

Fontbonne University

GriffinShare

All Theses, Dissertations, and Capstone
Projects

Theses, Dissertations, and Capstone Projects

2009

The College President as Moral Leader in Faith Based Institutions

John Michael Pressimone

Regis University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://griffinshare.fontbonne.edu/all-etds>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Pressimone, John Michael, "The College President as Moral Leader in Faith Based Institutions" (2009). *All Theses, Dissertations, and Capstone Projects*. 155.

<https://griffinshare.fontbonne.edu/all-etds/155>

Running head: MORAL LEADERSHIP

The College President as Moral Leader in Faith Based Institutions

A Creative Capstone Project

J. Michael Pressimone

Regis University

Chapter I - Introduction

The American college and university president or chancellor of the twenty-first century must not only be a competent administrator, but a moral leader as well, capable of providing leadership that gives an institution a moral compass. This is dramatically more important as the first decade of the twenty-first century comes near to a close and as the United States and world economies hover on the brink of collapse brought on, in part, by a lack of morality on the part of leaders in the world of business and finance. Throughout the history of the United States, institutions of higher education have been the reaction chambers of change and progress. Great college and university presidents have often been called on to speak on behalf of causes, great and small, from the bully pulpit of the academy, long respected as a place of superior intellect and ingenuity.

Even at smaller, lesser known colleges and universities, the president or chancellor must be a moral leader. This is particularly important at the many faith-based institutions in America. These institutions, by their religious affiliations, are perceived to be representative of a set of beliefs and patterns of behavior. The president or chancellor is the person who sits in the seat that is the nexus between all interested parties including the faculty, students, trustees, donors, parents and community and who has the broadest perspective in helping to reconcile varying points of view.

In order to be this moral leader, the college or university president must have a deep understanding of self and a desire to serve others. The leader must understand that moral leadership is rooted in mission and the president must have a valid understanding of the mission of the institution and its historical and current relevance. The ideal leadership style is balanced and collaborative. The moral leader is also a competent leader in the vast majority of areas of

expertise required of a college or university president. The ideal moral leader has a well-developed belief system and a strong personal faith that informs everyday decisions and gives sustenance to the life of the president or chancellor. Finally, the moral leader must be able to suppress the urges and sense of self in favor of the greater needs of the institution and its people.

Through an examination of pertinent and important literature about higher education and higher education leadership both historical and current; through an examination of broader issues of moral leadership in our society; through the examples of moral leadership seen in Abraham Joshua Heschel and Joseph Cardinal Bernardin; and through interviews with nine sitting presidents and a chancellor of faith-based institutions; this project will demonstrate that moral leadership in higher education is possible and necessary in the twenty-first century.

Background

In 2001 Robert Benne wrote an influential book: *Quality with Soul: How Six Premier Colleges and Universities Keep Faith with Their Religious Traditions*. In it, Benne (2001) examines the gradual but dramatic secularization of Christian colleges.¹ These colleges, all founded by various denominations, had at one time enjoyed close affiliation with their sponsoring groups. Their ethos was very closely tied to beliefs and expressions of faith which were at the heart of their founding group of believers. Similar parallels can be drawn for institutions from other faith-based traditions other than Christian as well.

As I discovered during the course my research into the history of higher education in America, much of higher education in the United States was founded by denominations. One of the primary purposes behind the denominational foundation of colleges was to assure that the new world had leaders who shared the Christian values of the new immigrants and founders of

¹ This is an important theme throughout Benne's book.

western colonies in America. Rudolph (1990) describes it this way

A society that intends to live rigorously, moreover, cannot afford to train its rulers haphazardly. A world that finds the deepest expression of its purposes and its goals in the Scriptures cannot afford to ignore the training of its Biblical expositors. A people that expects to have its pretensions taken seriously must recognize its responsibility to the inherited wisdom of the ages, to literature, to science, to learning (p. 6).

The denominational planting of colleges continued as America expanded to the west. Solomon (1985) says “The need to Christianize western frontiers created both the demand for new schools and competition in their establishment. Sponsorship by particular Protestant denominations...soared. Catholics just arriving also planted a few academies as their stake in the New World” (p. 16).

The men (in the early days, there were only men) who led these colleges were often men of the cloth. They were often both ministers and educators. Their moral centers were rooted deeply in the traditions of their churches. Rudolph (1990) quotes another historian and says “the president was by all odds the greatest single educative force encountered by the students. ...The president...was in most institutions the dominating influence...the greatest single force in college life” (p. 164).

Benne (2001, pp. 3-18) decries how denominational colleges have moved away from their moral roots, but his book gives some examples of colleges which have worked diligently to recapture their religious identity and find the correct expression of that identity in the twenty-first century.

In this project, I will examine the changing role of the president as moral leader. Fewer presidents today are culled from the sponsoring clergy. Some presidents are not members of the historical sponsoring denomination. The role of the college president has become more complex as has the enterprise of higher education. The business of higher education has become much more complicated. Higher education in America today is between a \$250 and \$300 billion a year industry. The early presidents spent more time wondering where the next dollar would come from than how to manage endowments or how to lobby the federal government for more money. Given this complexity, is there still a role for the college president as moral leader? This creative capstone project will provide historic context for the question through an examination of literature like Rudolph's (1990) seminal work on the history of higher education. The project will also examine what it means to be a moral leader through an examination of leadership literature and models of moral leadership. Through a series of interviews with sitting college presidents at faith-based and church-related colleges, I will gather opinions about the role of today's college president. Finally, I will draw some conclusions about an effective model for the president as moral leader.

An Economic and Leadership Crisis

The United States at the end of 2008 and in the beginning of 2009 is suffering under the weight of a crisis in leadership. There are numerous examples of corporate excess and excess on the part of previously well thought of industry leaders which fill our newscasts each night. While companies were laying off employees, executives were gathering at posh resorts and receiving generous bonuses. While we embrace and hold high the ideal of the American dream, we seem to have morphed the notion into the image of the American dream on steroids. It was not enough to own a home; instead the American people were told that they could afford a bigger

home. Wages were increasing and people began to accumulate those things which gave them pleasure: cars, big screen televisions, electronics, etc., all very attainable due to substantial credit availability. With the sudden onset of the recession and the tightening of the credit markets, those promises could not be kept and those dreams could not be fulfilled.

Higher education in America played a role in this as well. Higher education held out the promise of a better job and the ability to make more money. While our colleges and universities held on to the ideals embodied in the humanities and the liberal arts, students and families saw education as a means to an end that could ultimately be measured in economic terms. This is as true for private, church related colleges and universities as it is for public universities and state colleges. The difference between private, church related institutions and public institutions is that the private schools have a basis, often founded in church heritage and beliefs, for a conversation about the morality of our actions. Private colleges more easily have conversations about the balance between material success and the greater good.

