of transferability. If any were noted, the researcher made the appropriate corrections to clarify that the findings discussed herein describe what happened in this research, leaving the readers to use the information as they may.

3. *Dependability*; Dependability relies on the researcher maintaining a detailed audit trail that demonstrates consistency in processes and practices throughout the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Williams, 2006). In so doing, an independent person can conduct a dependability audit of the audit trail to evaluate how well the criteria for credibility and transferability have been met (Williams, 2006). This step was engaged by employing two independent readers—beyond those identified in the peer debriefing step—to edit and review this research, including the audit trail, to ensure dependability. Additionally, through the member check step, the participants also help ensure dependability.

4. *Confirmability*; Like dependability, confirmability is dependant upon a detailed audit trail and also employs an auditor to engage in a confirmability audit that evaluates if the data supports the researcher's interpretations and findings (Williams, 2006). The two persons engaged to check this research for dependability, were also able to evaluate it for confirmability. Additionally, confirmability employs a tactic known as triangulation to ensure findings are accurately portrayed (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gibbs, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Williams, 2006). Triangulation can be employed in a number of ways. For this research, it was engaged through (a) member checks; (b) audit trail including researcher notes and a detailed data analysis; (c) a document analysis including the literature review and its domain analysis; and (d) through the use of an analytic tool, Nvivo, for a documented transcription analysis.

Analysis. Two main analyses, domain and taxonomic, were engaged in this research. In domain analysis, the researcher examined the data, including in the literature, and created

a domain in name (e.g., a cover term or construct). Then, within each identified domain, the

researcher included terms or characteristics that are in association with the semantic

relationship description of how each characteristic relates back to the construct (Spradley,

1980; Williams, 2006). A taxonomic analysis is an extension of the domain analysis process

and involves seven steps: (a) select a construct from the domain analysis; (b) look for

similarities among the listed semantic relationships; (c) identify any additional included

terms or characteristics; (d) search for other domains among the already identified domains

selected for the taxonomic analysis to see if a subset of a larger, more descriptive and

inclusive domain can be created; (e) construct a tentative taxonomy, which includes

graphically representing the domains and their subsets and terms at each identified level; (f)

engage in a focused inquiry to test the adequacy of the above analysis; and (g) when no more

new included terms or relationships between domains can be identified through the first six

steps, then the domains identified can be finalized as a taxonomy and graphically illustrated

(Spradley, 1980; Williams, 2006). These seven steps were followed and detailed in the

researcher's research journal, which is included in the audit trail. Stemming from the

literature taxonomy, three domains, broad themes pertaining to the role, organizational value,

and practices regarding employing an interim president, were identified. Within each domain,

related topics were identified, grouped, and associated creating subset characteristics—four

in total per domain. The constructs discussed in Chapter Two encompass these three domains

and their four associated subset characteristics and are what the interview data is compared

against in Chapter Four.

Essential to both analyses processes is the maintenance of a detailed audit trail, which

contains journal writings, interview notes, and any other documents pertaining to the research

and its processes (Williams, 2006). The audit trail is the foundation upon which qualitative research rests. Without properly attending to the method and the management of information through a detailed audit trail it is difficult to endear trustworthiness or produce outcomes that are credible (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gibbs, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Spradley, 1980; Williams, 2006). Whenever the researcher was engaged in his research, he maintained a journal detailing his thoughts, actions, and outcomes. As thoughts occurred, they were recorded in a journal and acted upon accordingly as noted in the journal and audit trail.

Outcomes. Presumably, after engaging in the processes heretofore described, the outcome will hopefully be a story worth telling. Storytelling, in qualitative research, is another way of making sense of all the data and analyses (Williams, 2006). It is the process by which findings are shared and theory is developed. In the end, the researcher hoped to share a story that would yield meaningful insights into the strategies related to employing an interim university president and answer the question, "So what?"

Researchers need to exhibit a reasonable level of competency in the interview and data analysis process or they will not maintain the trust of the participants of the research or the readers of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher did this by building relationships of trust through regular and appropriate interaction with each participant. These interactions included phone conversations, in person visits, e-mails, and thank-you notes. Each interaction built the relationships and increased the confidence of the participant in the researcher and the researcher in the participant. The measure of researcher competency, though subjective, was

believed to be acceptable to the participants given their continued interaction and vested interest in the outcome of this research.

Confidentiality is at the heart of establishing and maintaining participant trust. The researcher must gain participant trust, as previously described, to be told an accurate and meaningful story by the participants. This was done by managing the information shared in an appropriate manner and according to expectations. For example, the researcher assigned each participant a reference code—e.g., P1, P2, P3, etc.—and did not use participants' names or the names of the institutions where they had served, thus maintaining public anonymity. Each participant consented to the level of disclosure shared in this study through the member check process.

Balanced with confidentiality is an awareness and commitment to objectivity, which is essential if the data analysis is to yield an acceptable and credible story. Strauss and Corbin (1998) defined objectivity as the "ability to achieve a certain degree of distance from the research materials and to represent them fairly; the ability to listen to the words of respondents and to give them a voice independent of that of the researcher" (p. 35). The paradox, however, that many researchers find themselves in is being passionate enough to sustain their course of research without being so passionate that they, as Strauss and Corbin called it, "go native" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 97; Williams, 2006) and thereby hinder the validity of their findings and lose credibility. Researcher passion can be expected and, when properly checked, can be good because it gives life and color to the story being told (Hammersley, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To keep the researcher's passion in check, each of the strategies heretofore described in the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformity sections were engaged and enacted as a sift for researcher objectivity.

Delimitations and Limitations

A delimitation to this research was limited resources that prohibited conducting in-person interviews, which if possible would have added to the thickness of the description and story told (Hammersley, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In an in-person interview, the researcher has the added benefit of reading body language and noting the immediate physical surroundings of the participants to help gage their questioning. Two of the five interviews were conducted in-person, the remaining three through the telephone. Being sensitive to the delimitation of a telephone interview, the researcher listened closely to cadence, tone, voice inflection, and how each of the three participants answered each question to ensure a rich description was captured. During all interviews, the researcher made notes of what he observed and heard in the posturing of each participant as they answered questions and shared their stories. In follow ups to each interview, as part of capturing a rich description, the researcher transposed his interview notes into journal entries and recorded his impressions and observations. Through these means, the researcher was able to capture specific points of participant interest according to different topics discussed by noting the level of energy and attention each participant gave each topic.

The final delimitation to this study was that the researcher acted alone, without the assistance of another researcher directly involved in the data collection and analyses processes. Having assistance in this process would have added another level of checking for unintentionally imposed biases (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A "key to good cross-case comparison is counteracting these tendencies [a researcher's biased tendencies] by looking at the data in many divergent ways" (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 540). An additional researcher would have provided another lens to examine the data through and would have also added to the

dialogue about what the data was saying and in the process of discovering and developing theories (Eisenhardt, 1989; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Williams, 2006). However, in the absence of such an option, the researcher of this study recorded his thoughts, actions, and theories step-by-step in his journal. He then reviewed his methods and findings with persons familiar with his research focus and qualitative research design (e.g., the actions previously described under peer debriefing) to ensure his research was credible (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Williams, 2006). Follow-up contact with participants (e.g., member checks) were also made through e-mails and phone calls to ensure the analysis and findings were accurate from the participants' perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Williams, 2006).

The limitation to this study was gender. The five individuals identified as having served as a permanent president at least once and an interim president multiple times were all male. However, this was not without just cause, as noted by Everley (1993):

Out of the 320 interim presidents serving this century, 9 (3%) were women. Those 9 women were employed at seven different institutions (8% of our 86 responding institutions), with one institution having had 3 female interim presidents. The historical records of the institutions show that four of the women governed prior to 1980 and 5 of them after. Therefore, 6% of the 84 interim presidents since 1980 have been women. (p. 14)

The fact that all five participants in this study are male is an outcome related to a very small pool of women who have served as an interim president at least once, let alone multiple times at different institutions, that none of the individuals identified to participate in this research were female.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide insight into the professional background of the five participants. The first section of this chapter describes the research methods in this research with the participants; including, why they are part of this study. The next section discusses the participants' general background and approach in being an interim president multiple times at different institutions. The final section looks in-depth at one participant's personal and professional background as a sample of the lives the five participants have lived.

Five participants were interviewed as part of this study. Two of the five were interviewed in person and the remaining three were interviewed over the telephone. Four of the five participants have been a permanent president at least once and an interim president three or more times. The fifth participant interviewed has been a permanent president and interim president twice, in addition to having held an interim position where he was a special assistant to a sitting president with the strategic objective of helping the institution matriculate to university status. Though the fifth participant did not bear the official title of *interim president*, he did serve a similar role as two other participants, who functioned as a coach to a sitting president. Therefore, given the strategic nature of the fifth participant's third interim experience, his institution-wide impact in that role, and function in aiding a sitting president similar to two other participants included in this research, the researcher elected to include this participant in this study.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the first participant never served as a permanent president of a university; however, he did serve as the chancellor of a state board of regents with stewardship over 61 institutions and their permanent presidents. This participant thereafter served as an interim president and chancellor six different times at different institutions and systems (public and private) with a variety of challenging circumstances. Therefore, because of this participant's extensive professional and interim experience, he was included in this study.

The participants served as permanent and interim presidents for a variety of institutions differing in type (public or private) and size. Most served at private institutions; however, three of the five participants also served at public institutions. The institutions ranged in student populations of 120 to 20,000 (P2: 39, 52, 123; P3: 209; P4: 47; P5-3: 31-37). Although there is variability in institutional type, the participants in this study observed that many of the issues they faced during their interim presidency role at different institutions were similar in principle (P2: 39; P4: 47). For example, one participant shared his view regarding permanent presidents and interim presidents serving at public and private intuitions, noting,

> I think there's a perception in the world that, you know, you can't cross over, which, to me, is absurd. Having done it, it's really absurd…. Certain private college presidents and state college presidents usually don't understand that that's not true. If you get past some accounting rules—there's a way of doing the books—it's pretty much the same. (P2: 39)

All together, the participants in this study have had a variety of rich interim experiences that span public and private institutions of different sizes. Table 3 illustrates the various experiences of the five participants as well as the interview method engaged in this research.

Table 3

Attributes of Participant Experience and Interview Method

Category	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Interview method and date	In-person Jan. 2, 2003 Feb. 10, 2005	In-Person Dec. 30, 2005	Telephone Jan. 27, 2006	Telephone Jan. 25, 2006	Telephone Feb. 2, 2006
Presidencies	6 interim 1 system chancellor	3 interim 3 permanent	3 interim 1 permanent	5 interim 1 permanent	2 interim 2 permanent
Other interim experiences	n/a	1 other	3 other	3 other	1 other
Internal or external interim appointments	External	External	External	Internal and external	Internal and external
Types of institutions	Public and private	Public and private	Public and private	Private	Private
Size of institutions (student FTE)	1,000–350,000 (61 state institution system)	450–7,500	950–7,335	505–4,651	625–1,500

Note. *"P"* refers to a *participant* and the number following each *P* indicates a different participant (e.g., P1, P2, P3, etc.). The numbers following a participant's reference number,

separated by a hyphen, indicate where in each participant's interview transcript a specific quote or idea is located (e.g., P4-39 or P5-43).

The five participants of this study have collectively served as a permanent president eight times, an interim president 20 times, and in another interim position seven times. The other interim experiences included positions such as interim chancellor, chief academic officer/provost, vice president, and dean. Participants were asked open-ended questions to minimize researcher bias and to allow each participant to tell his own story. (See Appendix A.) While there are many similarities between each participants' story, there were also distinctive characteristics to each, including what issues were most important to each participant pertaining to the role, organizational value, and practices of employing an interim president. These similarities and differences will be shared through the course of reporting the findings contained in the discussion in Chapter Five.

Participant General Background

As can be expected, each of the five participants had a strong academic background. Each had been a permanent president or system chancellor and had earned terminal degrees ranging from history to law to higher education administration (P1-4: 4; P2: 21; P3: 50; P4: 39; P5: 43). Two of the five participants pursued careers outside the academy of higher education—one into securities and investments and the other into practicing law (P4: 39; P5: 43). Both returned to their academic roots and enjoyed continued service as permanent presidents and interim presidents. Three of the five participants had "retired" from their academic careers before they discovered their second career—being an interim university president (P1-2: 231; P2: 36; P3: 50).

Two of the five participants were internally appointed interim presidents, which proved to be a launching pad for both into their first permanent presidency (P4-3: 10; P5: 117). One of these two participants was appointed permanent president at the institution where he served as interim president (P4-3: 117). The other participant returned to his previous role as executive vice president when the next permanent president was appointed. Having experienced a presidency, this participant knew that he wanted to be a permanent president. Therefore, he began the process of finding an institution he could be president at, and within one year he had accomplished this goal (P5: 47, 133).

The remaining three participants were externally appointed interim presidents for their first appointment (P1-4: 13; P2: 41; P3: 54). Two of these three participants were contacted outside the Registry's network by someone familiar with their presidential experience, professional reputation, and administrative skills in regards to serving as an interim president (P1-4: 13; P2: 48). However, one of these participants, though initially contacted from outside the Registry for his first two interim presidencies, funneled all of his interim president contracts through the Registry because he had signed an agreement with the Registry upon his initial retirement (P2: 48). The other participant never was an agent of the Registry, and all six of his interim presidencies came to him through reputation (P1-2: 232). The third participant—equal in experience, reputation, and skill—was contacted through the Registry's network for all of his interim presidencies (P3: 54).

Additional opportunities to serve as an interim president came to all five participants because of their success during their first and subsequent interim presidencies, and their experiences helped to establish each participants' reputation as a capable interim leader (P1-4: 13; P2: 307, 432; P3: 101; P4: 48; P5: 81). Regarding the four participants who were

agents of the Registry, when they were sent to an institution through the Registry as an interim president candidate, they were also sent with two to three other Registry agents for the key decision makers of the transitioning institution to interview and to select the one that best fit their needs (P2: 254; P3: 405; P4: 62). The Registry would only refer interim president candidates who were former permanent presidents and who had an expertise that matched the institution's organizational needs—whether they were financial, curriculum development, enrollment declines, etc. (P2: 254; P3: 404; P4: 62, 227; P5: 78). Once the Registry agent was selected, then a contract was drawn up that clarified expectations for the key decision makers and interim president to follow and achieve during the interim period (P3: 90; P4: 227; P5: 84). In addition to specifying expectations in the contract, it also explicitly stated that the interim president would not be considered as a candidate for the permanent presidency (P2: 370; P3-2: 3; P4: A). Furthermore, the contract would also include the compensation package to be paid the interim president, which was typically on par with former permanent president's compensation, unless that was an issue in his or her departure (P2: 343; P4: A). In such cases, a compensation package less than the former permanent president's compensation was given, but still competitive for a university president's position (P2: 343).

