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2009

The Role of Mentoring on the Career Paths of Female Presidents in CCCU Member Institutions

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Recommended Citation

Yordy, Kelly A., "The Role of Mentoring on the Career Paths of Female Presidents in CCCU Member Institutions" (2009). *Master of Arts in Higher Education (MAHE) Theses*. 6.
https://pillars.taylor.edu/mahe/6

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to discover the extent to which mentoring relationships have benefited the current female presidents in the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), and how those relationships have specifically impacted the mentee. Four of the five female presidents at CCCU member institutions served as the participants, and they were interviewed using a grounded theory qualitative methodology. Responses were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to discover the central themes. The main themes that developed include the importance of relationships for women's advancement in higher education, the significance of the role of the mentor in a mentoring relationship, cross-gendered mentoring, and informal vs. formal mentoring. Recommendations for future research are also included.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Introduction

Historically, women have encountered barriers when it comes to attaining and advancing in various professional positions. If a woman did not want to be a secretary, nurse, teacher, or work in one of the other "nurturing fields" (Twale, 1992; Scanlon, 1997), her vocational options were quite limited. Over the past few decades, however, the glass ceiling that prohibited so many women from advancing in their careers has begun to crack.

During the past two decades, the percentage of female college presidents has more than doubled − from 9.5% in 1986 to 23% in 2006 (American Council on Education, 2007). Although progress has occurred in academia on the macro level, certain subgroups within higher education have not progressed similarly. Currently, of the 109 Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) member institutions, a coalition of Evangelical, Christ-centered colleges and Universities, only five presidents or 4.6% are women (Council of Christian Colleges and Universities [CCCU], 2008). Thus, there exists a variance of greater than 18% between the number of female presidents at Christian and non-Christian institutions.

It is not only the presidential position, however, that exhibits a low number of women. Writing specifically about CCCU schools, Longman (2008) explains:

> While women now serve more frequently as chief student development officers or chief enrollment officers, many member campuses still have only one or no women serving in cabinet-level leadership. In contrast, the collective student body of [109] member colleges and universities is about 60 percent female. (p. 2)

While this study will focus specifically on the female presidents in the CCCU, it is important to establish the fact that currently there are few women in top administrative positions at most CCCU member institutions.

Purpose of the Study

Although there are many contributing factors hindering women from attaining and advancing in administrative positions in higher education, this study will focus specifically on the impact of mentoring relationships on the career paths of female presidents in CCCU member institutions. The purpose of this study is to discover the extent to which mentoring relationships have benefited four of the five current female presidents in CCCU schools, and how those relationships have specifically impacted the mentee. Numerous studies have shown the absence of women in senior-level administrative positions (Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991; Sagaria, 1988; Twale, 1992), yet it remains unclear as to what extent mentoring relationships have assisted women in attaining the top position at CCCU member institutions. As a result of institutional distinctives, such as size, culture, and religious affiliation, the influence mentoring has on women in higher education varies.

According to Havegik (1998):

It is estimated that over 90% of women executives have had mentors sometime in

their careers and that, of those, 80% considered their mentors to be important to

their career advancement. Over 96% of Fortune 500 executives credited

mentoring as an important influence in the development of their professional

lives. (p. 1)

Is it possible, then, that mentoring has had the same impact on female college presidents,

higher education's version of the chief executive officer? For the purpose of this study,

four of the five female presidents at CCCU schools have served as the participants. They

were interviewed using a grounded theory qualitative methodology. Responses were

coded and analyzed to more fully understand how mentoring has impacted the career

paths of these four female presidents, and on a broader scale, the extent to which

mentoring influences the attainment of positions and the advancement of women therein.

<p align="center">Research Questions</p>

Six separate but interrelated research questions were used to guide this

investigation. The following is the central research question, followed by five subsequent

questions:

- How have mentoring relationships impacted the career paths of the current female

  college presidents in the CCCU?

  o How do these women define and/or describe mentoring?

  o To what extent were mentoring relationships found to be beneficial?

  o Were formal or informal mentoring relationships more beneficial to the career

    paths of the female presidents?

- o Were male or female mentors more beneficial to the career paths of the female presidents?

- o Is mentoring necessary for women in Christian higher education administration to advance in their careers?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this literature review is to look at how women have progressed in higher education administration, the barriers that still exist, and specifically what role mentoring has played for women as they have advanced in higher education administration. Although the focus of this study is female presidents in Christian higher education, the available literature also includes other categories of educational institutions and women at all levels of higher education administration. The literature review establishes clear support for the need to research female presidents in the CCCU with regards to the impact of mentoring on their career paths.

Impact of Discrimination

The discussion of mentoring relationships for female presidents in CCCU member institutions, and ultimately women in higher education administration in general, must begin with background information detailing the discrimination women have faced over the last century. To begin, the glass ceiling is a term that refers to the invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing to higher-level positions. The term also suggests that although women can see the desired positions above them, there is a barrier that prevents them from attaining those positions. While most commonly used in the corporate world, the glass ceiling is a phenomena that can be observed in many types of organizations.

As women in professional careers developed and evolved throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the glass ceiling began to crack. In higher education, however, the glass ceiling persisted (Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991; Sagaria, 1988; Twale, 1992). Previously, research surrounding the lack of women in higher education administration focused on the numbers themselves. In her article, Sagaria (1988) clearly demonstrated that there has been a lack of mobility for women in high-level positions of higher education administration. While this information is a necessary piece of the puzzle, it is insufficient to explain the phenomenon. Numerous studies have identified the absence of women in senior-level administrative positions (Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991; Sagaria, 1988; Twale, 1992), yet there remains an inadequate amount of research exploring the factors that contribute to the problem of too few women at the highest administrative level.

Carol Gilligan began an era of new intellectual understandings of women when she published her 1982 work *In a Different Voice*. This book criticized Kohlberg's theory of moral development as it related to females. Although there is admittedly some disagreement about the validity of her theory of moral development, there is no question that she stimulated new ideas and thinking about gender differences, and contributed to discussions regarding currently held gender stereotypes in the workplace. Gilligan's theories on gender roles and the moral and psychological development of women "address the role of women's mentoring in relation to their interconnection with others in life and then mainly in relationship to temporary and permanent inequalities of male-dominated society" (Cullen & Luna, 1993, p. 125). Gilligan's theories have provided a framework through which future research can analyzed.