I contend that it is the president of these private, church related colleges and universities who must provoke and foster these conversations and set an example of exemplary moral leadership.

Each of us can cite examples of good and bad leadership and the effects on institutions ranging from small businesses to large, Fortune 500 companies. I believe it is fair to say that the institution or corporate entity is not, in itself, morally corrupt. Rather, individuals in leadership are responsible for the behavior of the institution. When we think of organizations that do well and do good, we often associate those behaviors with the individual or individuals who make up the face of the entity. We can not separate the Daughters of Charity from Mother Theresa. Ben and Jerry for many years led both a profitable and socially responsible company.

Throughout my career, I have seen examples of strong and weak leadership in higher education. I have worked for both. There have been dramatic examples of college presidents who became corrupted by their power. There are others who serve with humility and the respect of many colleagues. It is difficult to separate the reputation of the leader from the reputation of the institution. Certainly, when someone becomes president of Harvard University, that person's reputation is buoyed by such an association. Conversely, if the president of Harvard is found to have embezzled millions of dollars from its multi-billion dollar endowment, the institution suffers because of it.

Higher education claims to play a role in forming the moral character and fiber of our communities. Many college web sites and view books contain vaulted language claiming to 'educate tomorrow's leaders today' or 'create men and women of character.' On the Regis University web site is the phrase "learners becoming leaders in the Jesuit Catholic tradition." How can this happen if the leader has no character? Perhaps it is possible that all a college or university needs is someone with good business or marketing sense. I contend that this is not enough.

Historical Underpinnings of American Higher Education

Higher education in American is a part of the fabric of our founding and played a role in laying the foundation for a moral society. Harvard is the beginning. *New England's First Fruits* was published in 1643 and describes those things which were most important to the establishment of the new colonies.

After God had carried us safe to New England, and we had builded our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God's worship, and settled the civil government, one of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance

learning and perpetuate it to posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust (para. 4).²

Home, church, government and education were the four pillars upon which the United States was built. Rudolph (1990) tells us that “Approximately a hundred Cambridge men and a third as many Oxford men emigrated to New England before 1646; among them were the founders of Harvard” (p. 4). As an immigrant people, logic tells us that our foundations in higher education must be born of the root stock we brought with us as were our forms of government and commerce. Yet, as with government and commerce, the American system of higher education evolved, expanded and wavered from its origins.

All early higher education in America was church related and private. The concept of the public college did not exist until the 19th century. However, what we accept as public and private forms of higher education today is not how it would have been defined in the colonial period. Townsley (2002) says “Colonial colleges, neither public nor private in the modern sense, were public trusts under colonial regulation, with colonial legislatures retaining a direct interest in their activities and solvency” (p. 12). Some legislatures provided for the colleges in their communities by providing land or by assigning tax revenue to help sustain them. Still, there was a distinct ‘churchiness’ about all of the early colleges and universities. This can be seen most vividly in the leadership of the earliest colleges which was drawn largely from the ranks of clergy. Many of the communities in the colonies were in fact collectives around similar religious beliefs. The colleges they founded reflected those beliefs. One of the primary reasons for the

² *New England’s First Fruits* was taken from the Harvard University web site. The tract is believed to be anonymous, perhaps having been developed as a promotional piece to sell people back in England on the notion of coming to America.

establishment of colonial colleges was to ensure a learned clergy. Dartmouth was established by Congregationalists, William and Mary by Anglicans, the College of Rhode Island (later Brown) by Baptists and so on. As church related institutions, they were as much concerned with the notion of salvation as they were with education. Most of the early college presidents were members of the clergy of the particular denomination which founded the college. As church related colleges, there was a moral underpinning that was in place based on the dogma of the church. All of the early colleges were established by immigrant Christians from protestant denominations. Catholic colleges did not appear on the scene until the establishment of Georgetown University in 1789.

Rudolph (1990) also provides an apt description of the culture in which the early colleges were born and says

The proliferation of colleges - Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, New Jersey, King's Philadelphia, Rhode Island, Queen's, Dartmouth - all before 1770, this planting of temples of piety and intellect in the wilderness was no accident. Nor was it stubbornness, foolhardiness, even the booster spirit of a pioneering people which places at the disposal of American youth so extraordinary a number of educational institutions. At the beginning, higher education in America would be governed less by accident than by certain purpose, less by impulse than by design (p. 3).

Rudolph's (1990) use of the expression "temples of piety" shows the unmistakable relationship between the church and the college.

Rudolph (1990) says "College-founding in the nineteenth century was taken in the same spirit as canal-building, cotton-ginning, farming, and gold mining. In none of these activities did completely rational procedures prevail" (p. 48). After the revolution, the great migration west

began to occur. Men of the cloth, mostly educated at the early colleges ventured west with missionary zeal. Rudolph (1990) states that the proliferation of colleges in the early 19th century was not because there was a perceived community need, but rather because these Congregational and Presbyterian missionaries wanted to create colleges to confront “the benighted condition of life on the western frontier” (in Rudolph, 1990, p. 53). The Congregationalists and the Presbyterians joined forces to create The Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West. The Methodists, Lutherans, Baptists and Catholics also caught this zeal for college planting. The waves of immigrants brought with them their religion and, as we saw in the 17th century, they established towns, churches and colleges.

Those in higher education today may believe that many of the forms and traditions present in our colleges and universities have been a part of the system from the outset. In America in particular, we tend to think of recent history as the only history. Some of this is apparently because of the shift away from the classical European forms of education that were so present in early American higher education which persisted up to the middle of the 19th century and the beginning of the Civil War. This form embraced the classics and focused on the development of the intellect, not skills. That form had persisted for centuries in Europe and naturally emigrated to the new world with its people. With the coming of the modern age, the end of the Civil War and the industrial revolution, practical education and a move away from the classics took root in American colleges and universities. In many ways, the shift in focus to practical education and away from classical education was first envisioned as America won its independence. As the pioneering spirit of Americans pushed our boundaries west, we needed new forms to serve the needs of a new breed of people. Americans also developed a sense of individualism as their identity as a world power was cemented. The “American way” became

the way. Connections to older European customs were forgotten. We sometimes forget that our roots are deeply planted in foreign soil.

My point is that the forms and systems we accept in higher education today are relatively recent creations. The 120 credit Bachelor's degree has only existed since what Hawkins (1992) referred to as "The Age of Standards" (p. 332). We accept accreditation as a fact of institutional life but that too is a recent invention. The major American state universities which we so often associate with American success in research and ingenuity, have only existed since the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 and many of those did not become prominent until the early 20th century.