All five participants agreed that their labor as interim presidents was a fulfilling experience for them professionally and personally (P1-1: 192; P2: 35; P3: 92; P4: 68; P5: 60). While they admit their interim experiences have not been mistake free, they have experienced notable successes ranging from saving institutions from financial ruin and a loss of public trust to healing organizational divisions and helping the next permanent president inherit an institution that was organizationally ready to support him or her as its new leader

(P1-1: 6; P2: 226; P3: 203; P4: 105; P5: 165). All but one participant are currently still in the game and may yet fill more interim presidencies before retiring for a second time.

One Participant's Distinctive Background

With explicit permission by the one participant, his background will be specifically highlighted, which will reveal his name and the places he gained his education and worked. The intent of sharing this information is to give a sample of the professional and personal lives the participants in this research have lived.

Dr. Dolph Norton is the only participant of the five in this study that was not an agent of the Registry, yet he served the most interim presidencies (six) among the participant in this study (P1-2: 232). Norton began his second career in 1988 as an interim president at age 76 (P1-4: 12) and would most likely still be serving an institution experiencing a presidential transition if his hearing had not deteriorated to the point where it was difficult to sit in a meeting and understand what was being said (P1-1: 170). His mind is keen and full of knowledge generated by a wealth of experiences, and when visiting with him, this becomes self evident.

Norton grew up in a small town in north Louisiana. His father was a businessman who owned and operated the local hardware and furniture store. As was the custom in the 1920's, stores like the one Norton's father owned was the source of purchasing coffins, which became the focal point of his father's business when he developed the first cooperative burial association in Louisiana. Through this effort, Norton's father became active in state politics. Norton's first job was being a page for the Louisiana House of Representatives during his father's political tenure (P1-1: 68).

In 1939, Norton graduated from high school and began his higher education journey at Louisiana Tech; however, he eventually volunteered to serve in the military during World War II in the third communications division of the Army Air Corps, pursuing his interest in radios (P1-1: 68). After WWII, Norton resumed his formal educational journey earning a B.A. and M.A. from Louisiana State University in government. From there, he taught American government and state government at the University of Texas for a year before again continuing his education and earning a doctorate degree in government with an interest in local government from Harvard University (P1-1: 121; P1-4: 4). After Harvard, Norton accepted a job to teach government at Florida State University where he gained tenure after six years. However, for one of these years he took a sabbatical from FSU to teach one year back at Harvard in the School of Public Health (P1-4: 4).

Through Norton's teaching and research networks, he received a phone call from one familiar with his work who offered him double his current salary if he would accept a three-year position on a research project of the metropolitan region of Cleveland, Ohio. This call came in the month of August and by September Norton and his wife had moved, even though his wife had yet to finish her doctorate program. The three-year research project was completed on time and Norton returned to teaching, but at Western Reserve University and as a Ford Foundation fellow. However, this was a short lived experience because, as has been the case throughout Norton's career, a phone call changed his life as people sought him out to lead their organization (P1-4: 5).

Norton was invited to lead The Cleveland Foundation, the nation's oldest community foundation, back to the activist role with which it began in 1914 (P1-4: 8). With other vested community members, Norton tackled the urban problems of the metropolitan region of

Cleveland, which included initiatives to improve and resolve problems with "elementary and secondary education, economic development, and race relations" (P1-4: 7). Under his leadership, The Cleveland Foundation gained national attention during the 1960s as a model for other metropolitan regions to emulate. Much has been recorded about Norton's legacy and service to the Cleveland metropolitan region in Diana Tittle's 1992 book, *Rebuilding Cleveland: the Cleveland Foundation and Its Evolving Urban Strategy.*

Later in the 1970s, when a Democrat won the governors seat for Ohio, Norton was asked by the new governor to become chancellor of the Ohio Board of Regents. Norton eagerly accepted the challenge and enjoyed it, but became a lame duck when the Democrat governor lost the next election (P1-4: 10). Norton then returned to Cleveland as Visiting Chancellor at what had become Case Western Reserve University. Norton would later teach at Cleveland State University for a year before moving to Charlottesville and becoming the director of the Institute of government at the University of Virginia (P1-4: 12). It was at this point Norton retired, or so he thought.

A skill that Norton had become known for was his ability to heal divisive wounds of opposing sides of politically turbulent issues and to find a way to move forward in good faith and determination for the betterment of the community and cause in which he was engaged (Tittle, 1992). This skill kept Norton's phone ringing with opportunities and eventually launched his second career as an interim president.

Soon after retiring from the University of Virginia, Norton was asked to be the interim president of Hiram College, which was about 45 miles outside of Cleveland. His knowledge of the area, coupled with his administrative skills, made Norton the ideal interim leader to help Hiram College through their abrupt and unexpected presidential transition, to

help raise necessary funds from the community in support of the college, and to find a "first-rate permanent president" as his successor (P1-1: 23; P1-4: 13). The Hiram College interim presidency lasted eight months. Only two months after leaving Hiram College, the University System of Maryland called asking Norton to be interim chancellor of its 14-institution system and to help strengthen it organizationally. Norton again proved to be instrumental in finding a highly capable permanent successor (P1-1: 28, 50; P1-4: 13).

The next phone call came soon after returning to Charlottesville from the Lamar University System (five units) in Texas, which was enduring troubled times, to be its interim chancellor. The challenge to reestablish a healthy organization at Lamar proved to be the most challenging experience for Norton and lasted 22 months (P1-2: 145; P1-4: 13). After Lamar, Norton was asked to be the interim president at Bryant College—now Bryant University—in Rhode Island, which lasted nine months, during the mid 1990s. Bryant was the least problematic interim experience for Norton; however, it still carried some challenges in helping its board members understand their relationship with the institution (P1-1: 21; P1-4: 13). Adelphi University in New York was next and Norton was called to be the interim president in the wake of a president and board scandal. Only one board member, who was appointed one month prior to Norton taking office, was left on the board—the others being dismissed with the president. It took 15 months to regain trust in the central administration and to establish an organizational culture where the next permanent president could flourish (P1-1: 39; P1-4: 13). Norton's final interim presidency was at Central Washington University, which was a ten-month assignment that involved helping the institution raise some much needed private donations (P1-2: 221; P1-4: 13). Central Washington University

would prove to be Norton's last interim experience because of his hearing problem, and, in his eighties, Norton retired from his second career.

Beyond the vast number of positions Norton has held and awards he has been given, what defines him most, in the perspective of this researcher, is his commitment to doing the right things for the right reasons to improve the community in which he lives and the organization for which he serves. His love for his family is evident when visiting with him. Although his daughter lost her battle with cancer in between his Bryant and Adelphi interim presidencies, how he still speaks of her manifests an abiding love. Norton's continued support and care of his wife and her career ambitions and personal needs is exemplary. She played a significant role in his interim experiences, supporting Norton as he was put into difficult situations to correct, time and time again (P1-1: 40). In his own words, describing his wife, he stated, "she served as a great 'first-lady' as we moved with our suitcases all around" (P1-4: 14). Finally, ever the gracious southerner who enjoys life, Norton summarized his professional career by stating, "It has been fun. I would have paid to have each job if I had been wealthy enough" (P1-4: 14).

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS

The findings discussed in this chapter are an etic comparison of the literature taxonomy and its three constructs and four associated characteristics, which were discussed in Chapter Two, with the interview data collected from the five participants. The first three sections of this chapter describe how the interview data compares to the literature taxonomy of the three constructs. The next section is a summary of findings and additional insights the participants offer into a university interim presidency beyond the literature taxonomy. The final section is a discussion of unanticipated findings.

The taxonomy of literature discussed in Chapter Two that details the three constructs of focus for this research is the comparative foundation for the ensuing discussion. The three constructs again are (a) the role of an interim university president, (b) the organizational value of an interim university president, and (c) the practices regarding the employment of an interim university president. Each construct has four subset characteristics. At the beginning of the following sections, the number of references to each characteristic by the participants during their interviews has been collectively counted. Additionally, the *number of passages* are noted, recording the frequency of which each characteristic was referred to by the participants. Also, a *character count* number is given that notes the amount of talk-time or attention the participant gave each characteristic. Finally, how many participants refer to each characteristic is recorded as the *number of participants*. Given all participants acknowledged each characteristic through these means, the researcher deems the literature taxonomy credible. The threshold of three participants sharing the same idea will be esteemed as

significant. References less than three may be noted as interesting ideas and perhaps worthy

of future research and attention. The following is a discussion of these results.

Role of an Interim University President

      The roles of an interim university president, as characterized by the literature

taxonomy, are *caretaker*, *strategic leader*, *consultant*, and *preparer*. Although the attention

given each characteristic collectively varies in the perspective of the participants (see Table

4), the interview data show that all five participants recognized each characteristic, and

thereby generally concur with the literature taxonomy.

Table 4

The Primary Characteristics of Construct One: The Role of an Interim University President

Characteristic	# of Passages	Character Count	# of Participants
Caretaker	17	8,641	5
Strategic leader	52	25,465	5
Consultant	54	23,534	5
Preparer	52	27,335	5

      A common approach for many key decision makers is to appoint a *caretaker* interim

president to manage a presidential transitions (Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Perry, 2003).

Yet, the participants do not view the caretaker role as favorably as the other characteristics,

which is understandable given none of the participants perceive themselves as a caretaker

interim president (P1-1: 6; P2: 152; P3: 125; P4: 215; P5: 146). One participant stated,

representative of the other participants' views, "If the institution was healthy and it just

needed somebody to be the presiding president, I'm not interested in doing that. I'm not a

caretaker president" (P2: 152). Another participant similarly stated,

> If you see institutions that really don't want to change, they just want somebody in
>
> there to pilot the ship for a while, I'm not interested. I want to be in a situation where
>
> I can make a difference and where my leadership has some impact. (P5: 146)

While the participants recognize that many institutions employ caretaker interim presidents,

none gave it much attention or validity as an important role for interim presidents to play

because the participants are more action oriented as individuals. One participant even stated,

"I think it's always an activist position, or should be," (P1-1: 6) when describing the role of

an interim president and opposing the caretaker approach.

The last three characteristics—*strategic leader*, *consultant*, and *preparer*—have

approximately the same amount of passages and character counts, all of which were higher

than caretaker, and suggesting the participants value these roles more than the caretaker

characteristic (P1-1: 6; P2: 152; P3: 125; P4: 215; P5: 146). While each characteristic has its

distinct difference in role and function, each also has similarities which are manifest at

different times during the course of an interim presidency. For example, one participant

stated "As an interim president, you have to begin as best you can, with understanding the

reason you're there—and that varies from place to place" (P1-2: 137). When they needed to

be a strategic leader, they were; when needed to be a consultant, they were; and so on.

Caretaker discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature

review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that an interim president who plays the role of

caretaker subscribes to the practice that he or she is to maintain the institution's

organizational momentum without making significant or drastic organizational changes or

moves to improve the institution's position within its mission and educational niche; thus, the caretaker interim president leaves such changes to the next president to resolve or direct (Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Henck, 1996; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; C. Martin, 2005; Padilla, 2004; Perry, 2003; Weary, 2004; Zimpher, 2004). Recognizing that some key decision makers prefer the caretaker role, one participant stated, "You have to have a clear understanding with the trustees, if you're the interim president, whether they just want a holding operation or whether they want some initiative shown" (P3: 125). However, even the caretaker interim president may be called upon to take some initiative in resolving a situation because he or she is still president and must act accordingly, even if he or she would rather not act (P2: 377; P3: 125; Padillia, 2004). For the most part, the caretaker's approach is to avoid making significant decisions that, in his or her mind, would be best made by the next permanent president (P2: 269).

All five participants acknowledged that many universities are reasonably well run organizations which are faced with a presidential transition for a variety of reasons (e.g., a natural turnover due to pursuit of other professional opportunities, retirement, etc.;P2: 152; P3: 125; P4: 217). In such cases, the participants indicated that that is why many key decision makers look to employ a caretaker interim president—to keep the institution in its current rhythm because things are going well (P2: 152; P3: 125; P4: 217). However, all five participants reported that the majority of their interim presidencies were at institutions that had significant problems ranging from closing the campus down and selling off the buildings, equipment, land, etc. (P2: 225; P5: 55) to issues dealing with the management and personal troubles of the former president (P1-1: 21; P3: 203; P4: 180-194). That said, none of the participants served, according to their individual perspectives, a caretaker interim

presidency—they all had some significant challenge to address and resolve. One participant stated, which is representative of all the other participants' variety of interim presidency experiences, "Even the quietest ones … there were problems that needed to be addressed" (P1-1: 21).

Acknowledging that caretaker interim presidencies occur, none of the five participants believed they were a caretaker-type interim president because a caretaker does not make a difference and therefore has little value. Perhaps the caretaker characteristic is best summed up by the comments of one participant who said,

> I want to make a difference. I want to make a contribution. I want to be positive. So I think in interims, you want someone who is not a caretaker. I'm not a caretaker, so I'm giving you my interpretation of a successful interim, and what trustees ought to be looking for someone who is willing to—who, in fact, is decisive, who can grasp the mission statement, who is willing to commit themselves to the institution to make a difference and not just be a housekeeper or a caretaker or just someone who is content just sitting behind a desk and just putting in their time. (P5: 185)

Strategic leader discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that an interim president who takes on the role of *strategic leader* believes it is his or her responsibility to increase the institution's momentum within its mission and educational niche; thus, he or she is to advance the primary roles and functions of the institution (Fretwell, 2004; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Padilla, 2004). One participant framed the strategic opportunity of an interim president as,

> Potentially very important … to spend the interim year looking at the institution with "new" and reasonably objective eyes, and in the process simplifying some policies or

> sharpening them to make them more effective; filling in gaps in policies and
>
> procedures; perhaps improving faculty search procedures; taking a new look at
>
> admissions processes; realigning and improving the President's relationship with the
>
> Board of Trustees; ad infinitum. (P4-2: 5)

Specifically, another participant described one of his strategic opportunities to play the role

of strategic leader as an interim president by stating,

> We redirected the institution. I mean, they've got residence halls back. We started
>
> recruiting, hard, 18 to 20-year-olds from far beyond the region …. Put athletic
>
> programs back in, student life programs, renovated the student union, student affairs
>
> kinds of things. And their enrollment is growing slowly—it's stable at least—and
>
> they have a chance. (P2: 242)

Interim presidents, in consultation with key decision makers, have the opportunity to

strategically shape the future of an institution through initiatives they determine as best to

accomplish or start during the interim period (P1-1: 34; P2: 171; P3: 111-113; P4: 244; P5:

141). The opportunity presented by an interim presidency is the ability to make decisions that

may be abrupt, but essential, to help the institution maintain or gain a competitive edge in

fulfilling its mission and educational niche (P1-1:172; P2: 226-231; P3: 192; P4: 206; P5:

165-166).