As researchers have worked through their studies and analyses, many have offered conclusions as to why women are underrepresented at the most senior levels of administration in higher education (Konrad & Pfeffer, 1991; Sagaria, 1988; Twale, 1992), and some of these studies include mentoring as a contributing factor. Cullen and Luna (1993), for example, conducted twenty-four interviews to discover the importance of mentoring women in higher education. They asked questions that enabled them to draw conclusions about the importance of mentoring, and they used characteristics and activities described in a mentor-system framework developed by Kram (1986). Kram's framework defines mentoring in terms of five activities for career functions: sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure, and challenging work. In addition, her framework includes five psychological functions: role modeling, counseling, acceptance, confirmation, and friendship. Cullen and Luna used this framework to outline their questions, and to analyze their data.

In their study, Cullen and Luna (1993) discuss the ideas of sponsorship and nomination. They explain that job candidates who are sponsored and nominated for a position by a member of the search committee or by an influential administrator are much more likely to be offered a position than those who are not. Usually, the one who sponsors is a mentor-type figure to the candidate. Because most mentoring relationships are same-gendered, and because most high-level administrative positions are held by men, women are thus put at a disadvantage (Cullen & Luna).

Although much research is still needed to more accurately identify the effects of sponsorship and nomination, Cullen and Luna's study did indicate the propensity of administrators to hire mentees, thereby perpetuating the cycle of males hiring other

males. Men who had themselves participated in the traditional "time-in-line" movement up the higher education ladder were more likely to support, and therefore nominate, another male. Time-in-line refers to the typical, bureaucratic system of upward mobility through higher education administrative positions. To further explain, time-in-line is the "movement through fixed positions and the securing of successive appointments with increasing levels of responsibility, authority, and salary" (Twale, 1992, p. 7). Although this pattern of advancement is typical for the male professional, it is also one of the factors that prevent many women from advancing in higher education, due in part to motherhood and other familial roles (Twale).

Time-in-line theory also ties in with the "level of uncertainty" that various researchers have discussed (Cullen & Luna, 1993; Sagaria, 1988; Twale, 1992). When hiring committees and supervisors question the ability of a candidate based on factors other than education and experience, there exists a level of uncertainty. To further explain:

> Because characteristics of good administrators are not easily measured, the unwritten standards shared by decision makers can be more influential than those set forth in the job description….These unwritten standards call for a person who can fit socially and be easily accepted by peers….Consequently, there is a tendency for those in administrative leadership positions to rely upon ascribed characteristics, such as gender, to determine who is the "right-type" of person. The effect may be that organizations such as universities, in which men hold the vast majority of key administrative leadership roles, tend to filter out women candidates unacquainted with hiring officials. (Sagaria, 1988, p. 310)

Whether their actions are intentional or not, some men who work in senior-level administrative positions feel uncomfortable hiring a woman. As Scanlon (1997) explains, "males do not intend such exclusion, but the organizational sponsors, most of whom are men, tend to select protégés who are like the sponsors, even in gender" (p. 39). This may be due in part to her lack of similar experiences, and dissimilarities in personality and other characteristics. Unfortunately, this mindset is an element of the obstacle that too many women face when seeking career advancement (Scanlon; Twale, 1992). It is likely that if there were more women in upper-level administration that could sponsor female candidates, it would give women greater opportunity to attain increasingly higher level positions (Sagaria, 1988). This would be a significant step forward in the advancement of gender equality within higher education administration. It is also important to recognize the impact that sponsorship and nomination, time-in-line, and level of uncertainty have on women in higher education administration.

<center>Mentoring</center>

History of Mentoring

Although women have endured a long history of gender-based disadvantages restricting vocational advancement and attainment, there have been notable exceptions. Alice Freeman Palmer and Marion Talbot provide one of the earliest examples of a successful mentoring relationship between two women in higher education that also led to professional advancement. In 1892, William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, desired to have the most talented faculty and staff that his benefactor, John D. Rockefeller, could afford. He quickly pursued Palmer, who was the former president of Wellesley College, and asked her to serve as professor of history and

dean of women for the university. Palmer agreed to move to Chicago on two conditions, one being that Harper appoint Talbot, her protégé who was also a professor at Wellesley, as her deputy. Harper agreed, and Palmer and Talbot accepted the positions in Chicago (Nidiffer & Bashaw, 2001).

From there, Talbot's influence on women in higher education exploded. She, along with Ellen Richards, invited fifteen alumnae from eight different colleges to a meeting in Boston, Massachusetts. According to the American Association of University Women's (AAUW) website, "They envisioned an organization in which women college graduates could band together to open doors of higher education to other women and to find wider opportunities to use their training" (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 2006). As co-founder of the AAUW, Talbot played an important role in assisting and inspiring women to succeed in higher education. Today, this influential organization distributes more than 4 million dollars each year in fellowships, grants, and scholarships to female graduate students (AAUW, 2006). While contemplating the vast impact Marion Talbot has had on women in higher education, one might wonder if it would have been possible without the influence and mentorship of Alice Freeman Palmer. Palmer and Talbot provide a wonderful example of female sponsorship and nomination, and exhibit the positive impact a successful mentoring relationship can have on a mentee.

Definition of Mentoring

Although Palmer and Talbot provide a great example of a mentoring relationship, the word "mentoring" can have various meanings to many different people. It is necessary to provide a definition of mentoring that, for the purpose of this study, will

keep the reader on the same page as the researcher. Bowyer-Johnson (2001) defines

mentoring as "A relationship that is established between two people to allow a process of

learning and guidance to occur" (p. 22). She continues to explain, "In the professional

lives of many individuals, a mentor is the guide through the spoken and unspoken culture

of the work environment" (Bowyer-Johnson, 2001, p. 22). While many diverse and

complex definitions of mentoring are available, this simple and concise definition will

serve as the basis for this review of the mentoring literature.

Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring relationships provide many benefits for the mentee as well as for the

mentor, and, ultimately, for the institution. In his "Mutual Benefits Model," Zey (1984)

illustrates the three-way interrelationship that exists between these parties. The mentor

provides knowledge, personal support, protection, and promotion for the mentee, while

the mentee provides help in doing his/her job, information, loyalty, and prestige for the

mentor. The mentor/mentee relationship provides the institution with managerial

succession, managerial development, reduced turnover, and increased productivity, while

the institution provides the mentor and mentee with advancement, increased power, and

perks (Zey, 1984).

Because this study is focused on the benefits of mentoring as it relates to the

career advancement of the mentee, it is important to expand upon those benefits

mentioned above:

> The [mentee] benefits concretely by receiving advice regarding career goals, by
>
> learning new skills, by expanding his/her knowledge base, by having access to
>
> resources and opportunities, by enjoying increased exposure and visibility, by

gaining a greater understanding of the organization, and by learning to "read" the politics of the institution. Having a mentor can open doors, cut through much red tape, and facilitate promotion, professional involvement, compensations, and career mobility. (Diaz-Bolet, 1999, p. 48-49)

Diaz-Bolet (1999) continues to explain the intangible rewards of mentoring that are "just as valuable" (p. 49): "The mentee benefits from increased self-esteem, a sense of power, increased personal development, career satisfaction, job satisfaction, encouragement, and optimism" (p. 49). While the ultimate goal for the mentee is to "develop to a place of equality with the mentor and to be prepared for a similar position or a higher-ranking one" (p. 49), Zey (1984) emphasizes that the benefits of the mentoring relationship far outweigh career advancement:

The teaching, support, and promotion of the [mentee] effect a change in the protégé from one stage of competence to another. But for many [mentees] the result of mentoring is more than a change in skills and positions – the mentoring experience effects a fundamental transformation in the way they perceive themselves, their careers, their relationship to the organization, their very potential as people. (p. 63)

Risks of Mentoring

Although mentoring relationships may provide great benefits to the mentor, mentee, and the institution, there are also potential risks associated with the mentoring relationship. According to Meyers and Humphreys (1985), there are three main phases to mentoring in which problems can arise: selection, process, and outcome. During the selection phase, in which mentors and mentees are chosen, discrimination problems such

as preselection, "old-boy" network, and nepotism may arise. The next phase, process, includes the time in which the mentor and mentee are interacting. This phase raises potential problems such as overload, sexual harassment, poor role model, and selfishness. Finally, the outcomes stage poses the potential threat for adverse circumstances resulting from the mentoring relationship. These problems may include career obstacles, misguided loyalty, role reversal, and advocacy unfairness (Meyers & Humphreys, 1985).

Again, because this study focuses primarily on the mentee role in the mentoring relationship, only the potential risks of mentoring to the mentee are outlined in further detail. To expand more on Meyers and Humphreys' potential threats to the mentee, Diaz-Bolet (1999) explains the risks further:

> …choosing or being assigned to an inappropriate mentor, having unrealistic expectations about the relationship and the career-related outcomes, failing to assess the mentor's intentions accurately, being manipulated, having a mentor who is not committed to the role or who takes credit for the mentee's work and accomplishments, being the object of jealousy or gossip, being over-dependent, having feelings of inferiority, and being involved romantically or sexually with the mentor. (p. 53)

Clearly there are many potential risks associated with entering into a mentoring relationship. However there are also many great benefits, and one must weigh the potential benefits against the potential risks and decide if a mentoring relationship is worth the time and effort. The vast majority of the literature is in favor of mentoring relationships; in fact, it is difficult to find evidence that the risks associated with mentoring relationships, while present, outweigh the great potential benefits.

Informal vs. Formal Mentoring

There are essentially two types of mentoring relationships: informal and formal. While informal mentoring is generally considered "spontaneous," and is historically the more traditional form of mentoring, formal, or "planned" mentoring, has gained great prominence (Diaz-Bolet, 1999). It is important to distinguish between these two types of mentoring and the importance of each in institutions of higher education. According to Chao, Waltz & Gardner (1992):

> The basic distinction between formal and informal mentorships lies in the formation of the relationship. Informal mentorships are not managed, structured, nor formally recognized by the organization. Traditionally, they are spontaneous relationships that occur without external involvement from the organization. In contrast, formal mentorships are programs that are managed and sanctioned by the organization. (p. 620)

Numerous studies have explored the importance of one type of mentoring compared to the other for women in higher education administration. The research showed that for women who preferred female mentors, the sheer lack of women present at the senior-level positions prevented them from benefitting from informal mentoring relationships (Brown, 2005; Cullen & Luna, 1993; Diaz-Bolet, 1999; Scanlon, 1997). "Although many women have used male mentors, others say that they would prefer a female mentor.…with the relatively limited number of women in high level administration…there are simply not enough female mentors for the number of women aspiring to leadership roles" (Scanlon, 1997, p. 55).

Many women seek informal mentoring relationships because they are relationships that "[develop] naturally between two individuals who are drawn to each other with common interests and goals.…The relationship is not dictated or prescribed by bureaucracy; it arises naturally and develops over a period of time" (Diaz-Bolet, 1999, p. 39). While informal mentoring may be ideal, there are two significant barriers to women who seek this type of relationship. First, many eager and talented women may be overlooked simply because they were not fortunate enough to find a mentor to whom they were drawn, and/or they were not chosen by a mentor to enter into a relationship for the same reason. Second, since historically senior-level administrators have been white males, and because mentors tend to chose mentees that are similar to themselves (Cullen & Luna, 1993; Scanlon, 1997), informal mentoring relationships tend to perpetuate the "old boys" network, even if unintentionally, thus preventing women from advancing to the senior-level administrative positions (Diaz-Bolet, 1999).

While informal mentoring relationships are beneficial and even preferable, the necessity for formal mentoring programs has grown out of the deficiency of informal mentors available to mentees. Formal mentoring programs can be initiated by the institution exclusively for institutional employees, they can span numerous institutions or formalized groups of institutions, such as the Leadership Development Institute sponsored by the CCCU, or they can be open to all institutions. Formal programs have the potential to provide mentoring relationships to mentees who might otherwise not be involved in informal mentoring relationships. Formal programs can also prevent many of the disadvantages explained above. There is, however, one crucial drawback to formal mentoring programs that must be discussed. Because formal mentoring programs match

mentees with mentors, the likelihood that the pair is not naturally drawn to each other is

greater than with informal mentoring (Scanlon, 1997). As a result, the relationship has a

higher probability of ending prematurely and perhaps bitterly (Scanlon, 1997). This may

leave both the mentee and the mentor skeptical about entering into a mentoring

relationship in the future (Diaz-Bolet, 1999). The literature shows that because both

informal and formal mentoring have advantages and disadvantages, it is important for

institutions to initiate and foster environments that support both forms (Cullen and Luna,

1993).