The land grant university was the key player in the ultimate move away from the classical form of higher education. To be sure, many of the denominational colleges of the late 18th and early 19th century had already begun wrestling with the model especially as it related to the study of Latin and Greek. According to Rudolph (1990) "In 1793 William and Mary required French as an admissions credit" (p. 38). In addition to the move away from Latin and Greek, a new approach to science also began to emerge. "But it was with the founding of the Hollis Professorship of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in 1727, and the appointment of John Winthrop as the incumbent in 1738, that science made significant inroads at Harvard...(Winthrop) presided over the first laboratory of experimental physics in America" (Rudolph, 1990, p. 28). These early examples represent the first drips from the leaking dam. By the time the land grant universities had taken hold in the country, there was a ground swell of support for this new and practical approach to education. "In their (the land grant colleges) original rebellion against classical instruction only, they put things scientific at the center, around which an unusually strong research orientation has developed, with an emphasis on application

and problem solving. Thus was born the now famous academic trilogy: instruction, research, and service - a mission description that virtually every institution, public or private, now embraces, however different the interpretations" (Johnson, 1981, p. 280).

In the early days of higher education in America, there was no real link between higher education and a career. Geiger (2000) says "There was not a single urban occupation that required a bachelor's degree and few where it might be an asset in finding employment" (p. 376). There was certainly no link between graduate education and professional success. Rudolph (1990) states "Among other things, there was not a job in the United States for which an M.A. was required or desired" (p. 130). On the contrary, in speaking of Nebraska's land grant charter, Johnson (1981) says "to get to work as soon as possible, to reach as high a grade as could be afforded, and to improve by experience. That ever-upward ideal was the constant and crucial factor" (p. 288).

Moral Leadership

By moral leadership I mean leadership for the good of humankind - leadership that is altruistic - leadership that springs out of goodness. Where does the desire to be leader come from? For those who profess a belief in the divine, it may appear that this is indeed a gift of God. There is not, however, a link between a desire to be altruistic and a desire to lead. Every so often we see examples of those who desire to lead to feed a need for power. There are those who lead out of a desire for self aggrandizement. Unfortunately, there are also examples of those who are corrupt and use power against others.

To further define moral leadership, this project will examine two outstanding exemplars - Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and Joseph Cardinal Bernardin. These two men share much in common in their approach to leadership. Neither of these men ever led a college or university,

but their example of moral leadership is fundamental, in my opinion, to all positions of leadership and provide a particularly good model for the college and university president or chancellor.

Interestingly, while the active periods of their lives did not directly overlap, they shared some common experiences. Both spent some time in Cincinnati early in their careers. Heschel first taught in the United States at the Hebrew Union College there. I believe both men understood the importance of Vatican Council II, and Heschel's influence on *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican II document that defined the Catholic Church's relationship to non-Catholic religions, would ultimately influence Bernardin's own thinking on Catholic-Jewish relations in Chicago, where he last served as Archbishop, and in the world.

Heschel and Bernardin are wonderful examples and expressions of humility. Some may see humility as weakness. In the case of these two men, it is just their humility that allowed them to be profound leaders. Heschel (1951) says "Man's life is not only driven by a centripetal force revolving around the ego, but is also impelled by centrifugal forces outward from the ego-center. His acts are not only self-regarding but also self-surpassing" (p. 224). I interpret that to mean that man must get beyond himself in order to lead and be a faithful servant. If you focus entirely on yourself, you will never focus on others. Both of these men were able to see well beyond themselves. It was this selflessness that moved Heschel to march in Selma with Dr. Martin Luther King. It was this selflessness that led Bernardin (2000) to say on the eve of his installation as bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago to his fellow priests "You will know me as a friend, fellow priest, and bishop. You will know also that I love you. For I am Joseph, your brother" (p. 288)!

By all accounts, Heschel thought very little of his personal wealth or material worth. His daughter Susannah Heschel (2005) said “We lived near Harlem, and when we walked in the neighborhood, the poverty and suffering and injustice we saw became personalized, part of our own family's story” (para. 3). In the wake of the priest sex abuse scandal, we were ready to believe that all priests, even a man of Bernardin’s stature, could succumb to destructive desires of the flesh, but Bernardin (1997) very simply replied to questions of his sexual activity by saying “I have always led a chaste and celibate life” (p. 29). The man who accused Bernardin later withdrew his accusation, and the two men reconciled before the accuser’s death. We, who are surrounded by sexuality and the promotion of wanton desire, find it hard to believe that someone can willingly lead such a life. Yet it is this sexual desire that causes the downfall of so many leaders, from politicians to college presidents. Sacrifice doesn’t simply mean giving things away or giving things up. Like humility, it is a realization that an individual’s needs, wants and desires are secondary to the needs of those who count on the individual for leadership and guidance.

Leadership in Higher Education

“College administration is a business in which trustees are partners, professors the salesman and students are customers.” Rudolph (1990, pp. 160-161) recounts this quote from Francis L. Patton’s inaugural address as president of Princeton in 1888. It is hard to believe that the president of Princeton in 1888 referred to students as “customers.” Colleges and universities still debate today the identity of students as customers and consumers.

As referenced earlier, Rudolph (1990) classifies the college president as “the greatest single force in college life” (p. 164). As the business of higher education has grown by billions of dollars since World War II, we have elevated the presidency to that of corporate CEO. Such a

model may provide for the financial and business needs of the college, but it often puts a strain on the academy which heretofore embraced a more collaborative model of leadership nurtured from among the faculty ranks. The job of being a college president has indeed become much more complex and public.

While there are many wonderful examples of truly great collegiate leaders, there are numerous examples of presidents who exist outside of my definition of moral leadership. I have witnessed and studied presidents who are treated like and behave like royalty. They seem to be removed from the institutional culture. They seem uncomfortable on their own campuses. They only appear to be comfortable with trustees or in a tuxedo at a social function. They seem to relish an adversarial relationship with the faculty and manage from an "us versus them" mindset. I have seen this even in some presidents who started their careers as faculty. It appears that some presidents expect a silver spoon along with the mace and medallion.

The history of higher education in America is filled with examples of "servant-leaders" as college presidents. Originally coined by Bob Greenleaf in 1970 "the servant-leader is servant first... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead."

We have a rich tradition of this type of leadership in higher education which existed well before the phrase was in vogue. If you look at the establishment of the many church related colleges and universities in the country and their founding and early presidents, you will see many such leaders called by congregations with a desire to serve God and man. Many of these colleges were brought into being to serve specific populations. Many Catholic colleges were formed to serve underprivileged and undereducated immigrant populations. Institutions that fit

the classic “teachers and preachers” model existed specifically to serve a people and promulgate congregations.