Adding to the strategic leader characteristic from the current literature, this study

yielded an additional dimension to the strategic leader characteristic, which is talent

development, and is discussed directly or alluded to by all five participants (P1-2: 365; P2:

258; P3: 123; P4: 119; P5: 55-57). The strategic leader is about giving the institution and its

people a chance to "develop some unexpected strengths that will be useful for the college in

the future" (P3: 458). Differing from the preparer characteristic, which encompasses dismissing non-essential personnel or employees who are part of the institutional problems, the strategic leader looks for opportunities to develop the talents of employees before entertaining the notion of termination. Additionally, the strategic leader pushes the institution to further develop and improve its viability within its mission and educational niche (P1-2: 140; P2: 258; P3: 123; P4: 119; P5: 46). One participant noted that this was a lesson he has learned, stating,

> I've learned that, as an interim, you do that [terminations] only when you absolutely have to. It's better to work on—work with what you've got in the context of talent development and see if you can't get better mileage out of some of the people you have working for you. And I would say, for the most part, that works pretty well. (P3: 123)

Another participant added, "I was trying to build up their [the employees'] self-confidence and give them a sense of perspective of what would be happening in the future" (P4: 119). However, two of the participants had to make drastic organizational cuts to institutions in order to create the opportunity for the talents of some faculty and their programs to develop and flourish, which in the end saved the institutions from closing their doors for good (P2: 225; P5: 55-57).

Even though the strategic leader instigates change, change for the mere sake of change is to be avoided—change should serve some strategic organization objective (Drucker, 1999; Padilla, 2004). But, as all five participants agree, presidential transitions are, for the most part, about change (P1-2: 140; P2: 163; P3: 123; P4: 226; P5: 50). "Things have to be happening. Things have to be changing, and an institution has to be growing to be

competitive—it must change" (P5: 50). The role of strategic leader and the objective to improve the institution (e.g., instigate change) has it limits. One participant observed,

> There is a limitation. And I have tried to push that envelope as to what can be done. To do that, you have to convince people, frequently, that, yes, we don't know who the new president is going to be, but we're going to make this decision anyway, because we think it's good for the institution. (P4: 216)

But what the interim president believes is best should be in balance with what the institution is able to do, factoring in its history and current resources; thus, this same participant also suggested,

> You have to look at the college's history and its values and the things that it has made a commitment to. And if those seem to fit with—are not contrary to one's own values, and do seem to respond to social needs, and are valuable to at least some people, the people who are going to be coming to this college—then I think you have to adopt those things.…. You don't have to say, "Everybody should do this." But you cannot come in there and think, well, you know, I'm going to make sure that these people change their liberal arts curriculum so it represents more of what I think it should be, or I think we're going to have to do this or that. There are some of those things that maybe should be done, but I don't think you can come in with a premise that you're going to do that. I think what you do come in with is that you are going to accept and help develop and further the values of the college. (P4: 210-212)

Another benefit the participants add to the strategic leader characteristic is the opportunity it creates for the various constituencies to reevaluate their relationship, role, and

function with the institution and its mission (P1-1: 8, 16; P2: 226-231; P3: 263; P4-2: 6; P5: 198). One participant discussed this process stating,

> The interim year—and it usually is a year—also provides the college/university community with some time to change focus. I no longer work for President X. So what is my essential role in this institution? As we look forward to a new administration, how will I function most effectively? What changes should I seek in my own status and professional development? Key administrators and others can ask these questions in the fairly neutral climate established by the interim, and perhaps use the interim as a mentor to make some decisions and adjustments relating to the future. (P4-2: 6)

Interwoven in this participant's insight, which is evident throughout the other four participants data, is the assumption that the interim president is an externally appointed individual whose experience establishes him or her as a credible and safe mentor, which then creates the opportunity for employees to come forward with new institutional ideas or even to seek personal career advice. More will be shared about this in the discussion on the third construct.

The strategic leader, unlike the caretaker whose objective is to initiate as little as possible, seeks opportunities to create, build upon, and expand the current systems, services, and initiatives to further the institution within its mission and educational niche (P1-1: 7; P2: 269; P3: 218; P4-2: 5; P5: 154). In the end, all five participants agreed that the main objective of any interim president should be to leave the institution, as one participants stated, "in the best possible shape" (P2: 269) for the next permanent president.

Consultant discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that one of the most important functions of key decision makers is the selection of a permanent president and closely related to this is the task of attracting the most qualified individuals to apply so the best person for the job can be hired (Fisher, 1991; Kerr, 1984). Supporting this objective, all five participants viewed an interim president as an organizational leader well positioned to consult the key decision makers in fulfilling their important function of finding the right person to be the next permanent president (P1-1: 221; P2: 184; P3: 218; P4: 198; P5: 184). Furthermore, all five participants (P1-1: 8, 16; P2: 226-231; P3: 263; P4-2: 6; P5: 198) agreed that an effective way of helping key decision makers to find the right fit between the next permanent president and the institution is, as one participant stated, in "giving institutions a chance to take stock, to reassess their mission, to reassess their priorities … a chance to think about who [they] are because there may be some new directions—not everything is just wedded to [the] well-established model" (P5: 198). But beyond the reassessment process, four of the five participants noted the *consultant* interim president can also help find the right next permanent president by coaching key decision makers and the search committee through the search process (P1-1: 156; P2: 203; P3: 218; P4: 198).

The participants were more direct in defining the interim president's role in the search process than the literature. The same four participants that noted the interim president's role of coaching the search committee also noted that an interim president should not have voting rights on the search committee and should be a resource of options, services, and networks (P1: 182; P2: 203; P3: 218; P4: 198). However, one of the four participants recommended greater level of involvement, contrary to the other participants' position (P2: 203).

Specifically, this one participant believed the interim should chair the search committee and not merely play a supporting role. In two of the four interim presidencies that he held, he chaired the search committee and had a positive experience (P2: 203). He explained his position stating,

> [I] ran the searches [because] I knew how to do it—I mean, I'd been through other president searches [and] I could keep them on track…. If you didn't get the applications read, sorry, we're going to have the meeting on Thursday, and it's done that way, and you just don't participate because you didn't do your work. It was an advantage because I had contacts. I could—I had perspective. I participated fully, although I didn't vote on any of the key people or narrowing it down. I certainly had influence, and I knew—I felt I knew what they needed, and … I could direct the process, and it did work. And I could make sure that everything got done. (P2: 203-204)

Speaking against such a high level of involvement, unless it is necessary because of a dysfunctional search committee, one of the participants offered this insight:

> On the whole, I think it's best to use the search committee, and you hope you have faculty and students and trustees and a couple of people from the outside. And if you've got that sort of thing going, then you ought to stay out of it. Let them— they've got the stake in the future. (P1-1: 156)

Unfortunately, not all key decision makers understand their role, and they need to be coached not only through the search process, but in their role as stewards of the institution. Four of the five participants noted that the consultant interim president is well positioned to

directly advise key decision makers, including the board of trustees, in fulfilling their role

(P1-2: 143; P2: 203; P3: 222-223; P4: 198). One of these four participants stated,

> You work with the trustees, particularly, getting them to understand what the
>
> responsibilities of administrators on the college campus are, where they draw the line,
>
> who chooses athletic directors and coaches and hires faculty members and so on, and
>
> what is the proper role of a trustee in terms of oversight—what the policy is and what
>
> is the procedure. (P3: 218)

One of these four participants further explained the importance of the consultant interim

president as one who can be candid and direct with key decision makers and trustees to help

them understand and fulfill their role appropriately, stating, "You can be very candid about

the quality of personnel, the strengths and weaknesses of certain persons, and that's not just

faculty and administrators, but in the community sometimes" (P1-2: 365).

Another great service an experienced interim president has to offer as a consultant to

institutions and their presidential search committees is their personal and professional

networks (P1-2: 298; P2: 208; P3: 210; P4: 102). The value of an interim president's personal

and professional networks is a concept not explored in the literature to any great depth, yet

four of the five participants repeatedly mentioned contacting persons they knew could help

the institution they were currently serving (P1-2: 298; P2: 208; P3: 210; P4: 102). For

example, one participant accessed his professional network, calling in a consultant he had

used before with some success in a similar situation, to help him establish an organizational

strategy to resolve the problems currently facing the institution he was then serving (P1-2:

298). This same participant described the role of a consultant in aiding an interim president in

such circumstances, stating,

Consultants have to be used for what you want them to do. For some of them, you

want them to confirm your judgment and give you more strength. For some of them,

you need to have them explore and come up with ideas. For some, you want to have

somebody to blame. And you ought to know what it's going to be before you get

them in. (P1-2: 305)

Another of the four participants shared his insight into the value of an interim president's

personal and professional network, stating,

If you've been around as long as I have, there are people that apply for everything,

and you know you aren't going to consider them, but the committee itself wouldn't

know that. You know some baggage, and you know some—well, it's a small world as

a president, for sure. (P2: 208)

Finally, each participant made multiple references to consulting tactics they employed

to effectively aid key decision makers and the institution in managing the transition process

from one permanent president to the next. The main consulting tactics the participants used

were listening, asking questions, giving answers, observing patterns and processes, and

advising (P1-1: 225; P2: 184; P3: 234; P4: 163). Of these traits, one participant explained

that listening is the most important: "Sitting and listening to what people have to say is the

key. In fact, that's the key to being a successful administrator anywhere" (P3: 234).

However, another participant turned the listening tactic around in his interim presidencies by

sharing with each institution's constituencies the actual fiscal and organizational state of the

institution through open forums (P2: 234). He noted that "most campus' management or

administration are not honest with their campus" (P2: 324), always giving their usual "We're

incredible" (P2: 324) speeches. He continued, stating that he had followed presidents who

were not open with their employees regarding the actual condition of the institution; so, he would host regular open forums where he shared with the campus community

> Where the money came from; look what's happened…. Here's the deficit, here's where it goes, and we don't have this, and we've got to get to this. And we will. And we all have to figure out how we are going to do it together. And so I was, from the start everywhere I've been, saying, "This is where we are, folks. And if we're going to survive, we'll do less, but we're going to do well, but we're going to live within our means, because we don't have any reserves to go to." I would hold these open forums about every six weeks and tell them where we are on all kinds of things, and then open it up to questions. And I was honest with them. And they didn't like it, but they pulled together. And so you had people volunteering, "I think we could do without this. We could cut this. Here are ideas for cutting. We don't need this. Here's a way we could do it more efficiently. Don't really need this…." Too often we're closed and the president has a cabinet, and it's "they." It's always "they." People just want to know what's going on, even if it's bad. They want to feel like they're important and that they know what's going on. (P2: 234-236, 448)

Preparer discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that a properly prepared institution would be one that understands its organizational needs and distinguishing educational factors—current or potential—within its defined mission and educational niche (Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004). All five participants noted the importance of understanding the history of an institution—its stated mission—as well as what caused the presidential transitions, which helped them prepare the institution for the presidential search process and to support a new

permanent president's leadership style (P1-1: 6; P2: 125; P3: 203; P4: 114; P5: 55). The notion of preparing the institution for the next permanent president—again, leaving the institution in the "best possible shape" (P2: 269)—is the dominant focus of the preparer characteristics and shared by the literature and participants (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003). A common focus of the participants was to be a preparer interim president that made a difference for good (P1-1: 6; P2: 125; P3: 203; P4: 114; P5: 55). One participant, representative of the other four, summed this notion up when he said, "I want to be in a situation where I can make a difference and where my leadership has some impact" (P5: 146). Another participant interestingly observed that having a positive impact at each institution determined whether or not he would have another interim assignment—that the success of one led to the next (P2: 307). Yet, another participant described the desire to prepare an institution for the next permanent president, stating,

> If you're really interested in helping the institution come ahead, you have sort of a double-barrel goal. One is to make things or get things ready so that your successor can be a success. You don't want to leave things in such a hole that you have not cleaned up what provoked your interim presidency—you want to have grown past that. And the other thing is you can't have a *highness in life* [italics added] in a real sense—you certainly can't in a life of an organization. So, you ought to always be thinking about what are the things that need to be accomplished in this length of time. (P1-1: 6)

An interesting aside, the "highness in life" referred to in the above quote was also alluded to by two other participants as the cause of the former president losing favor with the institution and trustees (P2: 247; P4: 74). One of these three participants described two

former presidents he followed as an interim as being seduced into a lifestyle they were unable to maintain without inappropriately drawing upon institutional resources (P2: 547-550). And yet, another participant who experienced a similar interim experience observed,

> For a lot of presidents who have been upwardly mobile, there is more of a gap, probably more of an adjustment, and it's kind of a treacherous situation, because you do have to have certain social skills, you do have to attend lavish social events and go around the party circuit and do this, that, and other things. At the same time, you have to remember that you are not one of those people, and that that's not your lifestyle, and the things that they're concerned about are really not the things you're concerned about. (P4: 80)

All five participants agreed that a major aspect of the preparer role is to make the difficult decisions, the unpopular decisions including terminating employees, that need to be made to ensure the future viability of the institution and thereby give the next permanent president a fighting chance to be successful (P1-1: 307; P2: 260; P3: 192; P4: 206; P5: 165). One participant shared the following story about how taking the blame is an important role of the preparer interim president in the wake of making difficult decisions. He said, regarding one interim experience, "I knew it was going to be bloody, but I didn't realize, though, how bad" (P1-1: 36). He continued,

> There are some things that you take the blame for…. For example, the week we announced that we would be making these shifts, changes, a small group of legislators came in to talk to me and said, "Don't do it. We've got too many things on the plate. We've got constituents." And I knew who they were talking for, and so on. And they said, "Just don't do it." And I said, "Yes, this is the time. It has to be done.

There is no better time than now." And one of them said, "You're just trying to make it easier for your successor." And of course he was right, that is what I was trying to do. He came in, and he didn't have to get rid of 80 people. You can take it. You're going to leave town. (P1-2: 307-314)

Some of the terminations the participants reported involved members of the president's cabinet and other top level management positions. However, concurring with the literature, three participants warned that interim presidents should only appoint top level management replacements on an interim basis so that the next permanent president can fill these positions with people he or she feels best fits his or her leadership style (P1-2: 383; P2: 267; P4: 207). One of the participants mentioned he did participate in lower level cuts, but only when, as he stated, "The supervisor didn't have the guts to do it—then you have to step in and force the issue or do it yourself" (P2: 459). Three participants also stated, however, that it is important to remember to gain support from key decision makers, specifically, the board and chair, before terminating employees (P1-1: 39, 173; P3: 344; P5: 57). Unfortunately, as three participants noted, the board or the board chair can be the problem needing to be resolved (P1-1:28; P2: 171; P4: 157). One participant had an especially trying situation with a board chair and described their relationship, stating,

She and I did not get along. She was very crude, an older woman, cut like a sailor on the docks, had no concept of higher education, was a detriment to the institution. She has held it back, and she controlled it. And I was a threat, because I didn't take it. So we were at odds most of the time. (P2: 171)

Pursuant to the role of preparer, this participant had direct conversations with the board about its dysfunctional nature, which was a limiting factor in attracting a qualified candidate pool

because no new president would be willing to stay and endure the level of disrespect that he was having to endure from the board chair (P2: 184). Fortunately, for the sake of this institution's future, the difficult board chair was repositioned—left on the board, but in another capacity—and new leadership was appointed to provide the necessary stability in conducting the presidential search that could attract qualified candidates (P2: 181, 187-189).