Cross-Gendered Mentoring

While mentoring researchers have not reached a consensus on the advantages and

disadvantages of cross-gendered mentoring, it is important to reference the positives and

negatives of it as it relates to women in higher education administration. One notable

study that focused on women mentoring women discovered that while same-gendered

mentoring is ideal, relying solely on senior-level female administrators has its drawbacks,

as previously discussed in detail (Cullen & Luna, 1993). Nevertheless, women mentoring

women was viewed as the goal for which higher education must strive: "The essence of

women mentoring women is a powerful model that permits women mentors to teach

junior colleagues and promote their advancement in academe" (Cullen & Luna, 1993, p.

134).

Other studies perceive cross-gendered mentoring as a benefit to women in higher

education administration when there is a shortage of female mentors available. Scanlon,

1997, explains that "To meet the problem of limited numbers of females who can serve as

mentors…the use of dual mentors for women, one male and one female" (p. 57) can be

highly effective. Additionally, "women need to be aware of the positive nature of having a male mentor, for example, being encouraged to be more aggressive and learning how to expect and rally from crisis" (Scanlon, 1997, p. 57). While "many women have very successful mentoring relationships with men" (Scanlon, 1997, p. 57), the literature offers several cautions to women who engage in cross-gendered mentoring:

> Prospective female administrators are advised strongly against getting involved sexually with a male mentor. They also are warned against having a boss act as mentor, in spite of gender. Women need to guard against the fear of passing a male mentor, either in position or in knowledge, or of holding onto a relationship for too long. (Scanlon, 1997, p. 57)

Cross-gendered mentoring, like all other forms of mentoring, poses numerous opportunities and threats to women seeking to advance in their higher education administrative careers.

As evidenced by the literature regarding women in higher education administration, there are several contributing factors which would benefit from further research and exploration. Previous research on mentoring women in higher education administration has provided the initial groundwork for inquiry, yet much research remains to be done, particularly in faith-based institutions of higher education. It is crucial to grasp the significance of past and current research up to this point. However, it is also imperative to search for new practices and solutions related to this important issue.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This investigation utilized a grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory is the most appropriate approach for this study because it allows the researcher to "derive a general, abstract theory of a process…grounded in the views of participants in a study" (Creswell, 2003, p. 14). As previously explained, the overall aim of this study is to explore the critical influences of mentoring relationships on the career paths of the female presidents in the CCCU. Two primary characteristics of the grounded theory design are "the constant comparison of data with emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different [individuals] to maximize the similarities and the differences of information" (Creswell, p. 14). Detailed information regarding the participants, procedures, measure and analysis will follow.

Participants

There are currently five female presidents employed in CCCU member institutions. All five were contacted and four of the presidents agreed to be interviewed for this study. Although anonymity is not possible, full confidentiality was promised to the participants and has been maintained throughout the study. No specific reference to an individual president or her institution is made at any time.

Procedure and Interview Protocol

The investigation began with seeking written consent from the participants for their involvement. Assistants to the presidents were initially contacted and the researcher explained the purpose of the study and the interview process. Interested potential participants were e-mailed four documents: an introductory letter written by Dr. Steve Bedi, Taylor University Provost; a letter explaining the interview process; the interview protocol; and the letter of informed consent to be signed by each participant. Once questions were answered and participants were comfortable with their participation in the study, verbal consent was received. The informed consent forms were then faxed back to the researcher, and the researcher coordinated and scheduled interview times that were convenient for the participants.

Prior to interviewing the participants, two pilot interviews were conducted with two upper-level female administrators at Taylor University's Upland campus. The main purpose of these pilot studies was to assist the researcher in refining the interview protocol prior to interviewing the participants of the study. Although Creswell (2003) asserts that in qualitative research it is acceptable that the questions "may change and be refined as the inquirer learns what to ask and to whom it should be asked" (p. 181), it was ideal for the questions to be refined as much as possible before beginning the interviews with the actual participants.

A great deal was learned from the pilot studies and the following interview questions were refined and finalized:

- What has had the most significant impact on your career advancement?

- How do you define and/or describe mentoring?

- Have mentoring relationships played a part in your career advancement? Do you attribute any career advancements to specific mentoring relationships?

  o Have you participated in formal and/or informal mentoring programs? Was one type more beneficial to your career advancement than the other?

  o Have you had male mentors, female mentors, or both? Was there a difference in the benefits of these mentoring relationships related to gender?

- Do you believe that mentoring is important for women in Christian higher education administration to advance in their careers? If so, how? To what extent?

The finalized set of interview questions was sent to the presidents to allow for preparation if desired. In preparation for the interviews, the researcher reviewed vitas and other available biographical information about the presidents. This decreased the need to spend time during the interviews asking questions whose answers were available elsewhere, and allowed the entire interview time to be devoted to the mentoring questions. The interviews were conducted via teleconference, and lasted a maximum of thirty minutes. With the permission of each participant, interviews were also tape recorded to allow the researcher to transcribe them at a later date.

<div align="center">Measure</div>

After the four interviews were completed, the data analysis process began. In order to organize and prepare the data for analysis, the raw data was transcribed. Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher reviewed the data to obtain a general sense of the information. A detailed analysis of the data then ensued, through a formal coding process.

Coding was used to allow the researcher to "tailor the data analysis beyond the more generic approaches" (Creswell, 2003, p. 191). The first step in the coding process, open coding, is defined as "generating categories of information" (Creswell, p. 191). During this first step, the interview transcription was analyzed sentence by sentence to generate categories of main ideas and summaries of the raw data. Next, the researcher formed the categories and positioned them within theoretical models. In essence, the first step of coding broke up the data, and the second step began to put it back together into categories (axial coding). In the final stage of coding, core categories were selected and compared to each other (selective coding). During this selective coding stage, the data was reviewed to discover the apparent themes, or core categories, derived from the coding analysis process. The results of the research study were based upon the themes discovered in the final stage of coding. In the final step of data analysis, an interpretation of the meaning of the data was made. Essentially, "what were the lessons learned" captures the essence of this idea (Creswell).