Paul J. Olscamp (2003) wrote a thoughtful tome with his *Moral Leadership: Ethics and the College Presidency*. Olscamp (2003), a two-time president, brings considerable background to this discussion. By his own admission, his perspective is that of a public college/university president, but he asserts that some of the truths he puts forward are relevant for private colleges and universities as well. He is also a philosopher, and his approach relies heavily on his academic background. His arguments are very much in the vein of the philosopher, and he examines issues from multiple perspectives and uses logic to arrive at positions. In his preface, he invokes a Kantian point of view and cites this example and relates it to the presidency; “As Kant noted, breaking one’s promise, if practiced universally, would result in the destruction of the very concept of promise keeping and hence every moral concept that rests on it, such as contracting, marrying, taking out a mortgage, and so forth. The entire structure comes tumbling down” (Olscamp, 2003, p. ix). If a president breaks trust with the institution or any of its constituents, it will surely imperil the college.

An example of this can be seen in the history of the University of Bridgeport in Connecticut which nearly went out of business on several occasions throughout the 70s, 80s and 90s. The institution that remains today is a shadow of a once thriving school. According to its history as it appears on the Bridgeport web site and as presented in the American Association of University Professors [AAUP] journal *Academe* in 1994, authors Moon and Bergquist state that the University enjoyed significant growth through the late 1960s and enrollment peaked at over 9,000 in 1969. The University began to experience some decreases in enrollment in the early 1970s though many new programs were added. Moon and Bergquist (1993) describe the decline

in this way “Twenty years later, during the 1989-90 academic year, enrollments had declined to 5,200 full and part-time students (exclusive of the law school). By the fall of 1990, student enrollments had dropped to 4,300. The following year the number was down to 3,800, and in the spring of 1992, enrollment was estimated at 2,200. As of the fall of 1992, student numbers had declined to a reported 1,400” (p.37). Such a decline surely represents a structure that has tumbled down. It only survives today due to an infusion of cash - over \$50 million - from a branch of the Unification Church. While there were many external factors that caused this dramatic decline, at its heart was a bitter and prolonged labor dispute with the faculty. What exacerbated this particular labor dispute was a lack of honesty and good faith between the faculty, the president and the board. In one specific case, the president, at the height of the conflict was saying one thing to the faculty and another thing altogether to the board of trustees. It is not possible to have and support two diametrically opposed truths so therefore one of the truths must be false, a lie, or, to use Kant’s expression, a broken promise. A president acting morally, according to Olscamp, would never have put his or her institution in such jeopardy because honesty is a virtue or an attribute of the moral leader.

Why should there be an expectation that college and university presidents will act morally and ethically? Olscamp (2003) would argue that it lies in the higher purpose of higher education which he describes in this way

the university has an overarching vision of its comprehensive educational effort, into which every piece of the educational program fits like pieces of a picture puzzle. This also presupposes that university leadership can relate this overall plan or concept to our societal needs, not just employment, but for purposes of good citizenry, the protection of legal and moral right, and social progress. Indeed, at bottom, is not the mission of

enabling a population to fulfill its potentialities, including especially those for good, a moral matter (p. 11)?

In short, education is for the common good and the common good is best enacted by moral leaders who make decisions within a moral context.

Olscamp (2003) draws an interesting comparison between the corporate CEO and the education CEO consistent with the Kantian example above. "A CEO has a clear moral obligation to keep the promises she has made on behalf of the company. Thus contracts must be fulfilled, workers' health and safety must be protected, policies must be openly and honestly explained to shareholders, and where the public interest is involved to the general polity as well, and business practices must treat individuals fairly and justly" (p. 67). He goes on to say "those obligations (of the college president) rest on the same principles from which the obligation of corporate CEOs spring: the obligation to keep promises, the obligation not to cause unnecessary human pain and suffering, the obligation to contribute to the general well-being, the moral necessity to treat each individual fairly and equitably and to do good and avoid doing evil to the extent this is possible" (p. 67).

Chapter II - Conversations about Moral Leadership in
Faith-Based Higher Education

Methodology

Over the course of a nine week period in February, March and April 2009, I conducted interviews with leaders at nine institutions of higher education. The participants, their institutions and faith affiliation are as follows:

- F. Gregory Campbell, Carthage College, Kenosha, WI, Lutheran (ELCA)
- Margaret Carney, O.S.F., Saint Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY, Roman Catholic (Franciscan)
- Arnold M. Eisen, The Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, NY, Jewish (Conservative)
- Thomas F. Flynn, Alvernia University, Reading, PA, Roman Catholic (Franciscan)
- Arthur F. Kirk, Jr., Saint Leo University, Saint Leo, FL, Roman Catholic (Benedictine)
- Theodore E. Long, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA, Church of the Brethren
- Kevin E. Mackin, O.F.M., Mount Saint Mary College, Newburgh, NY, Roman Catholic (Dominican)
- Thomas H. Powell, Mount St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, MD, Roman Catholic (Diocesan)
- Michael J. Sheeran, S.J., Regis University, Denver, CO, Roman Catholic (Jesuit)

Summaries of the questions and participant responses are embedded below in each section which can generally be placed under these category headings: moral leadership, faith dimensions of leadership, the business of higher education and media and public opinion. Each section includes some relevant background material based on my research. I purposely refer to this section by the descriptor 'conversation' rather than 'survey.' This study is not meant to provide statistical samples about styles of leadership or the incorporation of moral aspects in leadership. Rather, it provides valuable and experience-laden insight into the discussion of moral leadership in faith-based institutions of higher education from leaders whose combined service totals over 100 years. Four of the presidents above served more than one institution.

Interviews

Moral Leadership

In order to determine if a president can act as a moral leader, one must first understand how a president governs and relates to the many constituents that populate the higher education landscape. In an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* Marcy (2008) draws some interesting parallels between the U.S. Presidency and the college and university presidency. She says “the vast majority of academic presidents, like the U.S. president, operate within a context of shared governance” (p. A34, para. 2). She goes on to say “They lead constituencies that have competing goals, with the responsibility for improving the institution in ways that are often harder to measure than market returns or profit margins” (p. A34, para. 2).

The faculty is not the only constituency a college president must deal with. Altogether “presidents...have five sets: the faculty, the trustees, students and their families, alumni and outside donors, and governmental and other external groups. Satisfying all of those constituents on every major issue is not possible, nor is their unanimous approval always desirable. But their united opposition is fatal” (Marcy, 2008, p. A34, para. 6).