All of the participants acknowledged another duty within the preparer characteristic, which was to solve administrative and personnel problems beyond terminations so the institution can be prepared for the next permanent president (P1-1:6; P2:125; P3: 203; P4: 114; P5: 55). For example, three of the participants elaborated on some of these problems, which included law suits that need resolution and financial difficulties—usually dependant upon enrollment declines or mismanagement—all of which need to be resolved before a search could be successful in attracting a qualified candidate pool (P2: 169; P3: 231; P4: 181).

Yet another opportunity for the *preparer* interim president is to help the institution heal from a negative departure of the former president or regroup after a popular president departs, as noted by all five participants (P1-2: 137; P2: 226; P3: 203; P4: 115; P5: 57-59). One participant described one interim experience following a negative departure as,

> Another situation where the president had aroused discontent on campus and had left to take another job—I think probably was encouraged from the trustees. The assignment there was to make peace on campus. A lot of hostility, a lot of anxiety, a lot of dissatisfaction on the part of the trustees, a lot of questions about the role of the trustees, and the management of the college—it took a lot of long beatings. (P3: 203)

Perhaps the gravest preparer role and negative circumstance reported by the participants was an experience that two of the participants were faced with, which was to save an institution from closure (P2: 226-231; P5: 57-59). Even though only two participants experienced such challenges, given the peril of the circumstances, it merits mentioning. Although not frequently sited as an interim experience, these two participants reported being sent to institutions that were facing closure—to either give it a chance of survival or to permanently close its doors and sell off the assets (P2: 226-231; P5: 57-59). Both participants were successful in saving the institutions but not without cost. In one instance, 25% to 30% of the employees lost their jobs, and in the other, whole programs were discontinued. Yet, in the end, both institutions were given a stable foundation that saved them from closing their doors forever. One of these participants describes himself as a "fix-it person" (P2: 434) who can quickly identify and solve problems. He also said that in the wake of the drastic cuts he made, when it came time for him to leave, "everybody didn't want me to leave" (P2: 310) and morale was high (P2: 231). The other participant described his experience, which well describes the preparer characteristic, stating,

> I had made all the hard decisions. I had reorganized the school academically, reorganized it financially. I had made a lot of tough decisions that involved personnel decisions and financial decisions. So the new person coming in didn't bring any baggage. I had made all the tough decisions. I took all of the baggage out the door with me. So that certainly is one of the beauties of an interim, is preparing the way for a permanent president to come in, making a lot of hard decisions, and carrying a lot of the political baggage out the door. There were a number of tenured faculty who lost their jobs … and there were a number of staff people who lost their jobs … as part of

the reorganization of the academic program and the financial structure of the

institution. So that's the baggage that I took out. I was the bad guy that reorganized

the institution and had to tell people they didn't have jobs anymore. And so the new

president wasn't burdened with that. He didn't have that baggage. I took that with me.

That's the baggage I'm talking about. (P5: 165-171)

Regarding a departure of a popular president, which ironically bears a similar end

result of the interim president being the person absorbing the negative baggage, one

participant made an observation that interim presidents can also be the fall-person designed

to not live up to the legend of a popular president who just departed (P4: 115-121). This

participant stated,

The value of an interim in this situation [following] such a strong person and so

beloved by those people, that had the next president come in—the permanent

president—immediately at the time she left, I think there would have been a sense of

disappointment, and could have been [an] immediate comparison between what she

did and her style of doing things and what he was and his style of doing things. They

had a break. They had me. They really didn't need to worry about my style, or

whatever, because I wasn't going to be there. But they had a breather before they had

another president, and I think that was—I didn't think about that much at the time—

but I think that was a very important thing for that particular group of people. (P4:

120-121)

So, in this instance, "the problem was, there really wasn't a problem" (P4: 116) like the other

situations previously described. Nonetheless, this participant was the preparer for the next

permanent president to give him (it was a man that was hired in this instance) a chance to be

successful, supported, and to enjoy a long tenure as president of that institution. This participant's experience adds to the literature review, which describes the characteristic of *breathing room*—which will be discussed in the next construct—and how an interim president can play preparer for an institution in the wake of a popular president.

In the end, all five participants agreed that preparer interim president can do only that which the key decision makers will allow him or her to do (P1-1: 34; P2: 261; P3: 111-113; P4: 244; P5: 141). Three of the participants stated they had the full support of key decision makers every during each of their interim experiences, but two reported that had one interim experience that had no such support (P1-2: 261; P2: 55). One of these two participants stated that he "had much more to give than they were willing to take" (P2: 163). The other participant noted that limited support during an interim presidency, sadly enough, often leaves problems that could have been resolved by the interim but were not, and thereafter become "problems for the successor" (P1-2: 369). Fortunately, this is not always the case and all five participants shared examples of supportive key decision makers empowering them as interim presidents to unify a campus and create a healthy environment for the next permanent president to inherit (P1-1: 34; P2: 261; P3: 111-113; P4: 244; P5: 141). One participant described the unifying effect of an experienced interim president: "The interim can make a difference and must be allowed to make a difference … to show the faculty and the administration do not have to be at war, that we have a common purpose—a common mission" (P5: 154).

Organizational Value of an Interim University President

The organizational value of an interim university president, as characterized by the literature taxonomy, is to provide *transitioning leadership*, *assessment management*,

breathing room, and *experience*. Although the attention given each characteristic collectively varies in perspective of the participants (see Table 5), the interview data shows that all five participants recognized each characteristic, and thereby generally concur with the literature taxonomy.

Table 5

The Primary Characteristics of Construct Two: The Organizational Value of an Interim University President

Characteristic	# of Passages	Character Count	# of Participants
Transitioning leadership	12	11,334	5
Assessment management	10	3,939	5
Breathing room	19	10,973	5
Experience	30	15,930	5

Experience is the characteristic on which all five participants placed the greatest value. Given the fact that all the participants have been an interim president multiple times, among other interim positions, it is not surprising the value they place on experience. While each of the other three characteristics has its distinctive features independent of experience, it is the experience of the participants having been a permanent and interim president that differentiates their interim presidential experiences from other first-time interim presidents. In other words, a first-time interim president may be equipped with good general administrative skills and can therefore provide transitioning leadership, manage an organizational assessment, and provide breathing room between permanent presidents. However, what the first-time interim president, who has typically not been a permanent

president either, cannot provide is experience of having dealt with similar issues, problems, and strategies from a president's perspective and organizational role. One participant said it this way:

> The biggest advantage you have is experience on a lot of other campuses, and in a parochial world, like the one I'm in, for example, that's valuable. Some people often ask, "What, in your judgment, ought we to do, based on your experience?" Unfortunately, some people should ask and don't. But that's in the nature of the academic profession. But it's no assignment for an amateur. (P3: 444)

The characteristic breathing room received the next highest passage count meaning its attributes are referred to more than the other remaining two characteristics, transitioning leadership and assessment management. However, the difference between these three characteristics is not in how many references the participants made to each characteristic, but rather, how much time they spent discussing each characteristic. For example, assessment management was alluded to a reasonable number of times in comparison to transitioning leadership and breathing room, but was not discussed in as much detail as the latter two characteristics. The attributes of these three characteristics, plus those of the experience characteristic, are described in more detail in their following characteristic discussion section.

Transitioning leadership discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that employing an interim president is an effective institutional strategy to provide leadership and clarity during a presidential transition (Everly, 1994; Guskin, 1996; Henck 1996; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; P1-2: 367; P2: 277; P3: 337; P4: 222; P5: 165). Reflecting upon the end goal of an interim presidency,

to leave an institution "in the best possible shape" (P2: 269) for the next permanent president, then providing leadership in the transitioning process becomes all the more important because of what it entails. Specifically, *transitioning leadership* is described by one participant as the gathering of "real information, not just hearsay" (P1-1: 365) so that the next permanent president can be appropriately informed as to the condition of the institution at all levels and act accordingly (P1-1: P2: 282). Three of the participants noted that when passing on information, however, it should be done in a balanced manner between the interim president's observations and accounting for the next permanent president's leadership style (P1-1: 367; P2: 281; P5: 133). One participant described the passing on of information, stating,

> I think you can be very helpful in telling them [next permanent president] the issues, helping them define the issues they're going to have to address. I try hard not to bias them about people, even when you want to. But they need to learn that themselves, and I may be wrong, you know. So I don't say, "If I were you, I'd get rid of so-and-so," or, "This is a weak link," because they may work differently with a different relationship. So I might say, "I worry about leadership in student affairs," or something like, "It's not well coordinated," or something like that. But I would never do somebody in like that unless it was obvious. I put warning signs out—"Watch out for this. Be careful." (P2: 281-282)

Another participant described the need for candidness when passing on the "real information" (P1-1: 365) as well as the breadth of information to be shared, when he said, "You can be very candid about the quality of personnel, the strengths and weaknesses of

certain persons, and that's not just faculty and administrators, but in the community sometimes—you can tell them all sorts of things" (P1-1: 365).

In essence, the interim president becomes the next permanent president's advisor, which as three participants noted, will last as long as the permanent president desires (P1-1: 344; P2: 279; P5: 133). One participant described the overlap period when both the interim president and the permanent president are on site together:

I don't think it has to be a long transition period, but I think you need a little bit to get the lay of the land. But, as a new president myself, I'd just as soon have him [the interim president] get out of there. I'd want to start, you know. (P2: 283)

Another participant conceptually described the transition process and the value of having an interim president to keep the institution organizationally functioning:

Then the new president is named. Swell. There you are, maybe March, maybe a little bit later. The new president is coming maybe at the end of June or so. And you have a quarter of your year as an interim, maybe even more of that you have to work. And you have to pull people back together and say, "Well, that was a very heady experience, and a very important thing. And, yes, now we know who the new president is going to be, but we still have things we have to do." And now you can, on some decisions, consult with the new president. But I have chosen not to do that a great deal. In fact, that's inappropriate. The new president doesn't have to make decisions yet, and you certainly shouldn't be consulting with him on small matters or even middle-order matters. You might consult with him on some really big things, but it is very difficult even then. (P4: 222-223)

Without leadership—presidential leadership as noted by three participants—an institution may lose its focus, creating unnecessary problems for the next permanent president; whereas, with a capable interim president at the helm, the institution can maintain its focus and be more prepared to support the new president and his or her leadership style (P1-1: 6; P2: 269; P3: 458).

Assessment management discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that the assessment process can be as extensive or cursory pending the situation and conditions by which the former permanent president departed and in consultation with key decision makers (Drucker, 1999; Fisher, 1991; Kerr, 1984; Routhieaux & Gutek, 1998; P1-2: 285; P2: 258; P3: 368; P4: 232; P5: 57). As discussed as a part of the transitioning leadership characteristic, the gathering of "real information" (P1-1: 365) is important. The process of gathering that information can be through an *assessment management* process. Since the interim period is relatively short, one participant observed that interim and new permanent presidents usually access the "immediate preceding self-study documents, to know what the institution self-study said and what the accrediting agency said" (P4: 232) as one of the first things they do when taking office. However, as all five participants observed, the value of an interim president offers an institution organizationally, is his or her professional observation—current assessment—of an institution's organizational efficiency of functions, quality of services, and ability to meet its mission and educational niche (P1-1: 21; P2: 258; P3: 368; P4: 231; P5: 57). The interim president can make a positive difference through his or her organizational assessment in finding the right fit between the institution's needs and the next permanent president's personal traits and expertise (P1-1: 221; P2: 184; P3: 218; P4: 198; P5: 184).

How an interim president assesses the current organizational condition can vary. Although, four of the participants reported engaging their personal and professional networks to call in consultants to help them assess needs (P1-2: 298; P2: 208; P3: 210; P4: 102). One of these participants explained, "The consultants did a study, which gave us a feel for what ought to happen. But then we held hearings, public hearings … to say what needed to be done; and to deal with it" (P1-1: 285). Similarly, another participant had used focus groups of various constituencies asking them, "What qualities do you think are necessary in a president? What are the issues the president is going to have to deal with? Define those issues…. What kind of person would fit at this institution" (P2: 213)? Unfortunately, as this same participant shared, the key decision makers, whose stewardship it is to select the next permanent president based on the information gathered by the interim president, may chose to ignore the input of such labors (P2: 163). He stated,

> I gave them advice, timelines, structure, time of the year, all of these kinds of things, how do you do it, how do you get input on campus, you know, what were the qualities, and all this, and they essentially chose to ignore it. (P2: 163)

The rejection of the key decision makers of the interim president's advice was an indication of a dysfunctional board that needed correction before the process could continue. The organizational value in this case was that the participant was able to play the role of *preparer* and correct the board's dysfunctional ways and thereby help the institution and find the right fit between the institution and the next permanent president (P2: 170). Three of the participants generally agreed with the literature that notes that in some instances key decision makers may act blindly through the search process. This can adversely affect the search process and their ability to find a next permanent president that fits the organizational needs

of the institution (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; McLaughlin, 1006a; Perry 2003; P1-1: 28; P2: 171; P4: 157).

As noted in the literature, there can be other points of resistance (e.g., top management) to an assessment process because of what it brings to light personally and organizationally (Farquhar, 1995). All five participants agreed with this notion (P1-2: 286; P2: 257; P3: 370; P4: 48; P5: 57) and one described his approach, stating,

> Frequently, it's been evaluation of administrative structure and personnel to make the changes necessary. So you might as well tell that up front. I mean, it's hard sometimes for those key administrators, "Okay, this is my crew, and part of my charge is to see if we have too many or the right people." But you might as well know that I did a number of things. I don't say this with any pride, but it is an advantage that an interim can do, because you can make change. (P2: 258-259)

The value of an interim president managing an assessment process is rooted in his or her ability to gather information in a usable format that can aid key decision makers in their search process. This information can also help key decision makers find the right fit between the organizational needs of the institution and the personal traits and expertise of the next permanent president as well as help the next permanent president, once in office, to function with accurate information.

Breathing room discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that the time between permanent presidents is a strategic opportunity to take advantage of to assess, correct, heal, and prepare the institution organizationally (e.g., a chance to organizationally breathe) before the next permanent president's leadership style is introduced into its culture (Hahn, 1996; Langevin &

Koenig, 2004; Lively, 1999). Time is the underlying value of the *breathing room*

characteristic (P1-2: 134; P2: 131; P3: 261; P4: 67; P5: 197). The majority of the preceding

characteristics of construct one and two are time dependant—time to be strategic, consult,

assess, and ultimately transition to a new permanent president. One participant made the

following observation about the interim president's need for sufficient time:

> I think the main thing is the limitation on time. You've got to move with some
>
> dispatch, and yet it takes time to get things moving ahead. It takes time to get people
>
> involved. It takes time to identify the directions that you want to take. (P1-1: 134)

Another participant, who was currently serving as an interim president, observed that the

search committee for the next permanent president was, "Taking their time" (P3: 349)

because they could afford to with him as their interim president. Understanding the need to

find the right fit between the institution's organizational needs and the next permanent

president's personal traits and expertise, these key decision makers did as the literature

suggests, to consciously extended the timeframe of the search process to ensure they were

able to fulfill their most important role of attracting and hiring a permanent president that fits

the organizational needs of the institution (Farquhar, 1995; Fisher, 1991; Kerr, 1984).