<center>Analysis</center>

Once the data was interpreted and fully analyzed, the researcher employed three strategies for validation: member-checking, presenting negative or discrepant information, and peer debriefing. Creswell (2003) explains that "reliability and generalizability play a minor role in qualitative inquiry" (p. 195), but that "Validity…is seen as a strength of qualitative research" (p. 195). Creswell suggests using member-checking to "determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings" (p. 196). For this study, the researcher took the interview transcriptions back to the participants to determine

whether or not they felt as though the transcription accurately reflected her thoughts. No objections were voiced by any of the participants.

With any qualitative research, there will be themes that run counter to the core categories that are discovered. Although these pieces of negative or discrepant information were the exception, they were nevertheless imperative to discuss. Creswell (2003) explains that "Because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of the account" (p. 196).

Finally, peer debriefing was also used to enhance the accuracy of the research findings. The researcher located an uninvolved person to review the qualitative study and ask questions about the research. This person, while associated with Taylor University administration, was not part of the Taylor University Higher Education faculty or one of the female administrators who participated in the pilot interviews. The purpose of the peer debriefer is to ensure that the study will resonate with people other than the researcher (Creswell, 2003). First, the peer debriefer was given a final draft copy of the study. Next, after reviewing the document, the peer debriefer spoke with the researcher about the research and the themes derived from the research. The peer debriefer assisted in validating the study by agreeing with the themes, as experienced in her own life as well as the lives of female colleagues she has known throughout her career. Essentially, the three strategies employed for validation previously mentioned assisted in strengthening the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The following section outlines the results and themes generated from the interviews with the presidents. The research questions will serve as the organizational guide for presenting the results, and the additional themes that transpired throughout the interviews will be included following the research questions and their subsequent themes.

Interview Questions and Corresponding Results

1. *What has had the most significant impact on your career advancement?*

All four participants revealed that they attribute their career advancement to relationships. More specifically, the encouragement from mentors and colleagues, the time people took to invest in them, and the opportunities people gave them impacted their career development and ultimately led to their advancement. While some participants also credited a strong work ethic and strong leadership and administrative skills for their advancement, the dominant thread throughout all the interviews was the impact of relationships.

It is important to distinguish that by "relationships," the participants did not necessarily mean mentors. They identified peers, colleagues, and superiors, whom they did not always consider mentors, to play a large role in encouraging them to seek new positions and experiences, and to take opportunities that were presented to them.

2. *How do you define and/or describe mentoring?*

Three of the four participants used either the exact same or very similar words to define mentoring. These three participants broke mentoring into two basic categories. Two participants used the terms "formal" and "informal" to define mentoring, while the third used "structured" and "unstructured." When describing the terms in more detail, all three used similar definitions. Formal mentoring relationships were defined as "intentional." With formal relationships, individuals intentionally agree to enter into the relationship with the understanding that it will be a mutually beneficial relationship, providing both participants with an opportunity for the exchange of thoughts and ideas. While informal mentoring relationships were given similar definitions in terms of being mutually beneficial and allowing for an exchange of thoughts and ideas, the main difference was the degree of intentionality with which the participants entered into the relationship. Informal mentoring relationships are more indirect, allowing even the possibility that participants may not realize that they are mentoring or being mentored.

While the wording was not exactly the same, three of the four participants defined and described mentoring similarly, and the preceding theme was discovered. The fourth participant described mentoring relationships similarly to the other three – mutually beneficial with an exchange of thoughts and ideas – but only defined mentoring relationships as intentional. Thus, the fourth participant would not consider what the other three defined as informal relationships to be mentoring.

3. *Have mentoring relationships played a part in your career advancement? Do you*

    attribute any career advancements to specific mentoring relationships?

        The responses to this question were similar to those given for the first question,

since all four participants revealed in the first question that relationships were an element

of their career advancement. When asked this question, all four participants immediately

and confidently declared that they did attribute career advancement to relationships, and

then continued to discuss in detail how those relationships were beneficial to them.

        The participants all indicated that they had benefitted from the relationships

through the encouragement they were given, the way people invested in them, and the

opportunities that were provided. Interestingly, only one participant directly attributed her

advancement to the sponsorship and nomination of her mentor. It was surprising that

more participants did not directly attribute the attainment of a specific position to

sponsorship and nomination. Two other participants added that while their informal

mentoring relationships did not directly result in the attainment of a certain position, they

learned, grew, and became better people through those relationships, and as a result, were

considered for the presidency because of the kind of characteristics that they had

acquired.

    a. Have you participated in formal and/or informal mentoring programs? Was one

       type more beneficial to your career advancement than the other?

        Interestingly, three of the participants revealed that they had never participated in

what they described in response to question number two as a formal mentoring

relationship as a mentee (some of the participants had served as a formal mentor), but

believed that the informal mentoring relationships had a great impact on them and their

advancement. Therefore, three of the four participants were not able to compare informal mentoring relationships to formal mentoring relationships.

The only participant who has had intentional, formal mentoring relationships was the same participant who would only define mentoring in terms of an intentional, formal relationship. This was also the same participant who directly attributed her attainment of the presidential position to one of her mentoring relationships. Because this participant had not participated in what has been defined as informal mentoring relationships, she was also unable to compare the two types of mentoring.

In addition to the fact that the majority of the participants did not have formal mentors, three of the four also did not participate in the Women's Leadership Development Institute (WLDI), a formal mentoring program for female administrators currently sponsored by Azusa Pacific University and co-sponsored by the CCCU. The one president who did participate in the WLDI did not have a positive experience, admittedly due to her own lack of follow-through with the assigned mentor.

b. Have you had male mentors, female mentors, or both? Was there a difference in the benefits of these mentoring relationships related to gender?