The relationship between the faculty and the president is one that can make an institution soar or could cause the collapse of a presidency or even the institution itself. The presidents in the *The American College President* published by American Council on Education [ACE] (2007) comment on the changing relationship over the last generation and say “Although faculty concerns have always occupied a good deal of presidential attention, disparities in attitude along generational or disciplinary lines were not so nearly sharp 20 years ago” (p. 3). Going on they said

Most presidents noted a clear distinction between junior faculty and longer-serving faculty. Younger faculty members tend to be more aware of the nature of the external

environment, more attuned to students, more in step with the technological revolution, more concerned with quality-of-life issues than with academic governance issues, and less committed to the institution for the long term (p. 3).

The balance of power between the faculty and the president in the higher education governance model is shifting as well. There are fewer tenured faculty today than there were in 1986. According to a 2005 AAUP study as reported on their web site, from 1989 to 2005 the percentage of tenured or tenure-track faculty positions in U.S. colleges fell from 46.8% to 31.9%. Burgan (2006) says “they (the faculty) too often give up on their power to act effectively and efficiently” (2006, p. xxii). Mortimer and Sathre (2007) go on to describe the faculty in this way

On the faculty side of the matter, apathy and lack of respect for the governance process may be among the most significant barriers to meaningful faculty participation. In our view, patterns of participation in the political life of the campus reflect those in the general polity. That is, there are likely to be three groups: a small group who participate actively and serve on committees; a somewhat larger group who attempt to be aware of and knowledgeable about governance issues and may get involved from time to time; and the largest group who choose, for whatever reason, not to participate actively in governance (p. 26).

If we accept the notion that there is a generational disparity among the faculty, we certainly can accept the notion that a generational disparity exists among the other audiences described by Marcy (2008) above. The expectations of traditionally aged undergraduates may be strikingly different from those of a robust but older adult population. Those who get their news from the internet and those who read the daily newspaper may well have different expectations.

Alumni from the 1950s have different sensitivities than those of the 2000s. The interviewees understand well this complexity and it is within this context that the interview responses must be viewed. There was a great deal to be said about the notion of the president as a moral leader.

Questions for discussion: Is the president a moral leader? How do you exhibit moral and ethical leadership in your daily work as president on both the micro and macro levels? Can you describe a situation where you were called on to act in your capacity as moral or ethical leader? Do the faculty look to the president as moral leader and what is the evolving relationship between the President and the faculty?

While there was general consensus that the college president is a moral leader, there was trepidation and caution about making any declarations about claiming to be so. President Campbell expressed it this way, "I think anyone who talks about himself or herself as a moral leader had better pray for forgiveness." This emphasizes the need for the moral leader to be a humble leader. President Campbell emphasized the need for humility in the presidency. President Flynn sounds a similar caution; "I think presidents have to be very careful about moral leadership. There are all sorts of pitfalls. Presidents are automatically moral leaders whether they like it or not and that has something to do with prominence and it has something to do with being in the catbird seat. They have moral leadership by virtue of position." He goes on to say, "The president has the position of enormous importance but presidents who get too caught up in that are headed for disaster"

The particular circumstance of each president in each institution frames the discussion of moral leadership. Each college or university requires something different of its leader. This may change over time and through the generations depending on the circumstances of the institution. In addition, moral leadership can be active and passive. President Carney describes the active

leader in this way, "Some presidents by personality choose to be much more of a public academic leader and leave all those business functions to the provost or someone else on their team. Sometimes personal aptitude or preference plays a role." Chancellor Eisen made the decision to be an active leader due to his circumstances and he says, "I had to establish a kind of moral leadership if I was going to lead this institution forward since the main thing it was identified with was training rabbis. How can you have a non-rabbi lead an institution where the signature program is a rabbinical school?" President Long describes a more passive approach to moral leadership and says, "I don't make a plan for communicating my moral leadership. Most of the evidence of moral leadership is cumulative and not incident specific. It's time after time after time demonstrating a certain pattern of action. There are, of course, incidents, and how you respond to them does tend to dramatize and sometimes to create or solidify an impression of the leader as a moral leader."

What are the incidents that compel a president to take on an active and public mantle as moral leader? There are sometimes circumstances that capture the interest of the nation like the shootings at Virginia Tech or the murder of Matthew Shepherd, a gay student at the University of Wyoming. President Flynn describes some particular circumstances that require moral leadership; "The two situations in which the presidents are automatically moral leaders is when they need to respond to a situation that is, in their view, a situation of right and wrong and a situation that has either intrinsic great gravity or even if the situation is not of great moment the issue around it is. For example, if you have assault on campus that is racial, that's both an intrinsically serious matter and the incident itself is serious. If someone scrawled 'fag' on a windshield, the incident itself is not serious but the content is. The president is a moral leader, like it or not, by how they respond, and they are a moral leader if they choose not to respond."

Notwithstanding the circumstances in President Flynn's comment, President Powell makes a good point about the more mundane and day to day circumstances that require moral leadership and says, "Leaders help communities deal with complicated issues and problems. Problems that universities have often come down to moral issues. The way we talk to each other and listen and speak to each other has got to be around the moral principles of honesty and justice."

Finally, President Long makes a very good point about the qualities of moral leadership. He says that, "Moral leadership is not absolutist leadership. It's a matter of balance. It's a matter of prioritization. It's a matter of partial achievement. It's a matter of practicality. The activity of moral leadership is always a calculating one. Max Weber talks about the ethic of responsibility. I have the responsibility for the imperfect outcomes which are always going to be imperfect in some way and for maximizing the good for the institution at any given time. I think moral leadership sometimes involves doing difficult things that people outside see as lacking moral integrity in some sense." Moral leadership is not always practical however. Sometimes leaders are called to do impractical things because they are morally right. One of these respondents spoke of particular situation and having to return a large monetary gift to the donor because the strings attached to the gift required the institution to behave in a way inconsistent with its mission.

The college president who wishes to be a moral leader must have an understanding of and a heartfelt commitment to the mission of the institution. This was a predominant theme in the responses. The respondents were passionate in their feeling that moral leadership had to be based in mission. President Sheeran stated that, "Moral leadership has a lot more to do with being sure that what the school does in its own activities is truly consistent with what it proclaims as a mission and what it is trying to say to its students their life ought to be all about." For President

Sheeran this means; “In the religious frame I think it's awfully important for us to be going out of our way to educate people who are poor, to put money behind the faculty who are interested in serious and legitimate academic service learning, and to be sure that the school is known for making very clear the religious commitments of its sponsors.” The other presidents are no less committed to mission. For example, President Kirk says, “I have always felt a responsibility as the president to be very faithful to the mission of the institution.” President Long echoes that statement and says, “Everything for me starts with our mission and statement of institutional identity and value. My job is to be the steward of the institutional mission. One's moral leadership really extends from that authorization and that role.” President Mackin finds a way to frame moral leadership within the context of the particular denominational identity; “I always look first at the mission statement in church related colleges and universities. The mission of the college has to be very clear. I usually frame moral leadership within the context of Catholic and Franciscan and now Catholic and Dominican.³ I frame moral leadership in terms of our identity and our mission.”