Because of time restraints, however, all five participants suggested the interim

president should balance the interim agenda with key decision maker's desire to move on

with the search and hiring process for the next permanent president (P1-2: 144; P2: 257; P3:

337; P4: 87; P5: 61). Regarding the timeframe for implementing change one participant

observed,

> [The agenda] shouldn't be too open-ended, but there ought to be some flexibility. If
>
> it's too open-ended, people think, "My gosh, you're just sitting around this desk, and

who knows what's going to happen when? And when do we really feel we should get

behind things?" And so on. On the other hand, identifying a short period of time that

has no flexibility can be quite a problem. (P1-1: 143-144)

Taking the necessary time to breathe organizationally creates an atmosphere where, as one

participant stated, "It's much easier to get people to work together" (P4: 103) and where

some recently fought battles can be resolved. The interim president can "provide some

stability, maybe some encouragement that [employees] hadn't received before" (P4: 103).

The healing process following the difficult departure of a former president is another

organizational value and attribute of the breathing room characteristic. One participant

observed that his "greatest strength, probably, is in healing situations and getting people to

work together," (P4: 103). This same participant also noted that "People were generally very

cordial and cooperative, and the people within the college were happy to be able to heal some

of their divisions that the [former] president had created" (P4: 67). But the opposite can be

applicable when a popular president leaves a community where he or she was beloved and

the institution has intimately associated itself with that president's personality and leadership

style. Furthering this point of discussion, one participant, who followed a popular president

as an interim president, noted,

She was a charismatic person, who was beloved in the community. She was not only

president of the institution; she was also president of the Chamber of Commerce,

chaired the capital campaign for the public television station, and chaired United Way

for a while—she did everything! And that woman has tremendously high energy. I

found her to be a completely charming woman, very intelligent, very energetic ….

[However], I had to assure the people who were working with me directly—she had

been such a strong person—that they were also strong people, and that her

departure—sometimes when a person like that leaves, you think, well, she was so

wonderful, she did all of these things for the institution, and we'll never have

somebody who is that good again. You know, it's probably going to be downhill from

here. It's never going to be that good again. I had to reassure them that they were all

highly competent and that all of them could work pretty independently, and that no

matter who the next president was, the college was in a position of great strength, and

that they were part of that strength, and they didn't need to worry so much about

going forward. And I needed to reassure them over and over again that they could do

what they were doing. And indeed they could. They were all really outstanding

administrators. (P4: 115-118)

This same participant continued sharing his experience, stating,

In this case, I was following a woman who just had an impossibly positive reputation,

and I think a cooling-off period was necessary there. And I think in that kind of a

situation … any time you change presidents and the president has been there for any

appreciable period of time, it's good to have that interval. And I would generally

agree with that. But it's particularly important when the president has been

tremendously popular and in this case, people were practically grieving that she was

gone. (P4: 127)

Similar to following a popular president is following a president who had a long

tenure at an institution, all five participants noted the need to reevaluate the organization at

such times of transition (P1-1: 16; P2: 226; P3: 263; P4-2: 6; P5: 198). The breathing room

between permanent presidents can provide an institution and its key decision makers the

"chance to take stock, to reassess their mission, to reassess their priorities" (P5: 198). In such an introspective process, the institution may find the need to change or update processes, systems, and strategies (P1-1: 140; P2: P3: 261; 129; P5: 198). One participant described being an interim president following a long tenured president:

> A new president coming in after a long, long presidency has difficulty, because nobody wants to change…. I call it everybody coming into a situation brand new sees possibilities that have not been fully utilized. There are good people who have not been recognized by a previous administration. There are favorites who should be out of favor. There are people who have been lax, who have been allowed to be lax. It works in any organization. And the interim person has a chance to evaluate and make suggestions. (P3: 261-263)

Perhaps the greatest attribute of the breathing room characteristic as discussed in the literature is the psychological buffer it creates between presidential leadership styles or paradigms that dominate an institution's culture (Fisher & Koch, 1996; Fisher et al., 1988; Kuhn, 1962). All five participants agreed with this notion of using time as a buffer to breath between permanent presidents (P1-2: 134; P2: 131; P3: 261: P4: 67; P5: 197). One participant, representative of the other four participants, summed up the breathing room characteristic and its organizational value to an institution experiencing a presidential transition, stating,

> The interim also serves as a psychological buffer. If the outgoing president has been especially beloved, the interim president can absorb some of the grief (and sometimes it is grief), disappointment, and doubt the faculty and staff will experience as the incumbent leaves. "Things are not the same; we used to do these things differently."

The interim can help people through a season of vague hostility resulting from

change, and then leave. The new incoming president will find that the community has

during the interim year pretty much "let go" of its relationship with the past. Without

an interim person and period, however, the new president may be the direct object of

negative feelings related to the change. If, on the other hand, the incumbent left

because of serious problems, or had worn out his or her relationships on campus, the

interim has an opportunity to restore confidence in the administration and improve a

sense of community, thereby improving the climate the new president will encounter.

(P4-2: 7)

In the end, the interim president can provide the necessary leadership to allow an

institution and community the time necessary to assess, correct, heal, and prepare (e.g., a

chance to breathe) before the next permanent president takes office. However, the quality or

level of effectiveness of an interim president in establishing an institution and preparing a

community to embrace a new permanent president is based upon that interim president's

experience in leading through such processes.

Experience discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature

review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that the best person for the institution to resolve

the existing organizational issues and manage the institution during the transition is a former

permanent president and not an individual who has no presidential experience (Langevin &

Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003). Understanding that the participants in this study are experienced

permanent presidents who have also served as interim presidents multiple times, one of them

offered this insight into the value of employing an experienced interim president:

The beauty of these interim appointments is that it challenges the university to bring
in persons of considerable experience, and you don't have to train us. You just drop
us into situations, and we bring a great wealth of knowledge to the table…. I think,
one of the great strengths of the Registry, is that you have persons who know how to
be vice presidents, who know how to be presidents, who know how to be deans. And
so they hit the ground running. There is no time lost in saying, "Well, they've got to
get used to the job. They don't know this. They've got to learn this and that." The
expectations are very high for Registry individuals, and so it's exhilarating, it's
challenging, it's exciting, and I will tell you its extremely rewarding. You gain [trust]
easily because you know that in today's age and stage of my life, I bring 35 years of
experience in private higher education to the table, so I have legitimate academic
credentials. I don't have degrees in higher education and that sort of thing. I have
legitimate academic credentials in English and in history. I have a research
background. I have experience as a chairman, as a vice president, as an executive vice
president, as a dean of a college, as an interim, as a permanent president. So everyone
in the Registry brings what I would, in my own words, say are impeccable
credentials. So we have credibility immediately with faculty, staff and students when
we come into a position. (P5: 78-81)

As stated in the above quotation, the other four participants also reported gaining trust
and credibility on the campuses that they served as an interim because of their experience
(P1-2: 164; P2: 133; P3: 444; P4: 55). In other words, using a common adage, these
participants have "been there, done that;" or, in the words of another participant, "You have
credibility coming in because of who you've been, where you've been, what you've been

doing. So you have a level of their trust automatically, and an expectation that you're going to do something" (P2: 133).

What experienced interim presidents can do includes coaching key decision makers—who typically are external to the business practices of academia (Fisher, 1991; Kerchner & Caufman, 1995; Kerr, 1984)—on how to conduct a presidential search, what to look for in prospective candidates, and how to make smooth transitions. Agreeing with the literature, all five participants concurred that an experienced interim president knows how to help an institution organizationally assess its quality of services, correct personnel and systematic problems, heal employee divisions, and prepare the campus to embrace new leadership (Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; P1-2: 367; P2: 277: P3: 337; P4: 222; P5: 165). The confidence these participants have gained through their multiple experiences has helped them realize that, as one participant bluntly stated, "It's the old adage, the bit about 'it's the same BS, it's just different names, people.' There's a lot of truth to that. There's not too much that's new, that you haven't seen somewhere before" (P2: 305). Agreeing with McKinney (1992), this same participant attributed his experience to being the means by which he has been an effective agent of change with each passing interim and now permanent presidency (P2: 307).

An additional insight from the literature review is the topic of interim president maturation. When asked if their personal style as an interim president is any different now after serving as such multiple times, three of the five participants agreed that it had—that they have matured in that role (P1-2: 247; P2: 299; P3: 361). One participant shared the story of his first interim experience where he had conceptually solved a problem dealing with faculty compensation, but practically it was wrong when it came time to implement the

strategy (P1-2: 247). This participant admitted, still holding his ground that conceptually he was right, that he would not have attempted such a strategy in his later interim presidencies knowing what additional problems it caused (P1-2: 250). Another participant also commented on the maturing process from one interim presidency to the next, stating, "I didn't know what to expect in my first interim [and] I waited too long to make some change. I don't think it created a problem, but I think I should have taken charge sooner" (P2: 299). While yet another participant reported the opposite regarding his speed to act as an interim president, stating, "I would be more careful to be less assertive and probably to listen a little bit more carefully and not try and make too much of an impact at the outset" (P3: 361). The maturation process of these participants' interim presidential experiences is relative to each participant's default leadership style and modality. However, based upon the experiences of these participants, it is evident that even after serving as a permanent president there is a maturing process distinctive to serving as an interim president.

There are two more additional insights brought to light by these participants (consensus decision making and the value of personal and professional networks) from the literature review related to the characteristic of experience. Although the interim president seeks input in the information gathering process, one participant noted that he was in a strategic position to make decisions in the best interest of the institution without seeking consensus before acting. He stated,

> In an interim situation, particularly that's in trouble, I don't think you have the time to build consensus. So you have to move quicker, without consensus—particularly on the obvious ones—you just do it, and rely on your past experience and your own

judgment. I think they [key decision makers and the campus] expect something to happen in the interim—that's why you are there. (P2: 302)

Unless key decision makers choose to appoint a caretaker interim president, all five participants agree that there is an assumption that the interim president will make changes in the organization by making the hard decisions that need to be made, thus saving the next permanent president from having to carry that baggage through his or her tenure as president (P1-1: 307; P2: 260; P3: 192; P4: 206; P5: 171). Pursuant to such actions, an interim president may make decisions without seeking perfect consensus. It is difficult for the current actors to come together and eliminate their own position or positions. Therefore, three of the five participants noted that many decisions may need to be made without perfect consensus, but with the support of key decision makers, and then only when an interim president knows based on his or her experience such heavy handed actions are necessary (P1-1: 39; P2: 133; P5: 55).

The final additional insight into the experience characteristic is the concept of personal and professional networks. Because the participants have had such a wide array of permanent and interim presidencies, in addition to their other professional experiences, three of the five were able to leverage an extensive personal and professional network of consultants and contacts with specific areas of expertise to the benefit of the institutions they served (P1-1: 32; P2: 143; P4: 102). The organizational value of being able to access such networks, as reported by the participants, can aid interim presidents in positioning the institutions to better fulfill their mission and educational niche and in helping key decision makers better fulfill their role as institutional stewards (P1-1: 182; P2: 226; P5: 57).

Practices Regarding the Employment of an Interim University President

The practices regarding the employment of an interim university president, as characterized by the literature taxonomy, are *incumbent interim president*, *candidacy*, *internal/external appointees*, and *tool in the toolbox*. Although the attention given each characteristic collectively varies in perspective of the participants (see Table 6), the interview data shows that all five participants recognized each characteristic, and thereby generally concur with the literature taxonomy.

Table 6

The Primary Characteristics of Construct Three: The Practices Regarding the Employment of an Interim University President

Characteristic	# of Passages	Character Count	# of Participants
Incumbent interim presidents	6	5,282	5
Candidacy	10	5,763	5
Internal/external appointees	50	26,057	5
Tool in the toolbox	23	10,081	5

As indicated in Table 6, of the four characteristics within construct three, the internal/external characteristic discussion was more dominant than the other three characteristics in the level of attention the participants collectively gave it during the interviews. It is evident that the issue of appointing an interim president from within an institution's organizational structure (e.g., internal appointee) verses appointing one externally to the institution, was an important issue to the participants. Even though only two

participants actually served as an internal appointee, they favored appointing interim presidents from outside the institution (P4-3: 10; P5: 187).

Perhaps the most telling aspect of the construct three characteristics analysis is noting how the incumbent interim president and candidacy characteristics were given less attention by the participants than the internal/external appointees and tool in the toolbox characteristics. For example, the candidacy characteristic, pertaining to the practice of an interim president being a candidate for the permanent presidency, did not receive as much attention as the other characteristics. However, this characteristic did receive more references in the passages count suggesting it was discussed more often than the incumbent interim president characteristic. Still, both of these characteristics receive comparable attention in total character count.

The tool in the toolbox characteristic ranked the second highest characteristic in passage and character counts. This characteristic pertains to the growing practice of employing an interim president to strategically bridge the leadership gap between permanent presidents (e.g., an option among others to consider; Dangelo, 2002; Diorio, 1991; J. Martin & Samels, 2004; Overman, 1993). All five participants agreed that the employment of an interim president during presidential transitions is the best option, or tool, for key decision makers to engage when managing a presidential transition, which was expected given their experiences being an interim president multiple times (P1-2: 367; P2: 277; P3: 337; P4: 222; P5: 165)

Incumbent interim president discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that whenever an out-going president functions as the interim president, stays on with the institution as president-

emeritus, or assumes a faculty position at the same university, situations of uncertainty and confusion inevitably follow (Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003). Interestingly, all five participants interpreted the *incumbent interim president* characteristic as a lame duck issue and were not in favor of a departing president taking on the role of interim president (P1-3: 4; P2: 287; P3: 2; P4-2: 6; P5-2: 2). However, four of the five participants did make the distinction between a lame duck/incumbent interim president and a successful permanent president of a healthy organization giving, for example, a six month announcement of his or her departure (P1-3: 4; P3: 2; P4-2: 6). Regarding this distinction, one participant stated,

> There certainly is plenty to designate the "lame duck tenure" as "interim." But the status should be—and probably is—quite different. If the president has been successful, this period should be like a "victory lap." It could be a time of relaxation for the whole institution, a time to celebrate. This would be great for a successor. On the other hand, if the "lame duck" tries to change or discipline personnel, there will surely be questions as to why he (or she) waited till they were leaving. Is such action retribution for some slight or is it concluding some long held grudge? If the exiting president knew this change needed to be made, why was it not done earlier? The rancor would certainly do the incoming president no favor. (P1-3: 4)

Speaking to the would-be lame duck president, another participant stated,

> I think immediately when you announce you're leaving, you're a lame duck. I don't care how good you are. People will begin to work around or wait, and I think you lose momentum. So I think if you were a sitting president announcing you're leaving, I think that's okay—you're leaving at the end of the year. They start the search now and everyone recognizes they're in a process to find the replacement. Then I think

you're okay. But having him continue as an interim, I don't think is wise. I can't

think of a benefit to it. (P2: 287)

Agreeing, another participant stated, "The possibility of a sitting president serving as an

'interim' during the last part of his term: I do not think this would work very well" (P4-2: 5).