Three of the four participants had both male and female mentors, while one of the participants had only male mentors. None of the participants felt as though the gender of their mentors made a difference in their career advancement. When asked this question, two participants were fervent in their beliefs that gender should not be an issue, and that having both male and female mentors is more beneficial than limiting oneself solely to female mentors. The other two participants (one of which had only male mentors), while they may not have disagreed with the preceding statements, focused more on the

unfortunate reality of simply not having very many female mentors available to them throughout their careers. The participant who had only male mentors made a point to say that while she is deeply thankful for her male mentors, she does wish that she had had a female mentor at some point during her career to discuss issues that are specific to women. Overall, besides the lack of female mentors available to these women, gender was not an issue for the participants in terms of whether or not their mentoring relationships were beneficial to them and their career advancement.

4. *Do you believe that mentoring is important for women in Christian higher education administration to advance in their careers? If so, how? To what extent?*

All four participants stated that either mentoring or relationships in general are essential for women in Christian higher education to advance in their careers. The reasons given for why mentoring/relationships are necessary, however, varied. One participant stated that while formal mentoring may not be necessary, having people in one's life who are willing to encourage, invest, give opportunities, and allow for mistakes is absolutely a necessity. Another participant noted that especially if women aspire to advance to senior-level administrative positions, mentoring relationships are important. This participant also noted that from her experience and observation of other mentoring relationships, informal relationships are usually more beneficial than formal ones.

An additional belief by one of the participants is that women need encouragement, validation, and affirmation from their mentors because the social context and structures in Christian higher education have not historically been inviting to women in leadership. The encouragement of a mentor can help women to see their capabilities and potential when they may not have naturally observed it in themselves. The final

participant noted that while it is possible for women to move to the top without a mentor, advancement is much more likely to occur with a mentor. In addition, women will be better prepared for the position because of the personal and professional benefits they received from having mentors. While the reasons mentoring and relationships are crucial to women's advancement in higher education administration may have varied, the participants all agreed that mentoring is important for advancement.

<div align="center">Additional Themes</div>

At the end of each interview, the participants were given the opportunity to add any thoughts or ideas to the discussion that they felt were important to include, but were unable to share during the interview due to the format of the questions. The following are themes that were derived from these additional thoughts or are themes that arose at some point during the interviews.

"Organic" vs. Assigned Mentoring Pairs

Two of the participants throughout the course of their interviews mentioned the importance of having "organic," or naturally occurring mentoring relationships as opposed to assigned, or forced mentoring pairs. While these women have not participated in formal mentoring relationships as the mentee, they have served as the mentor numerous times, and noted that the chemistry of the mentoring relationship is very important. They communicated that while it is possible for an assigned mentoring pair to be compatible, it is much more likely for compatibility to occur when the mentor and the mentee have chosen each other. Neither of these women had experienced, and had rarely observed, an assigned mentoring pair that was successful.

Reluctant Leaders

To begin, three of the four presidents mentioned during the interview that they did not aspire to the presidency. This is why, in part, the encouragement of their mentors played such a large role in how they advanced to the various positions in which they have served. In fact, one of the three participants said that she actively tried to not become the president by participating on the search committee, hoping that would exclude her from consideration. This same participant also noted that compared to men, women are definitely "reluctant leaders," in that men often decide sometime during their career journey that they want to be a college president. Most of the female presidents she has encountered, on the other hand, did not aspire to the presidential position.

The other two participants referred to above spoke of the social contexts and structures that may limit women from seeing the presidential position as a reasonable goal. They propose that these structures may discourage women, or suggest to them that the same leadership paths that are available to men are not similarly possible for women. One participant even stated that in the Christian context the word leadership tends to have a male pronoun attached to it, and that if women are going to advance to senior-level leadership positions, encouragement and validation along the way is vital.

Peer Mentoring

Two of the four participants mentioned that all of the female presidents in the CCCU convened exclusively with each other for the first time in January of 2008. They both mentioned that while this is not technically mentoring, the time they spent together was invaluable. They invited speakers to present on leadership and governance, but also had productive informal conversations over meals sharing about how they govern on their

campuses and best practices they have found, as well as other presidential issues that arise on a daily basis. According to the participants, it was a safe, non-threatening environment to develop relationships with one another and learn from each other. Ultimately, even though peer mentoring is a different process than traditional mentoring, the mutual benefits that emanate from relationships with colleagues can be quite significant. Peer mentoring can be especially valuable for women who have not had many opportunities for female mentors and are at the top of the administrative ladder.

Responsibility to Mentor Junior-Level Women.

Two of the participants spoke of the "responsibility" and "opportunity" that women in senior-level leadership positions have to intentionally foster mentoring relationships with junior-level women in higher education. One spoke of this opportunity as a challenge, as well. While there are now more women in higher education leadership than before, still most of the mentoring responsibilities lie on the shoulders of a few. This was not spoken of in a negative tone, but instead cited as a challenge and an opportunity to mentor junior-level women in ways in which they were not similarly mentored due to the significant lack of women in leadership at that time.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, AND LIMITATIONS

The central research question for this study asked: How have mentoring

relationships impacted the career paths of the current female college presidents in the

CCCU? The research results show that mentoring relationships, whether formal or

informal, played a significant role in the career paths of the female presidents. All of the

participants revealed they would not have attained their current position without the

encouragement and support of the people who took interest in them and invested in their

lives. Besides the main research question, however, the results answered other key

questions and revealed additional themes that were not explicitly sought. This section

will discuss, in detail, the four main themes that emerged from the research results. The

inclusion of implications for future research and a discussion of the study's limitations

will follow the themes.