Mission animates the college and university and, in turn, the president or chancellor. These men and women then have a responsibility to promote and preserve the mission of the college. President Campbell believes mission is an important component of heritage and states, “I think it's a very important for whoever is in a leadership position to have an understanding of Carthage's tradition and the reason Carthage was founded and the reasons why it has continued to exist and why people have supported it.” Leadership does not stop with the president. It is

³ President Mackin had been president at Siena College, a Franciscan institution, near Albany, New York. His current college, Mount St. Mary College, was founded by a group of Dominican sisters. He is the first non-Dominican and non-sister to be president. equally

important that the board and other members of the campus community become invested in the mission as well. President Carney puts it this way; “There must be a consciousness on the part of the institution and the board about how we orient or inculcate within them a commitment to this mission.” It is vitally important that board members be in tune with institutional mission. It is difficult because board members have limited exposure to the daily life of the college. For some board members, their exposure may be limited to three or four meetings per year. Board members, as stewards of the institution, must be held to the same high moral standards as the president. It is the president first and foremost who must help frame this conversation for the board. It is the president who must confront issues when a member of the board acts outside of the construct of the mission.

President Kirk made the identification of mission and its core values the central focus of his work when he arrived at St. Leo University. Here he describes his process for building a sense of mission within the community which surely is a best practice today. “I pulled together a fairly small group of people to work with me to identify and define, in behavioral terms, core values of the institution. At our very best what values were at work? The result of that was the identification and definition in behavioral terms out six core values three are directly from the Benedictines: community, respect for all people, and responsible stewardship. Three are more generic: excellence, personal development, and integrity. Since then we have gone about our business in every respect based on these core values. At least one value is integrated into every single course in the curriculum. We have a matrix that we keep to make certain that within our core liberal arts and sciences foundation that every student must take, and in all of the majors, is that all of the values are appropriately addressed. They are part of our hiring process. We screen people based on the core values. All of the candidates write a couple page paper [*sic*] on how

they would contribute to our mission and what core values mean to them. They are fully integrated in the foundation of all of our student life and student development programs. They have been very instrumental in our decision-making as an institution.”

Issues of Faith and Church

Can you lead without a belief structure in place? More specifically, does belief in God make it easier for you to lead? How does a belief system sustain someone in a leadership position? One of the things I found most profound in Heschel was his ability to express that which could not be expressed. He took the concept of the infinite and all powerful God and framed it in such a way that you could understand that you could never understand and yet you would feel joy in that realization.

In the early faith-based colleges and universities, denominations could be assured of influence over the college by making sure that a majority of the board members were representatives of the denomination. In many ways, the early presidents were much more like clergy than we think of the president today. Presidents would travel from congregation to congregation recruiting students and seeking funds and materials for the establishment of libraries for example or for the general operation of the college. While the role of the president as a clergyman has greatly diminished today, the role of the president as a fund raiser has reached new heights in twenty-first century America.

Questions for discussion: Since many institutions have legally separated from their original church sponsors, what is the role of the president in keeping that heritage alive, if any? Catholic colleges still have a preponderance of Catholic presidents though the number of vowed, ordained or religious presidents has declined. Protestant colleges and colleges of other

faith traditions may call a president from outside the institutional faith tradition. Is this good or bad or neutral? How should a president's personal faith life affect their leadership?

There were some varying shades of reaction to these questions. In general, there is a commitment to a role for the president in sustaining the faith heritage of the particular institution, but to different degrees. President Sheeran points up the difficulty when a leader comes from outside the faith tradition. Sheeran says, "It's really hard to maintain the tradition when the faith community⁴ can't staff the place in at least large enough numbers to put a stamp on it. It doesn't have to be the presidency. We do a formation program for our faculty so that throughout the faculty this Ignatian tradition is learned. The first generation of presidents who were not ministers at the Ivy schools were the sons of ministers, but after that it just petered out and the influence of the church on any of those schools just simply ended. I am afraid of that sort of thing happening in our Catholic schools."

A number of respondents had a view that while the faith of the president or chancellor is important, strict doctrinal or ordained alignment may not be as much so. President Long puts it this way, "As a leader anywhere your faith obviously plays some role in how you're oriented. The peculiar tradition you come out of shapes the way you think about things. The way I think about the church and the college stems, in part, from my Lutheranism. The way I think about academic freedom stems, in part, from my Lutheranism." President Long, as noted above, is president at a Church of the Brethren college.

Chancellor Eisen is only the second non-rabbi to serve the Jewish Theological Seminary. He faces a particular challenge which he describes thus, "When you bear the title rabbi in front of your name, you are identified as a spokesperson for this religious tradition; you are wholly

⁴ In President Sheeran's particular situation, he is referring to the Jesuit community.

identified with it. Whereas if you're a Jew or a professor of Judaism you are not fully identified with it the same way a rabbi would be. The gap I had to overcome was not a gap in Jewishness, as it were, or even in perceived Jewishness, but simply that I'm not a rabbi and so I was not a part of this club of rabbis and I had to win the trust of rabbis to let them know that I cared about the synagogue, I cared about the rabbinate and I cared about the movement, our conservative movement as much as they do."

While it may have been the tradition, or perhaps even a preference, to find a rabbi to serve as Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary, such a candidate may not be available. This is true for other presidents as well like Carthage College from the Evangelical Lutheran tradition. President Campbell reflects on this reality and states, "The older practice of finding a respected pastor from the denomination who would seem to comport himself right and choose him as president is behind us and it has to be. It's not that pastors can't be good leaders and presidents, but it is not the case that their status as pastor automatically qualifies them for such a role." This represents the crux of the conversation about leaders and faith tradition. What is the balance between faith and commitment to mission and competency? The ideal solution would be to find a person from the faith tradition who is also highly competent, but this is becoming more difficult.

President Flynn is less concerned about denominational affiliation. He says, "I don't think that moral leadership is denominationally based. I don't think a president of a Catholic university is more moral because he or she is always spouting church teaching. That might make him or her a better Catholic but to say that they are more moral, we ought to let God decide that."