Continuing, this participant reiterates the organizational value of an interim presidency,

stating,

Even if the incumbent's administration has been notably successful, some of what she

or he has established as administrative process and style will be stale, out-of-date,

beside the point. I think it would be a rare incumbent that would perceive that, and be

able to bring new and fresh ideas to the situation. (P4-2: 5)

Agreeing with the literature, all five participants noted that a permanent president

who has announced his or her departure is commonly labeled a lame duck president and may

slow the momentum of an organization (Everley, 1994; Greenberg, 1997; Perry, 2003; P1-1:

3; P2: 290; P3: 126; P4-2: 6; P5-2: 2). However, "it is unfair to everyone to call the lame

duck experience as 'interim'" (P1-3: 4). An interim president is a strategic leader, a

consultant, and/or a preparer; not a lame duck.

Candidacy discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature

review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that the interim president should not be a

candidate for permanent president (Everley, 1996; Footlick, 2000; Greenberg, 1997;

Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Lively, 1999; R. H. Martin, 1997; McKinney, 1992; Padilla,

2004; Perry, 2003; P1-1: 229; P2: 150; P3: 369; P4-2: 8; P5: 117). One participant stated,

"On the whole, I think it's bad business" (P1-1: 229). However, distinguishing between

situations where the interim president is the president-in-waiting or the search is competitive, this same participant stated,

> Sometimes it turns out that the interim president who was chosen does have the talent and after they've been there they've shown they have the talent and people get behind him … but if it's going to be a competition, I don't like it—I just do not like it. (P1-1: 229)

Four of the five participants noted that the interim president that would be the next permanent president is typically an internally appointed candidate at a healthy, larger institution where there are no significant problems and a large enough workforce to choose from (P1: 6; P2: 150, 157; P3: 369; P4: 259). Thus, these participants agree with the literature that an interim presidency in such a situation is merely a trial basis or formality, and a deterrent to other qualified, would-be applicants (Dangelo, 2002; Everley, 1994; Farquhar, 1995; Langevin & Koenig, 2004). For example, one participant stated,

> I think it's healthy to say no, to have that understanding up front that this person is not going to be a candidate for the presidency. I think it colors your approach. Even if you don't think you are going to be, and you change your mind, I think it changes how you relate to the campus decisions. You start campaigning for the job. (P2: 368)

The participants agreed, the best practice is to not allow the interim president to be a candidate for the permanent presidency. Three participants noted the fact that the Registry has a clause in their contracts prohibiting any of their interim president agents from being considered a candidate for the permanent presidency (P3-2: 3; P4-2: 8).

Summarizing the candidacy characteristic as not a good idea to allow the interim president to be a candidate for the permanent presidency, one participant stated,

I think the fact that one comes from outside the institution, brings a depth of experience and particular expertise to the interim situation, and is not beholden in any way to the college or university's constituencies gives the interim some prestige and stature—not only on campus but also off—that a candidate cannot have. We trust people who have nothing to gain by flattering us or embellishing the truth. (P4-2: 9)

Internal/external appointees discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the literature review taxonomy described in Chapter Two that pending the circumstances necessitating the need for the presidential transition, one of the best options for key decision makers to consider is to hire a qualified, externally appointed, interim president to strategically lead the university through the interim period (Dangelo, 2002; Fretwell, 2004; Lively, 1999; C. Martin, 2005; McKinney, 1992; Registry, 1992; Wiesendanger, 2000) (Dangelo, 2002; Fretwell, 2004; Lively, 1999; C. Martin 2005; McKinney, 1992; Registry, 1992; Wiesendanger, 2000; P1-1: 172; P2: 138; P3: 368; P4: 62; P5: 78). However, that is not to say that an internally appointed interim president is not appropriate. All five participants also acknowledged that the decision to appoint an interim president from within an institution is fine and can lead to successful interim presidencies (P1-1: 6; P2: 150; P3: 369; P4: 257; P5: 117). The decision to appoint an internal interim president verses an external interim president was categorized by some participants into three general variables: (a) the size of the institution and therein the number of likely interim candidates (P1-2: 200; P2: 150 P4: 251); (b) if the prospective interim candidate is a likely candidate for the permanent presidency (P3-2: 3; P4-2: 8); and (c) the institution's organizational status of health, which is typically related to the reason why the former president has departed (P1-1: 172; P2: 152; P4-2: 9; P5: 192).

Three participants suggested the size of an institution can be a significant variable that can factor into the decision to appoint an interim president internally or externally. The larger the institution, the more employees and thereby the larger pool of qualified prospective interim president appointees to draw from; the smaller the institution, the opposite is true, the smaller the pool of qualified prospective interim president appointees (P1-2: 200; P2: 150; P4: 251). One of these participants made the following observation regarding the frequency of Registry interim presidential placements at smaller institutions:

> It's significant that our organization is placing people in very small—typically in very small colleges—and that we don't get calls from large universities. And why are we going into small colleges? When you look at … my first interim, there was no one else there who could have done that, who had much experience in higher education. So that is one reason you go into small colleges, is that there is simply nobody who knows—who has had an overview of administration, and nobody who wants to undertake that. Also, the college may be so small that if there has been a divisive situation, there is nobody who is not stained by that situation. And in a larger organization, frequently there is someone, first of all, who is highly competent to do this, who is willing to do it, and who may not have been party to whatever controversies there may have been. (P4: 257-259)

Another participant also noted that,

> In any organization—the larger, the more important this is—there ought to be people to fill the slot just above what they are doing. If not the provost, then the dean, or the finance director, or somebody ought to be able to step into the position of interim president. (P1-2: 200)

This same participant also made the observation, "Ideally you ought to have a person who is being brought along into anything [a position] and sometimes it works and sometimes is doesn't" (P1-1: 6).

If there is a qualified person within the organization to be the interim president then key decision makers, as one participant stated, need to "decide if this person is going to be an interim for a while, or are [they] going to, at the next board meeting, make him or her president" (P1-2: 205). If the intent is to try the internal candidate out—to see if it is an organizational fit between the internal appointee and the institutional needs—then three of the five participants were supportive of such a maneuver if the organization is healthy (e.g., the interim position was nothing more than a caretaker interim presidency; P1-1: 6; P2: 150, 157; P3: 369). Otherwise, four of the five participants recommend that an experienced external appointee is best (P1-1: 172; P2: 152; P4-2: 9; P5: 192). If, however, the institution has problems—in need of revitalization and change—or is ill, then all five participants concur that an experienced external appointee is the better option (P1-1: 172; P2: 138; P3: 448; P4-2: 9; P5: 192). One participant stated, "When you bring an interim president in from the outside it indicates that something has been wrong with your operating policies" (P1-1: 6). Another participant added,

> Certainly in an institution where there's been great turmoil and change and conflict, an outsider, in my opinion, is always better. [Also], in situations where there's been change and turbulence and unexpected resignations and revolts and votes of no confidence, I would go with an outsider every time, personally. (P5: 192-193)

The advantages to appointing an experienced external interim president are many; however, as the majority of the participants noted, it should not be limited to institutions

organizationally ill (P2: 156; P3: 368; P4-2: 9; P5: 187). Even the healthy institution can benefit from the expertise of an experienced interim president because, as one participant stated, "change is good … it's good to get an outside perspective" (P2: 156). Another participant observed, "I think they [key decision makers and employees] learn more about themselves and about their institution with somebody coming in with a fresh look from the outside, who does not have an axe to grind, who does not have connections in the community" (P3: 368). The credibility of an externally appointed interim president is that he or she does not "already have established loyalties and [is not] already affected by the internal politics" (P5: 187). As another participant stated, "We trust people who have nothing to gain by flattering us or embellishing the truth" (P4-2: 9), who operate with the best interest of the institution at heart (P4: 255). However, some institutions "do not want an outside perspective" (P3: 370) and choose to appoint an internal interim president.

While all five participants agree that an internally appointed interim president can work, all believed that the experienced, externally appointed interim president is best regardless of the health of the institution (P1-1: 6, 172; P2: 138, 150; P3: 368-369; P4: 62, 257; P5: 78, 117). One participant, who has been an internal and external interim president appointee, believes the best interim presidents are externally appointed. He stated,

> The best interim is from the outside, because you want someone who can come in who is not affected—I think my best interims were at [institution] and [institution] because I was from the outside. I didn't know anything about the internal politics. I didn't know anything about the internal loyalties. My mission was to look at the institution and make the best decisions for the future of the institution, the fulfillment of its mission. So my opinion is from the outside, because if you're from the inside,

you already have established loyalties, and you are already affected by the internal

politics. (P5: 187)

Tool in the toolbox discussion. In general, all five participants concurred with the

literature review taxonomy described in Chapter Two, that the practice of employing an

experienced interim president is under used (Everley, 1996, p. 20; Farquhar, 1995; Langevin

& Koenig, 2004). All five participants in this research believe the practice of employing an

interim president—a *tool in their toolbox* of options—is not only under used, but "makes a

huge difference" (P5: 150) when engaged in preparing an institution to support a new

permanent president (P1-1: 172; P2: 163; P3: 443; P4: 224). One participant described the

interim president as "an assignment that should be used more often" (P3: 443). This same

participant also made the following observation about the length of tenure for experienced

interim presidents:

> The norm is a year. Two years is becoming more common…. I think my own
>
> impression is that most of the interim people I know in the Registry have done an
>
> unusually good job in their assignments, and the trustees [key decision makers] have
>
> decided they'd like to continue that and really establish a foundation before they
>
> appoint a permanent chief executive officer. I know that's happened to several
>
> people. I think that's the reason. They're finding greater value in the interim
>
> experience. (P3: 364-368).

Another participant made this observation about the practice of employing an interim

president:

> One of the interim's great strengths is that she or he can be candid and objective, raise
>
> difficult and unpopular questions, and take some actions—frequently corrective

actions—that do not please everyone—simply because the interim is independent,

temporary, and need not make the personal and political compromises that most of us

would make if we were candidates for the permanent position. (P4-2: 8)

One participant observed that most interim presidents have appropriate motivations, to help

institutions according to their needs and not to pursue their own agendas (P4: 255). As

described in the literature taxonomy, interim presidents are an option—a tool in the

toolbox—for key decision makers to employ when confronted with a presidential transition;

especially when the health of the institution is suffering or stagnate, but even when it is good.

As one participant said, "I don't think individual successes are so tremendous; but if you take

an organization and you get that going in the right direction, then you've got something" (P1-

1: 166).

Summary of Findings

The findings previously discussed in this chapter address the first and second research

question in sharing the perspectives and insights of individuals, who are experienced former

permanent university presidents and who have been interim university presidents multiple

times, and how they compliment or differ from common beliefs contained in current

literature. The participants seemed to agree with the mainstream of the literature and with the

characteristics of the literature taxonomy discussed in Chapter Two. While not contradicting

any of the constructs and characteristics of the literature taxonomy, participants did share

perspectives that differ from current literature, but in the context of offering further insights

into some of the characteristics contained in the three identified constructs. The remaining

discussion of findings, shared hereafter, will discuss these additional participant insights and

hopefully answer the question "so what," revealing the contribution this study makes to the current literature dialogue regarding interim university presidencies.

The findings discussed hereafter are a result of a domain analysis of topics, issues, and ideas discovered in the process of conducting this research and analyzing the data. (See Appendix B.) These additional findings expand the understanding related to the characteristics regarding the role, organizational value, and practice of employing an interim university president. The main variable in this domain analysis is experience, which is the distinguishing data point that this research brings to the current dialogue regarding interim university presidencies.

Current literature does not define experience; rather, the meaning of experience is left to key decision makers to determine when selecting an individual whom they esteem having the skill level or ability to be interim president and to lead their institution through a presidential transition. Typically, these individuals are internally appointed and have no background in being a university president, but have exhibited the administrative ability to lead an institution through a presidential transition from the perspective of the key decision makers. The data of this research clarifies the meaning and value of experience and suggests it refer to hiring an externally appointed individual as interim president who has been a permanent president at least once and who may also have been an interim president. The distinguishing factor between these perspectives is appointing an interim president who has had presidential seat time prior to his or her appointment as interim president.

Therefore, the findings of this research build upon constructs one, two, and three and expand upon the role and organizational value of an interim president by creating another construct: the advantages of employing an experienced interim university president during

the transition between permanent university presidents. Based on the date, this construct

includes five characteristics: (a) trust, (b) resistance to change, (c) talent development, (d)

networks, and (e) openness. (See Table 7.) In the discussion of these five characteristics, the

threshold of significance will be to have three or more of the participants support the

meaning and organizational value of each characteristic.

Table 7

Organizational Value of Employing an Experienced Interim University President

Characteristic	Definition
Trust	Based upon the past permanent and/or interim presidential experience and credentials, the ability of an experienced interim president to quickly gain the confidence of an institution's constituencies; seen as a credible source of information and know-how
Resistant to change	Ability to absorb hostility, grief, disappointment, and hasty judgments of those reluctant to support new leadership and organizational restructures
Talent development	Providing candid feedback to individuals and the opportunity for them to improve their job/stewardship performance; an alternative to termination
Networks	The access of people, resources, and information through personal and professional contacts in behalf of an institution's welfare
Openness	Ability to identify institutional problems and publicly involve the campus community in finding appropriate solutions; help establish a culture of accountability to increase in internal and external institutional trust

Trust. All five participants support the meaning and organizational value of the *trust*

characteristic (P1-1: 6; P2: 260; P3: 263; P4-2: 9; P5: 78). An experienced interim president

has the credibility to quickly establish a trusting relationship with key decision makers and

employees of the institution because of his or her professional experience. One participant stated, "You have credibility coming in because of who you've been, where you've been, what you've been doing. So you have a level of their trust automatically, and an expectation that you're going to do something" (P2: 133). Another participant shared his insight as to why an experienced interim president can establish trust, stating, "We trust people who have nothing to gain by flattering us or embellishing the truth" (P4-2: 9).

Four of the five participants noted that having been a permanent president and an interim president gave them credibility in their service as an interim president and leader to manage the affairs of the institution (P2: 133; P3: 444; P4: 55). Furthermore, if the experience of an interim president included serving as an interim president before, even more weight or trust was placed upon his or her ability to assess, plan, and recommend corrective action to help an institution be prepared to conduct a presidential search and support the leadership of the next permanent president (P1-2: 164; P2: 133; P3: 444; P4: 55).

Resistance to change. All five participants support the meaning and organizational value of the *resistance to change* characteristic (P1-2: 307; P2: 259; P3: 203; P4-2: 6; P5: 146). An experienced interim president can serve as next immediate president of an institution that has just lost its popular or long-tenured president. The value of this position is that the experienced interim president is able to take any baggage (e.g., negative expressions exhibited by those loyal to the former president and who do not want to see change occur) with him or her once the next permanent president takes office (P2: 259; P3: 203; P4-2: 6; P5: 146). The baggage can also be the unrealistic comparisons to the former popular president's leadership style that his or her immediate successor will be pitted against—a no-win situation. Or, if the former president has enjoyed a long tenure at the institution, the

experienced interim can bring a new perspective and known best practices to help rejuvenate the institution organizationally (P2: 259; P3: 261-263; P4-2: 5).