Significant Themes

Relationships are Crucial to Women's Advancement

The results clearly showed that relationships were important for the participants'

advancement in higher education. Based on the literature and these findings, one can

logically conclude that for most women aspiring to advance in higher education

administration, mentoring relationships, whether formal or informal, are similarly

essential. But why exactly are these relationships so significant for women? As previously mentioned, two of the four participants believe that the social contexts and structures currently in place in higher education may limit or discourage women from seeking leadership positions:

> I think sometimes the social context and the social structures that we've been raised with have not suggested to us women the kind of leadership journey or path that often is suggested, just sociologically, as the structures that have worked for men. Even in our Christian context how leadership is seen, it tends to have a male pronoun attached. And so that's difficult if you don't have that kind of validation along the way. (personal communication, January 8, 2009)

Another participant alluded to the same idea of the larger Christian context and the difference between it and her institution when describing the importance of one of her mentors:

> I don't think there was ever a question for anybody whether a woman could serve as the president of [this institution], but I don't think that's true at a lot of CCCU schools. So the relationship that I had with [my mentor] was very important to my career advancement goals in terms of seeing myself as a potential president trying to develop in that way, but also I think for the environment that was created at [this institution]. (personal communication, January 9, 2009)

There is the possibility, then, that because the Christian higher education social context may not suggest a path of leadership for women in administration, those who could and should aspire to the presidency or other senior-level administrative roles are reluctant to do so. This is again evident in the fact that three of the four participants

admitted to not seeking or aspiring to the presidential position earlier in their careers. As one participant explained, "I really didn't particularly desire this…it was never part of my trajectory that I said 'Oh, I want to be a college president'" (personal communication, January 9, 2009). As a result, there may be many intelligent, capable, and dynamic female leaders throughout Christian higher education who are reluctant to consider a presidential or senior-level administrative role. One of the participants explains how women may be reluctant leaders:

> I've come across many more women presidents who I would say are reluctant leaders, and many more men who somewhere along the line thought they wanted to be a college president. Now maybe that will change as more women are out there who see women presidents…but I'm just saying that I think you'd have a whole different study if you were studying men in leadership because I think there's a greater degree of intentionality in terms of 'I want to be a leader…so I want to get those people to mentor me so I can advance' – I've heard men talk that way – and I just haven't heard that as much from the women I know who are college presidents. (personal communication, December 16, 2008, B)

Are women reluctant leaders? Longman (2008) believes they are:

> While both men and women of the next generation have greater confidence in living fully into their giftedness, women traditionally have not focused on the possibility of leadership roles….Research found that women tended to associate the concepts of ambition and achievement with negative connotations such as egotism, selfishness, and self-aggrandizement. Yet in recounting their childhood dreams, these women spoke of a youthful sense of limitless potential, many

picturing themselves in significant roles. Christian non profits generally speak of supporting women's contributions in leadership positions, yet the profile of senior-level leaders suggests that a "stained-glass ceiling" still exists. Many capable Christian women simply have not been able to envision themselves in top-level leadership. (p. 1)

Therefore, this study is suggesting that in order to overcome the existing social limitations of Christian higher education and the reluctance of many female leaders, it is crucial for women to have significant mentoring relationships. These relationships are not only necessary for sponsorship and nomination with the purpose of attaining higher positions, but also to provide the encouragement, affirmation, and validation that many women need in order to envision themselves in senior-level administrative roles in the first place.

The Role of the Mentors

A second significant theme that emerged from the research revolves around the roles of the mentors in the lives of the participants. The literature asserts that one of the main roles of the mentor is to sponsor and nominate his or her mentee for a specific position (Cullen & Luna, 1993). However, only one of the four participants spoke of the significance of a mentor in terms of sponsoring and nominating her for a position. And even with that specific mentor, that was only one of the significant ways in which he impacted her career path.

Instead of valuing their mentors solely for the roles and positions that they helped the participants attain, all four participants spoke of the encouragement, opportunities, and affirmation they received from their mentors. Not only did the relationships between

the participants and their mentors help them become better people as they learned and grew over the years, but their mentors encouraged them to begin seeing themselves in those roles. Perhaps the most powerful manner of communicating this theme is to allow these presidents to speak for themselves. Following are the testimonies of each of the four participants. They speak to the importance of their mentors as they encouraged them to seek leadership positions:

1. "[My informal mentors were] people who took an interest in me, believed in me, and wanted to help me to grow – people who were willing to come alongside me at various times to provide encouragement, particularly in just providing encouragement to let me know that I could succeed" (personal communication, December 16, 2008, A).

2. "I can think of people in my life and I would say that I have been serially mentored, and what I mean by that is I can point to significant people at different stages of my life who have played a mentoring role. What's common to all of them is that at that particular point in my life they saw in me something that I didn't see in myself" (personal communication, December 16, 2008, B).

3. "In a lot of respects, it's been the folks who have been instrumental in encouraging me along the way, and speaking into my life. I don't think that I would have ever honestly even looked at doing this [presidential role]. It was not on my radar screen. It was not something that I thought of doing from a young age; I grew through the process and grew through different roles and had people who consistently talked to me about my direction and my future" (personal communication, January 8, 2009).

4. "I think what [my mentor] did was really help me think through my own gifts and where they might fit, at least for [this institution's] president. He helped me imagine myself in a different role and in different ways than I was able to on my own" (personal communication, January 9, 2009).

The testimonies of the four participants demonstrate the ways in which their mentors believed in them and encouraged them to begin thinking of themselves in these roles. It is possible that without the encouragement of their mentors, these four female presidents may have remained reluctant leaders.

Cross-Gendered Mentoring

The third theme that emerged from the interviews was the idea of cross-gendered mentoring, defined as a male mentoring a female or vice-versa. As previously mentioned, three of the four participants had both male and female mentors, and one had only male mentors. Therefore, all four of the participants have experienced cross-gendered mentoring. The participant who only had male mentors greatly valued them, but expressed that she wished she could also have had a female mentor. With that exception, none of the other participants said that they valued their male or female mentors over the other gender. The majority of the participants were in favor of women benefitting from both male and female mentors and not limiting themselves to one gender or the other. One participant commented specifically on the importance of cross-gendered mentoring:

The ideal is to have people in your mentoring repertoire who are both men and women…if you only are mentored by women, then at best you deprive yourself of insights that come from men who have had a whole different kind of experience in leadership roles (personal communication, December 16, 2008, B).

According to this sample, male and female mentors are equally beneficial, and women in higher education are wise to take advantage of the benefits that both male and female mentors can provide.

Informal vs. Formal, and "Organic" vs. Assigned Mentors

The fourth theme that emerged from the interviews was the idea of informal and formal mentoring, otherwise described as "organic" and assigned mentoring pairs respectively. All but one of the participants defined informal, or "organic" mentoring as "natural" mentoring. In particular, one participant expressed a strong preference for informal mentoring:

> I have never been in a situation of formal mentoring that worked half as well as what I would consider the informal mentoring context….I tend not to think it's something that happens best through formality….There's so much about mentoring that really is about the chemistry of the relationship between the people. (personal communication, December 16, 2008, B)

Another participant explains that: "there's something organic about mentoring relationships.…There has to be an affinity, and I think it's been hard for me to have that imposed" (personal communication, January 8, 2009).