More generally, is it important to be a person of faith in order to lead a faith-based institution? The presidents interviewed would support my assertion that it is important though to

varying degrees. President Long explains it this way; “When you are a person of faith, to serve an institution of faith provides a happy conjunction of personal and institutional orientation. In a certain sense it's a more holistic leadership role than if you have to separate those two.” He goes on to say that, “your faith animates your own ethical decision-making, your own orientation to life, to work and to people.” President Powell has a more emphatic position on this topic and he says, “I have a special trust that has been entrusted to me at this institution to be the chief person for our Catholic identity and I don't delegate that to anybody. I worry deeply that, in a lot of Catholic institutions now, with the advent of mission officers, that the presidents have ceded their responsibility.”

Whether or not the president is from the particular faith of the sponsoring organization, presidents are linked with the standards articulated by that faith tradition. President Kirk states it this way; “Any president of any church related college is appropriately held to a higher standard, and any significant deviation from that standard will do a significant damage. Whether we particularly articulate a moral code and project that we are moral leaders or not, people say that if you are the leader of a Catholic college or a religiously affiliated organization then we need to walk the walk, and when you deviate it is very, very damaging particularly to young people.” Interestingly, President Kirk, a Roman Catholic, served his first presidency at Keuka College in New York – an American Baptist college. He professed no difficulty in leading this institution. He grew in understanding of the American Baptist traditions while holding on to his own Catholic faith.

The presidents continue to look to mission and how the heritage is embedded in it for a key to sustaining the tradition. The president is also, for many, the nexus between the faith tradition and the broader world in which the institutions exist. President Long feels is it his

responsibility “to clarify what the relationship is with the church and the college, because that clarity has to be the basis for how you go forward. The second thing for me is that, as part of the mission and heritage of the institution, I believe I have a responsibility to find the best way to sustain that founding heritage and to give it life in the current context.” President Mackin, in his previous and current presidencies, looks for intentional ways to express the connection between faith and mission. He describes his approach thus, “I try to create a program that will be a catalyst to ensure the traditions that are the foundation of the college. I look for a center like a center for Franciscan and Catholic studies or a center for Dominican and Catholic studies.”

President Long also feels that there has to be an intentionality about heritage and faith particularly as it relates to institutional identity. He says, “The heritage of the institution should be used in a way that advances the institution not in a way that holds the institution back. If you take the Brethren heritage out of Elizabethtown, you've got a nice small college; put the Brethren heritage in and you've got something that gives the place a particular identity and character.”

A college or university is not a church. While each institution might have religious services and observances, and most do, the institution is not a church or synagogue; it is a college, university or seminary and there is a difference. President Sheeran addresses the difference and he says, “Ours is the kind of a Catholic college that invites rather than commands. The role of the bishop (as the representative of the Catholic Church) is indeed to be really clear about what we hold and therefore to command. The Catholic college's role is not that. And so we are presenting things that are inviting to people. We spend a lot of money on professional staff for liturgy and for university ministry, but we train those university ministers not to twist arms.” There is a role for the faith-based college or university that goes beyond the campus. Some of this depends on the public stature of each institution, but each college or university is

known within its community. The Jewish Theological Seminary occupies a special place in Conservative and American Judaism. The Chancellor's role is to manage the balance between the internal and external audiences. Chancellor Eisen describes it this way; "While the chancellors have had to look toward Conservative Judaism, they have also had to look toward the Jewish world in general and the world in general beyond the Jews. My dual focus is not necessarily religious versus non-religious. The question is to look toward Conservative Judaism but also to look beyond Conservative Judaism." He goes on to say, "We are all in a position that we have some special responsibility to America but we're trying to figure out how to fulfill it. If you are an academic institution connected to a religion then your responsibility is really acute because people will listen, and that's all the more reason why you should be careful about what you say."

And why should people listen? President Powell says, "In this environment right now, there's a niche for a strong faith-based place that's not gone over the edge. I want us to be a contemporary, robust and Catholic institution that deals with the real critical moral issues of the day."

On the matter of one's personal faith, each interviewee had a particular point of view on the role of personal belief within their daily lives. While some of this is reflected in the responses above, the following responses speak more specifically to the issue. They also address the issue of charging one's own spiritual batteries which would be most important for the president of the faith-based college or university. President Sheeran, an ordained member of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) relies on his "pastoral instincts (to) guide our decision processes, the way we announce things, the level of consultation we do with our people. It's the priest thing that I find is really important in keeping this school on its mission. The issue is whether people

who assume the presidency have that pastoral sense that has been traditionally there with priest presidents or with nun presidents.” As discussed previously in this paper, priest and nun presidents are getting harder to attract as the religious communities decline in numbers. President Sheeran earlier referred to Regis’ efforts to build an Ignatian culture among both lay and religious leaders. While his preference is clearly that the president should be a member of the Jesuit community, an intentional approach to educate a new generation of lay leaders is an acceptable solution.

President Carney relies on her personal Franciscan spirituality to sustain her in her work. She describes it this way; “As I’m running across campus I have a habit of reflection on what it means to be a Franciscan that I can call on very readily. There is something about one’s grounding in formal education in theology, community experience in one’s church or faith group that helps you stay honest and grounded and perhaps some personal habits of reflection, prayer and spirituality. Those things help you avoid the seduction of getting into the framework that says I am the president; I have full executive powers; I will do what I want to do in this instance because I can. That’s a temptation. There are moments when it’s easy to get caught in your executive persona.” The president – lay, ordained or professed – must find a way to keep spiritually alive in order to remain vibrant as the moral leader of the college or university.

Business of Higher Education

The business of higher education in America has grown dramatically since the establishment of Harvard in 1636. Morey (2001) tells us that higher education is a \$211 billion business. In 2008 that figure is likely to be between \$250 billion and \$300 billion (p. 300, para. 22). In the near term that growth is expected to continue. According to Chabotar (2006) “Total college enrollment is expected to grow from 16.4 million in 2004 to 18.1 million in 2013” (p. 6).

However, there are some regional variances in this growth and some regions are expecting a decline in traditional college age undergraduates.

Higher education was not always the mega business we think of today. The literature of higher education history is rife with stories of presidents who travelled from town to town, congregation to congregation and potential benefactor to potential benefactor seeking the funds to continue the enterprise. Often the presidents would come away with a few volumes to add to the collegiate library.