Following a popular or long-tenure president typically occurs at healthy organizations, thus reinforcing the point that healthy organizations can benefit from an experienced interim president at the helm. Furthermore, potentially qualified candidates are less likely to apply for the next permanent presidency when following a popular and long-tenured president unless there is some presidential buffer to help the institution transition to and be ready for a new leadership style (P1-2: 307; P2: 259; P3: 203; P4-2: 6; P5: 146). The experienced interim president is well positioned to provide the necessary buffer between a former and new permanent president's leadership style (P1-2: 134; P2: 131; P3: 261: P4: 67; P5: 197). The externally appointed experienced interim president should know how to absorb any negative resistance or unwillingness to accept the organizational change a presidential transition causes.

Talent development. All five participants support the meaning and organizational value of the *talent development* characteristic (P1-2: 365; P2: 225; P3: 458; P4: 119; P5: 154). An experienced interim president's ex officio ability to be direct with key decision makers and employees—especially top level management of the institution—allows him or her to coach, mentor, or train people candidly without the worry of negative long-term working relationships or repercussions. Such action, though potentially painful to the employees' and key decision makers' ego, can yield long term benefits to the organization because the person is being supported in improving his or her job performance (P1-2: 365; P3: 218; P4-2: 8).

The talent development strategy is an interventional option to termination, thus placing a high organizational value on the institution's greatest resource: its people (P1-2: 140; P2: 258; P3: 123; P4: 119; P5: 46). Termination may still be an option to pursue if the person does not respond to counsel; however, if other terminations have occurred and continuity in some regard is desirable, then talent development is a viable option to pursue. Nonetheless, an inexperienced interim president may find such actions difficult to take and thereby will not resolve organizational problems that could hinder the quality of permanent president candidates and the organizational fit between the next permanent president and the institution (P1-1: 229; P2: 150; P3: 369; P4-2: 8; P5: 117).

Networks. All five participants support the meaning and organizational value of the *networks* characteristic (P1-2: 298; P1-2: 260; P2: 208; P3: 210; P4: 231; P5: 50). An experienced interim president, by the very nature of his or her professional experience, has available to him or her a broad array of personal and professional contacts—networks of people, resources, and information—that can be accessed and leveraged for the betterment of the institution (P1-2: 298; P2: 208; P3: 210; P4: 102).

Knowing people (e.g. consultants or people of expertise) from a variety of contexts can prove to be a valuable resource to an interim president, and thereby the institution for whom he or she serves, in resolving organizational problems and adding further credibility to the interim president's course of action (P1-1: 32; P2: 143; P4: 102). In times of crisis, an experienced interim president should have the ability to appropriately manage the situation, as well as the ability to quickly access people who can help resolve or provide needed resources to manage and resolve the problem (P1-1: 182; P2: 226; P5: 57).

Openness. All five participants support the meaning and organizational value of the *openness* characteristic (P1-1: 225; P2: 234; P3: 263; P4-2: 5; P5: 198). An experienced interim president is positioned to help an organizationally ill institution by identifying the problems and publicly involving the campus community in finding appropriate solutions. For example, conducting regular institutional forums regarding the current condition of the institution's financial affairs, administrative functions, and strategies can help correct any problems in the wake of a tumultuous departure of a former president (P2: 234). Such forums may be held more frequently at first to help the organization heal and reestablish lost institutional trust, internally and externally, but then taper off as attendance fades and constituency support of the institution's direction increases.

The underlining organizational value to the openness characteristic is accountability. Instilling measures of financial and administrative accountability can strengthen an institution's ability to better fulfill its mission and educational niche long-term (P1-1: 225; P2: 184; P3: 234; P4: 163). Furthermore, it will help attract qualified candidates to be the next permanent president because full disclosure to the institution's actually organizational status can be gained. Hopefully, after an experienced interim president has appropriately prepared the institution for the next permanent president, it would be healthy, and thus attract the best possible candidates to apply.

Unanticipated Findings

While conducting this research, the researcher became familiar with most topics, themes, and ideas related to the employment of an interim president; thus, the findings discussed previously in this chapter were anticipated. What was not anticipated, however,

were two findings: (a) the role of an interim president's spouse; and (b) the role of being a coach to a sitting president.

Four of the five participants discussed the personal need to have a supportive spouse when being an interim president (P1-1: 97; P2: 332; P3: 480; P5: 203). Two of the four specifically noted the strategic value their spouse personally as well as organizationally during their interim presidencies (P1-2: 556; P2: 335). One participant described his wife's influence as a source of information: "She's a good mole. I mean, in a positive sense, telling me what the feeling is, what's going on out there" (P2: 335). The other participant described his wife as "great first-lady" (P1-4: 12) who helped host social events to build relationships with the campus and community (P1-2: 556). One participant noted that his wife had been well received by all the campuses he had served at: "Every presidency that I have left, interim or real, somebody always gets up at the end and says, 'We're really sorry to see you go … but we're going to keep your wife'—always" (P2: 334).

Perhaps the greatest role a spouse plays, which the two participants shared, was that of a confidant—the one whom they could confide in with their thoughts and strategies without fear of misrepresentation or misunderstanding (P1-1: 97; P2: 332). Both of these participants specifically mentioned how helpful and therapeutic it was for them to come home and feel their spouse's support because of how challenging their interim presidencies were at times (P1-1: 97; P2: 332). One of these two participants made the observation that an interim president "needs a supportive spouse, because you don't have anybody else—you don't know anybody" (P2: 332). The other participant framed the position of interim president as a lonely job where "one does not make close friends because you could be accused of playing favorites and having a little clique" (P1-1: 97).

The loneliness of an interim presidency, however, is not limited to the interim president alone; it also has impact on his or her spouse. While four of the five participants reported they had the support of their spouse and that their interim presidencies did not adversely affect their family relations, it was not uncommon during some of their interim presidencies for their spouse to commute, when needed, from their permanent residence so they could maintain their own social and professional interests and responsibilities (P1-1: 97; P2: 334; P3: 480; P5: 203). When necessary, the spouse would visit the participant at their interim campus, or the participant would return home for a few days to enjoy, as one participant called it, "Getting down to real life … to keep my sanity" (P1-1: 97).

The final unexpected finding of this research was that three participants had been hired to coach sitting presidents in their duties as an interim leader (P2: 49; P4: 48; P5: 76). Two of these three were hired by the institution's board of trustees to help the sitting president resolve organizational, enrollment, and fiscal difficulties (P2: 49; P4: 48). The other was hired by the sitting president to help in the institution's matriculation into university status (P5: 76). While all three advised the sitting president with strategy and options, only the later president (the one who hired the interim leader herself) produced the desired outcome (P5: 76). The other two interim coaching experiences, which were orchestrated by the institutional board, did not yield positive results. In one situation the sitting president left the institution under strained circumstances. In the other situation, the participant left before the end of the contract because the sitting president refused to follow his advice, which then translated into a waste of institutional resources (P2: 49; P4: 48).

Neither of these two unexpected findings is discussed in current literature; thus, they were not expected findings. However, it is the opinion of the researcher that they merit

further review given that a majority of the participants alluded to the need for a supportive

spouse and that three of the five participants were hired, as an interim leader, to coach a

sitting president. In the next chapter, future research questions are posed which relate to these

two unanticipated findings.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Presidential transitions are a natural part of an institution's lifecycle. They can occur under positive or negative circumstances and at healthy or ill organizations. Those who have stewardship over the transition (key decision makers) have options, or tools, to choose from in managing such processes. The practice of employing an interim president is an option chosen by many to bridge the organizational gap between permanent presidents. The interim president can play different roles depending upon the desires of key decision makers and the institution's organizational needs. Nonetheless, the end objective of an interim presidency is to provide value to the organization through the transitioning process; thereby, preparing the institution and its constituencies to support a new permanent president, who will hopefully provide the institution with its desired leadership long-term.

The more common approach when appointing an interim president is to appoint a person internal to the organization. Typically, these internally appointed interim presidents have never led an institution from the vantage point of a presidency. While such a practice may not hinder an institution in fulfilling its mission and educational niche during a transition between permanent presidents, it may not help it either. Furthermore, with an inexperienced internally appointed interim president, the tendency is for key decision makers and the appointed interim president to not look at the presidential transition as a strategic opportunity to advance the institution organizationally through short-term actions that can produce long-term benefits. Thus, the interim presidency becomes a missed opportunity that yields little

organizational value. An alternative approach is to hire an interim president who has experience in leading an institution in a strategic and deliberate manner.

An experienced interim president is a former permanent president (possibly a former interim president as well) who is externally appointed and charged to resolve any major problems in order to prepare the institution organizationally for the next permanent president. Because of his or her previous presidential experience, the experienced interim president can quickly garner the trust to strategically lead the institution, assess the organization for improvements, breakdown any resistance to the change, and develop the talents of key decision makers and employees to better fulfill their institutional responsibilities.

The inexperienced, internally appointed interim president may be less likely to strategically act to improve the institution because of preexisting internal politics and possible long-term repercussions once he or she returns to his or her previous duties. Whereas the experienced interim president can take the necessary actions to improve the institution organizationally and carry any negative baggage with him or her as he or she leaves office. The organizational value of employing an experienced interim president is realized when the next permanent president takes office and inherits a stable organization, prepared to support his or her leadership. The experienced interim president understands the different roles an interim president may play and can switch roles, like an actor in a monologue, according to the organizational needs of an institution.

Observations and Recommendations

The following are the observations and recommendations of the researcher based upon the findings in Chapter Five and are not assumed to be applicable to every institution experiencing a presidential transition. However, given the high level of agreement between

the literature taxonomy and the participant data, also as noted in Chapter Five, the researcher has confidence in offering his observations and recommendations for key decision makers to consider when faced with a presidential transition to determine their best course of action. Furthermore, the researcher believes that first-time interim presidents could benefit from this research to help orient them in their approach and leadership style to make the most of their interim opportunities; thereby, advancing their institutions within their missions and educational niches. Hopefully, this research may spark an interest in current and former permanent presidents to consider a second career being interim university presidents and helping institutions to strategically take advantage of their presidential transitions.

First, when faced with a presidential transition, look at it as a strategic opportunity to advance the institution organizationally within its mission and educational niche. Such a perspective and approach is applicable to an ill and a healthy organization and will require the necessary time to assess what needs should be addressed. Key decision makers and top level management (e.g., a president's cabinet) should determine the strategic initiatives to be addressed during the interim period. They should then hire an interim president who has the appropriate skills and background to lead the institution through the necessary steps to accomplish the strategic initiatives. An experienced interim president (one who is a former permanent president, and possibly a former interim president as well, and who is externally appointed) can provide the necessary leadership during this time of reflection and improvement to advance the institution within its mission and educational niche.

Second, key decision makers and top level management of the institution should not assume an experienced interim president is incapable of understanding their institution within the short interim period between permanent presidents because he or she is "not one of us."

This research reveals that the experienced interim president is a credible leader that is able to quickly garner the trust of the organization, understand the institution's strategic needs, and provide the appropriate leadership to bring the strategic initiatives to fruition, thus preparing the institution to support the leadership of the next permanent president.

Third, a presidential transition requires an organization to adjust to the idea and reality that change is necessary and is happening. Skipping the interim period by immediately appointing a successor forces the next permanent president to absorb any resistance to change and may slow his or her ability to move the institution forward because what energy should be focused on advancement is deluded by the need to deal with and prepare the organization for change. Furthermore, skipping or rushing the interim period does not allow the necessary time for the organization to breathe. The time to breathe serves as a psychological buffer and gives time assess what strategic initiatives would be best dealt with during an interim period as well as to prepare the institution to support a new permanent president's leadership style. Key decision makers should appropriately leverage the interim period between permanent presidents for the institution to organizationally adjust to the idea and need for new leadership so the next permanent president is not confronted needlessly with resistance to change.

Fourth, appointing an interim president from within the institution may be the preferred method of management by key decision makers to bridge the leadership gap between permanent presidents, which is an acceptable option. However, if such an option is selected, it is recommended that the interim president not be a candidate for the permanent presidency because it places him or her in a situation where his or her actions are seen as selfish tactics to improve his or her chances of being appointed permanent president and not

as those taken for the betterment of the institution. Furthermore, the internally appointed

interim president that is a candidate for the permanent presidency signals possible interested

and qualified candidates to not apply because the key decision makers already know who

they want as the next permanent president. The exception to the recommendation of not

allowing the interim president to be a candidate for the presidency is if the key decision

makers are using the interim appointment as a testing period to ensure organizational fit.

Fifth, an interim leader hired by key decision makers to coach a sitting president in an

attempt to help save the sitting president's presidency is not a healthy situation. The two

participants in this research who were hired under these circumstances reported the endeavor

was ineffective. Such attempts to help a sitting president, though perhaps thoughtful in intent,

are seemingly offensive to the sitting president who is resentful of the action and unwilling to

be coached. It appears to the researcher that a better way of dealing with a less effective

sitting president is to give him or her, for example, six months to relocate and find an

institution where his or her skills are a better organizational fit. Then, to engage the strategy

of appointing an experienced interim president to resolve any problems that may have

developed under the former president leadership. The exception to this recommendation

would be if the sitting president was the hiring agent of the interim leader and thereby willing

to be coached through whatever initiative was needed to advance the institution.

Finally, the interim president and his or her spouse should be slow in giving their trust

and in making friends because they cannot afford to be perceived as playing favorites and

expect the organization to support the interim president's leadership. However, the slowness

to trust and befriend does not preclude them from gaining trust and being friendly to others.

The reality is that being an interim president can be a lonely experience for the interim

president and his or her spouse; yet, it can also be a very fulfilling experience to help an institution advance within its mission and educational niche and prepare it for the next permanent president.

Future Research

In the course of conducting this research, other ideas for future research emerged. The following are three ideas for future research that the researcher, or any other interested person, may choose to study to advance the understanding regarding the employment of an interim president during a presidential transition.

First, the majority of the participants and their interim experiences discussed in this study served at reasonably small institutions. Therefore, an interesting research question may be: What are the variables that determine the likelihood of key decision makers hiring an interim president external from the institution compared to the size of institution for which the key decision makers have stewardship?

Second, as discussed in the *Unanticipated Findings* in Chapter Five, the majority of the participants in this study discussed how important a role their spouse played in supporting them in their interim duties. Therefore, an interesting research question may be: What is the role and organizational value of an interim president's spouse in supporting the interim president in his or her duties and how does the spouse impact the outcome of the interim presidency?

Finally, as discussed in the *Summary of Findings* of Chapter Five, all the participants in this study discussed how they accessed their personal and professional networks to aid them in their duties as an interim president. Therefore, an interesting research question may

be: Under what circumstances should an interim president engage his or her personal and

professional network to advance the institution during the interim period?