Overall, the majority of the participants concur that informal mentoring and "organic" mentoring pairs are preferable to formal mentoring and assigned mentoring pairs. It is important to acknowledge that while the majority of the presidents made a point to mention their current support of the Women's Leadership Development Institute, three of the four did not participate in the program as a mentee, and the one who did participate in the WLDI did not have a positive experience, due primarily to her own lack

of follow-through with her assigned mentor. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that the majority of the participants would view informal and "organic" mentoring as ideal.

While informal mentoring may be ideal, it is not always plausible for women in higher education administration. As previously discussed, there is currently a lack of senior-level female administrators in Christian higher education. Because of this, many women who would like to have a female mentor may be unable to "naturally" or "organically" find a mentor with whom they are compatible. There are numerous potential reasons for this: personality differences, scheduling conflicts, or even the possibility that there are no female administrators currently employed in the specific field desired by the mentee. While mentees may even prefer to enter into an informal, "organic" mentoring relationship, that is not always possible for every woman at every Christian institution. It is precisely because of this potential problem that the CCCU should continue to sponsor programs like the WLDI for women, and perhaps expand those programs to include junior-level women.

Not only is it crucial for formal mentoring programs like the WLDI to continue for women in middle to upper-level administration, but junior-level women in Christian higher education could also benefit from similar programs. Currently, the intention of the WLDI is "to identify and equip individuals who have been gifted and called by God to serve as leaders in Christian higher education, primarily as future chief academic officers and presidents" (CCCU, 2008). Furthermore, "the program is intended to serve emerging leaders who are in the early to mid-stages of academic careers. Priority is given to applicants who have an earned doctorate in hand or near completion" (CCCU, 2008). While this is a beneficial program for women in higher education who currently meet the

qualifications, there seems to be a lack of programs available to junior-level women who are just beginning their career journey in higher education. One of the participants explained why she never participated in the WLDI as a mentee:

> I really never intended to end up doing this [presidential role], and I think that at the point when you would think that it would make sense to have done [the program], well, I just was never intending to end up here." (personal communication, December 16, 2008, B)

Junior-level women may have been "gifted and called by God to serve as leaders in Christian higher education," but they may be reluctant to acknowledge this calling. Mentoring programs like the WLDI can also help women to recognize and accept God's calling in their lives.

As has been demonstrated, women in Christian higher education may have a tendency to be reluctant leaders. The research shows that a formal mentoring program may be beneficial for women who are in the early stages of their careers, and especially for those who have not yet earned a doctorate or have not decided if they would like to pursue a doctoral degree. The four participants were fortunate to have people in their lives that invested in them, encouraged them, and helped them see their abilities and gifts for leadership. But for women who are in the early stages of their careers and are uncertain about their own leadership potential, a formal mentoring program seems to be critical, especially since it may be difficult for these women to find informal mentors at their own institutions.

Implications for Future Research

While peer mentoring was not one of the significant themes derived from the research, it did emerge as an issue. Therefore, a study exploring the idea of equally positioned colleagues or peers would be beneficial to the mentoring literature, as the traditional definition of mentoring involves a senior colleague mentoring a junior colleague.

The research suggests a variation in the intentionality of men aspiring to leadership, and the apparent reluctance of women aspiring to leadership in higher education (personal communication, December 16, 2008, B). A study exploring these differences would be beneficial to the development of both male and female leadership in the CCCU.

While the topic of mentoring has received much attention in recent years, the idea of sponsorship and nomination is a subject area with relatively little known about it. A study dedicated to discovering more about sponsorship and nomination would potentially uncover new theories about this segment of mentoring.

Finally, women, the CCCU, and Christian higher education in general would benefit from a study assessing the advantages and disadvantages of the WLDI. How the program has specifically benefitted women in higher education, as well as a study of the program's weaknesses and potential for improvement, would be valuable.

Limitations

Every research study includes a certain set of limitations and this study is no different. The first limitation of this study, as with any study that utilizes interviews as the research tool, is that the nature of interviews provides indirect information that is

filtered through the views of the participants. Additionally, participants may not be equally articulate and perceptive (Creswell, 2003). Because all people are different, the information provided through the interviews will vary depending on the individual personalities and characteristics of each participant.

The personal bias of the researcher is also a limitation. It is difficult for any researcher to completely eliminate his or her bias. The bias of the researcher may have surfaced through the interview questions themselves, as well as through her presence in the interviews, resulting in skewed results. Although attempts were made to eliminate bias in the interview questions and throughout the interviews, it is impossible to entirely prevent the influence of previously held beliefs. However, to guard against this, the researcher also made a conscious effort to limit commentary throughout the interview.

Finally, the sample size itself is a limitation to the study. While there are only five female presidents in the CCCU, and four of the five (or 80%) were interviewed for this study, it is obviously a small sample size. Major themes were chosen based on a majority response from the participants; however, the validity of the themes would have been stronger with a larger sample size.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to discover the extent to which mentoring relationships have benefited the current female presidents in the CCCU, and how those relationships have specifically impacted the mentee. By utilizing a qualitative methodology, four of the five female presidents at CCCU member institutions were interviewed. The responses were transcribed, coded, and analyzed to discover the central themes. The main themes that emerged from the interviews answered the central research question of this study.

One of the main themes revealed that while mentoring is beneficial to the advancement of women in higher education, the informal relationships that women build are more crucial to their advancement than are formal mentors. The majority of the presidents identified themselves as reluctant leaders – they were hesitant to advance to the presidential role. As a result, the role of the informal mentors was crucial to their advancement. These informal mentors provided encouragement, affirmation, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. At times, the relationships also directly led to advancement through sponsorship and nomination. Without the support and encouragement of their mentors, the majority of the participants revealed they may not have advanced to the presidential role.

The majority of the participants revealed they had not had formal mentors, but benefitted greatly from informal mentors. While the majority of the participants believe that informal mentoring is more beneficial than formal mentoring, it is not always possible for every woman in higher education to find informal mentors at their institution. As a result, it is suggested that the CCCU and individual institutions continue their current mentoring programs or begin mentoring programs if they do not already exist.

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