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. To begin, please share with me your professional background.

2. Tell me all about your first experience being an interim president.

3. Tell me about each of your other interim presidential experiences and how they came to happen.

4. How would you approach an interim presidency now and how has that changed from your first experience?

5. Tell me about the biggest mistakes you made because of your status as interim?

6. Tell me about the most satisfying experience in your interims?

7. Please share anything else you think should be understood about interim university presidencies.

8. Are there other individuals you would recommend that I interview who could offer further insights into the interim presidential experience? If so, who are they and may I have their contact information? May I use your name?

Appendix B

Audit Trail Sample

04-15-06

I did finish coding P1's interview transcripts! It was late, but I did it! I've noticed that by accomplishing set goals for the day—target of how much work I can get done in one day—the more energized I get for the next if I meet the pervious day's goal. Thus, today I have the momentum of finishing the coding of P1's two transcripts, which were my longest by far. So, today's goal: to finish two more interview transcriptions before I go to bed.

I received a reply e-mail from P2 clarifying his first presidency that he was an interim for the first five months before being made the "full-time president." P2 wrote in his e-mail, "I was named acting president of [*institution*] in May of 1987 and named permanent president in October of 1987. It was not an interim assignment" (04-14-06 e-mail received at 3:36 PM). Though P2 does not count this experience as an interim presidency, in some of the literature, it is noted that an acting president is like an interim president, but tends to have less credibility because the title is perceived as being weak (Everley, 1994; Langevin & Koenig, 2004; Perry, 2003). I will honor P2's perspective that this experience was not an IP experience, but with notation.

I am feeling as though P2 and I are entering the *informal* stage of our relationship. The first few e-mails I sent to him, I addressed as "Dr. Name." The first couple of e-mails he would sign his reply with his first name's initial followed by his last name. After the interview he signs his e-mail by his first name, while I still addressed him formally. But that changed when in a more recent e-mail he capitalized all letters in his first name signing off. Since that time, I have addressed my correspondences in the informal using his first name.

He in turn has stopped capitalizing his name and signs it normally by his first name. It is refreshing because I feel a level of trust and openness now in our relationship.

Coding Observations: 04-15-06

Contrary to P1, P2 believes the IP should play an active role in the search process for the next PP. P2 believes, especially with a well seasoned IP who has been a PP and an IP before, that their professional network to check references and to be aware of those who apply for every presidential opening is a very valuable resource that benefits the institution and the search committee. P1 believes IPs should only be a resource in the selection process and to pass on information in a factual manner (e.g., this skill is needed) and not engage in the debate of persons. P1 feels the IP does not have to live with the choice and the KDMs and campus does, and you do not want them blaming you, the IP, for a choice that should be their's alone to make. P2's position is, however, to be more involved and a part of the debate of who to hire to make sure the KDMs are seeing the applicants as which is the best fit to the organizational needs of the institution and not just the best interviewer.

P2 also disagrees with P1 that the Registry's practice of not having the institution pay for the IP's retirement benefits is fine because most of the Registry agents are retired presidents who are already taken care of retirement-wise. However, P2 said that for his first IP he negotiated to be put on the institution's health plan because his retirement health coverage had not kicked in yet. He also noted that retirement and health coverage is the sort of thing that bothers CFOs because the IP is not technically an employee of the institution; they are agents of the Registry. But for P2, his first two IP experiences weren't through the Registry and so he was hired by the institutions.

P2 makes the observation that he does not think most PPs are completely honest with their institutions because they always give a *rah-rah, we are great* speech and do not give an accurate picture of the financial well-being of the institution. P2 believes this is one reason why the external/seasoned IP is so valuable and wanted by the organizational ranks—not necessarily by the top management and KDMs—because they are open with everything— expectations, financial stability, enrollments, organizational structure, etc. P2 employs the method of hosting routine open forums for faculty, staff, and students to question him and the central administration on progress and status with the institution's current situation. He says that at first you get some venting, but then it settles down to the core issues and very helpful suggestions are made—the good suggestions he acts on and was not aware of—and then eventually the attendance tapers off and the need to hold the forums is spent. This method has helped him communicate openness and trust to the organization and has been well received by the ranks everywhere he has gone. Openness and honesty is key and the ranks deserve to be informed. Every place he has served as PP or IP has asked him multiple times not to leave, to reconsider, and stay. The literature reports hesitancy to engage in such openness because it airs their doings or puts them out for public debate and basing.

P2 shares P1's apprehension or advice to not make friends too quickly and to be very cautious doing so because who you call friend may not be a true friend at all. It reminds me of the saying *you are known by your friends and you enemies*, which means it is good to be known as an enemy to some who are usually the untrustworthy sorts. P2 simply states that there are very few, if any, an IP can trust; thus, the importance of the spouse—a trusted friend—who can listen to you without using the information inappropriately and can

maintain confidence. P1 also shares the importance of a spouses' role and believes it is a most valuable asset to the IP.

P3 is a more soft-spoken individual than the other participants; although P4 is a close second. Nonetheless, I don't get the impression he is soft on fulfilling his interim assignments. On the contrary, I get the impression that he is most effective, yet he acknowledges that his style is different than his colleagues. P3 observed that he has been considered for other IP positions and not been chosen when a colleague has and visa versa. I get the impression that P3 is assured of who he is and that gives him the confidence to move in a direct, yet humane and kind manner. The Registry always sends institutions three or more IP applicants to choose from after Tom Langevin makes his initial site visit and assessment of the organizational needs (e.g., an academic leader, financial expert, public relations guru, etc.).

P3 was one I was worried would not fit the criteria of my study, but since adjusting the criteria to having been a PP at least once and an IP multiples time (i.e. three or more) totaling a minimum of four presidencies, he fits. Plus, P3 has been an interim three more times; once as an interim dean of a school of business and twice as an interim provost/academic vice president. All total, P3 has had six interim experiences and has a wealth of knowledge to share because of it.

P3 brings to light a theme—perhaps the beginning of one the theories this research will develop—of talent development. P3 believes that terminating employees should be the absolute last strategy and before ventured, a concerted effort should be made to develop the talents of the employee within their job function, which puts the person—the organization's most valued asset—first. The value of doing this under the IP's tutelage is that the IP is

positioned to be direct with the employee where the PP may be less likely to be because of long-term personality difficulties. I really like this idea and I am anxious to see if this theme is picked up by anyone else as I finish the coding process and analyzing the data.

When asked about his experience as an IP and what it has taught him and how he approaches or acts differently now than he did from his first IP experience, P3 said he wouldn't move as fast at first, that he would listen more and then act. In the beginning, he thought he had to act quickly because that was the expectation and his time was limited. However, experience has taught him to be more patient in his IP role and to listen more and then to act with directness and purpose. I thought this was interesting because it is the opposite perspective of P2, who says he is now able to act more quickly with confidence; thus, getting more done in the restricted time of the interim. Both persons' perspective is relevant, but, nonetheless the observation is interesting.

04-16-06

I accomplished yesterday's goal, so another boost of energy and hope about what I can get accomplished today. Given it is Easter Sunday and all my other responsibilities, my goal today is to finish coding one more interview.

Coding Observations: 04-16-06.

P4 describes himself as a mild-mannered gentleman who does not need accolade or attention to be effective in his professional role. He is one of three IPs interviewed (P2 and P5 are the others) that had a partnering role with an existing PP. For P4, he maintained a low profile, allowing the other PP to fill the public role, which as P4 describes it, he was good at. But, eventually the PP left. Neither P4's nor P2's presidential coaching experiences were positive because both were created by the KDMs and not wanted by the PP. At the beginning

of this research, I would have never imagined that one possible role an IP could fill was to be a PP coach—someone brought in by the KDMs as an IP, thus creating a co-presidency, in the attempt to help the sitting PP improve his or her management skills. Both of these sitting PPs had great skill in the public arena, but neither had the administrative savvy to run a fiscally sound academic business. Thus, the KDMs thought that they might save the sitting PP's presidency by bringing in a seasoned, former PP to save the organization administratively and thereby save the sitting PPs job. The KDMs in both situations reportedly liked the PP and didn't want to see him leave, but eventually both sitting PPs did leave.

I see this act of creating an IP coaching situation as a weak KDM chair who can't make a business decision—cannot dismiss his or her friend who is the president. In the end, the relationships are severed anyway. It seems to me that had the KDM chair gone to the PP and said it's not working; go elsewhere and we will give you one year or six months to do so, that would be a better approach that could save both the institution and the friendship.

P4 makes an interesting observation that P2 shared: if you were a PP of a particular type of institution—e.g., a private fine arts college—it is commonly believed that the only type of institution you could be an IP of is the same kind of institution. Reason being, it is because that is where the person's expertise, background, and experience are based. Both P4 and P2 said the Registry acknowledges and promotes this assumption; yet, both now having crossed over to different institutional types think the assumption is "bunk" and ill founded. Both make the observation that the administrative role, duties, and function of a president are basically the same regardless of institutional type. P2 said that other than knowing the difference between public and private accounting terms and methods, there is no difference.

P4 and P2 agree the names and places may change, but the issues and the approach to resolving problems are not different from place to place.

P4 makes the observation that an IP can provide organizational value to an institution who's former PP was very popular and/or long tenured by being the one to follow the legend and prepare the way for a new president and his or her new/different leadership style and paradigm. P4 said there is not a way for the next PP following a popular president can succeed because of the immediate comparison to the legend, which grows every passing day—especially when a change in system, style, and function is implemented. There needs to be a break, but with leadership; thus, the value of the IP is in providing that breathing room, break, and leadership as the organization prepares for change and a new leader.

In the case of following a long tenured president, the organization is in a "rut" of operations—this is the way we have always done it and the way we will always do it mentality. The IP can be the change agent to prepare the organization for change and the new leadership paradigm. The IP is the catalyst to an organizational awakening and renewal; whereas the next PP may expend personal capital in trying to create that awakening. P3 also made this observation.

P4 is in agreement with P1 that the IP should only be a resource to the search committee for the next PP and not a member of the committee or chair of the committee. P2 disagrees, given he chaired two search committees. Yet, I don't see it has to be one way or another. The IP can, without being a member of the search committee, be a resource to the search committee and offer all the benefits that P2, P1, and P4 note that are essential roles of the IP. Specifically, the IP, who is external and well seasoned (e.g., not an internal appointee) is a source of: (a) professional networks to access when checking candidate references,

background, and track record—they know who's who in the industry; (b) to keep the committee on task by establishing a timeline with deadlines for the committee to follow; and (c) coach the committee on how to do a search—protocol, best practices, and expectations. Additionally, all three are in agreement that the IP should not have voting rights on the search committee and should give the information in a factual manner. All agree that the final decision should be the search committee's because they will have to live with the candidate selected to be the next permanent president. Interesting note however, P2—remembering he is the proponent of the IP being more actively involved in the search process and chaired two searches—states that because he knows the system, he can manipulate the process and who is hired even without voting rights by how he manages the information. P2 firmly believes he can get the results he thinks are best, given his experience and knowledge. The disadvantage to this approach, however, is if—because there are no guarantees—the person he recommends does not work out, he takes the blame. The IP who is too aggressive in the search process will be blamed for anything that goes wrong—he or she is the easy target because they are not there to defend themselves; he or she has left town.

P4 and P3 are the participants that noted the relationship between the size of an institution's employee base and its ability to have a pool of capable persons who could serve as IP. The smaller the employee base, the less likely there is an employee with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively serve as IP; the larger the institution, the more likely. P3 believes there is enough data to research this out, especially with public institutions.

In my coding of P4, I noticed connections with what he said to what some of the other participants said, especially P2. Below are the connections that I noted.

- The folly of many PPs in the industry—some of whom these participants followed to clean up after—to self socialize oneself into the affluent world of institutional donors. PPs that fall prey to this fallacy get themselves entangled in the snare of living beyond their means to the point where they begin to pass onto the institution costs that are not appropriate institutional expenditures or use institutional resources inappropriately. These PPs forget who they are, as in the role they are there to play as president of an institution, and consciously or subconsciously believe it is justifiable to use or spend institutional resources to fill their selfish social desires.

- An IP coaching position to help save a floundering PP rarely works. Neither P2 or P4, who were called in as IPs to help save a PP's presidency, noted that such attempts are not good situations. My observation is that such an approach is the sign of a weak appointing authority that can't for whatever reason dismiss the PP. I think the IP coach option is a negative in the mind of the PP and not fair to their future. They should be given six months to find another job or just be terminated without stringing them and the organization along. Both P2 and P4 observed the organization needed a clear leader—both recount that person as being themselves, that the organization came to them with their issues, leaving the PP administratively alienated.

- Following a legend or popular PP, the IP is an effective tool in the toolbox of options to consider. P2 followed a popular PP, but who had also engaged into financial irregularities and was therefore terminated. However, the campus did not know of the irregularities and therefore would have seen the next PP as one following a legend; thus, the IP was able to help the organization make the transition to being ready to support the next PP.

- Future research could include a study of how to dismiss ineffective or destructive

    board members or chairs.

Appendix C

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction
This research study is being conducted by Cameron Martin at Brigham Young University to explore the role and organizational value of an interim college/university president through the perspective of individuals who have held an interim presidency at least four times. You have been selected for this research because you have served as an interim president at least four times.

Procedures
You will be interviewed by Cameron Martin, who will ask you questions regarding your repetitive experiences of being an institutional interim president. The interview will take approximately three to four hours and the questions will focus on discovering your practiced routine, refined management philosophy, and practical approach to being an interim president. The interview will be tape-recorded and then transcribed. You are one of five participants being interviewed who meet the criteria of this study.

Risks/Discomforts
Risk and discomfort is minimal; but they may include discomfort at recalling difficult professional situations. You will not be asked to share any information that you deem sensitive or too personal. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, notify the interviewer and the interview will immediately change the subject. At any time, you may end the interview.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits to the participants in this research. However, it is hoped that through participant participation the voice of those who have been an interim president multiple times can enter the literature dialogue on a broader scale describing the role and organizational value an interim president offers institutions transitioning from one permanent president to the next.

Confidentiality
Information provided will be anomalously cited and reported as group data with no information that would reveal participants' identity unless expressed permission is given to do so in advance. All data, including (tapes/transcriptions/documents) from the interviews, will be kept secure. Recordings of the interviews will be deleted from the recording devise and computer drives upon completion of this study. Only those directly involved with the research process will have access to the data and will operate under the same standard of confidentiality.

Compensation
Participants will not receive any compensation for assisting in the research other than contributing to a study that hopes to make a positive contribution to the industry of higher education administration.

Participation
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at anytime or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy of any kind.

Questions about the Research
If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact the principal investigator, Cameron Martin (801-319-2524), or his advisor Dr. Scott Ferrin (801-422-4804) at Brigham Young University in the department of Educational Leadership and Foundations.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants
If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, 801-422-3873, 422 SWKT, renea_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will and volition to participate in this study.

Signature:_____   Date:_____