A brief examination of the history of the presidency provides an interesting parallel to the history of the business of higher education. When you look at the history of the college and university presidency in the United States over 400 years, you see a dramatic shift from a position of penury to a position of privilege. For most of this history, compensation was not a prime attractor for presidents and faculty. Rudolph (1990) describes it as "a profession that was not expected, and finally not permitted, to enjoy or to aspire to the material pleasures and living standards that elsewhere defined American goals" (p. 193). That has changed. According to the 2006 *Chronicle of Higher Education* annual survey of private college president salaries, there were 14 presidents who received total compensation in excess of \$1 million. Over 100 presidents received total compensation in excess of \$500,000. While these men and women undoubtedly work very hard for these wages, such amounts call for more intense scrutiny. Such scrutiny has brought to light some dramatic excesses which have led to embarrassment for some institutions and shame on fallen leaders. With the higher salaries, we have also seen the American college president grow in power as well. This power is most manifest on campus, but it also goes beyond the campus community. Some well placed presidents also garner attractive seats at corporate board tables which come with additional compensation. I do not mean to imply that there is an

automatic tipping over to the 'dark side' once a president passes a certain numeric threshold, but I do believe that money has and continues to alter the landscape of higher education in America.

Management in higher education could easily be summed up in margins and factors, but some of the best literature draws a strong link between mission and management which is valuable for our discussion of leadership. The 6th edition of *Strategic Financial Analysis for Higher Education* (2005) states "Well-managed institutions use their mission to drive success and financial metrics to determine affordability" (p. 2). It also goes on to say that "Strategic financial analysis is a combination of approaches, methods and tools to analyze, evaluate and communicate financial information about whether an institution is achieving its mission from a financial perspective" (p. 2). Kent Chabotar (2006) and Michael Townsley (2002) both focus on mission as a necessary ingredient in financial planning.

In order to stave off declining revenue and the threat of closure, private colleges turned to non traditional markets as a ready source of revenue. The adult learner became a common feature of the private college. As technology increased, more private colleges began to experiment with on-line delivery and distance education. Branch campuses were opened in order to provide convenient access to students.

These efforts to expand into the non-traditional market have paid great dividends for some small private colleges. The revenue generated by these markets has created a thriving economy for many colleges. Others have observed this trend and the for-profit college is attempting to maximize this market by providing high quality, convenient and competitively priced higher education. They do so without the pressure of some of the fixed costs of residential colleges: large administration, tenured faculty, large physical plants. Townsley

(2002) says "For-profit colleges target continuing-education, nontraditional, and working students who have collectively been the cash cow of not-for-profit colleges" (p. 40).

According to a Minter study (as cited in Townsley 2002) "Thirty-five percent of small colleges depend on student enrollment to generate more than 60 percent of their revenue. Twelve percent are practically commercial enterprises; they rely on student enrollment for more than 85% of their revenue" (p. 27). The only tenable solution for the small college is growth and managed increases in tuition and fees.

Depending on where you are in the country, growth may be a problem. If you happen to be a private college in the northeastern United States, the number of high school graduates is expected to decrease anywhere from 1% to 35% by the year 2018. If you happen to be located in Nevada, Arizona, Utah or Colorado, you will see increases in the range of 26% to 103% over that same period (Chabotar, 2006, p. 7). Roughly two-thirds of the colleges and universities in the United States are located in the arc that goes from the states just west of the great lakes, moving eastward through Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania and throughout the mid-Atlantic states and the northeast. Most of the population growth is somewhere else.

Colleges and universities in the business of traditional, undergraduate education will compete for a finite pool of potential students. To win, a college must be able to beat the competition on program, quality or price or the college must be able to exploit new markets such as adult, continuing, graduate or professional education. This is an area where a new generation of proprietary or for-profit schools have made significant inroads over the last couple of decades.

New proprietary schools have changed that model.

And while for-profits maintain an emphasis on applied education for career preparation, they also incorporate general education into their technical programs and offer extensive

student support services. As these institutions have adopted more of the features of traditional postsecondary institutions, the financial and educational distinctions between the two sectors have also blurred (*Change*, 2001, p. 47, para. 2).

That publication also states “What has caused concern is the legitimacy that for-profit institutions are earning as they increasingly obtain accreditation and therefore access to a greater share of government-funded student financial aid” (*Change*, 2001, p. 47, para. 2). So in many respects the proprietary school of the late 20th and early twenty-first centuries looks like traditional baccalaureate and graduate degree granting institutions. There are key significant differences however. Winston (1999) said “(the University of) Phoenix teaches its 60,000 students with a total of 45 full-time faculty members (up from 26 because of worries about re-accreditation) - and 4,500 adjuncts” (part I, para. 2). By comparison, the University of Maryland web site reports total enrollment of just over 36,000 in the fall of 2007 and full time faculty of 2,896 and part time faculty of 856 for a total of 3,752. Imagine the labor cost difference between those two models. The institution of full-time, tenured faculty is well engrained in the American system of higher education. As colleges struggle to make ends meet and face the competition, tenure is at risk.

By the year 2006, enrollment at the University of Phoenix had reached over 230,000 - a 170,000 increase from the time Winston wrote his article (Kinser, 2006, p. 24, para. 7). In addition, Kinser (2006) says “Fewer than two percent (less than 400) of its 20,000 faculty are considered full-time employees” (p. 24, para. 17). That represents an increase in whole number of full-time faculty, but not as a percentage of the total faculty.

The University of Phoenix and all its various sites and online programs are fully accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and

Schools. They were first accredited in 1978. Kinser (2006) says “From a policy perspective, its (University of Phoenix) prominence has gone a long way toward legitimizing for-profit higher education in state capitals and in Congress” (p. 24, para. 30).

More and more, small colleges are forced to turn to debt in order to keep their campuses and their programs vibrant. New tuition revenue simply does not come in fast enough or in amounts significant enough to make a difference. According to Townsley (2002)

colleges and universities now carry more than \$100 billion in bond debt. In 2000, institutions of higher education added more than \$15.5 billion in bond debt to their balance sheets. Public universities can turn to legislatures to fund their capital projects, while independent colleges and universities hold most of this new debt (p. 41).

Private colleges, particularly those which are faith-based and church related, have traditionally cornered the market on “values centered” education. For-profit colleges have typically been successful because they promote the “value” of their education in terms of cost and convenience. Can we have both? I believe that private colleges in the future will be able to survive through continued expansion into non-traditional markets, by securing capital from new sources and by adhering to their “values” orientation. As students shop for a program in higher education, some will look for the “values” experience while looking for a good “value.”

Questions for discussion: Does the shift from the purely "academic" president to the "professional administrator" model indicate that higher education going in the same direction as health care? Will we see more presidents who act more like CEOs? How have the increasing financial pressures on private higher education in a competitive market affected the role of the president? How entrepreneurial must a president be in order to succeed today? Does the business of higher education get in the way of the moral responsibility of higher

education and the work of the president? Has the for-profit competitive landscape altered the role of the president in not-for-profit higher education?

The answers of the presidents and chancellor in this section were much more wide ranging, which likely reflects the various business models in place at each institution. This group of schools range from traditional, residential undergraduate institutions to complex business models which include significant adult, continuing, graduate and on-line education.

President/Administrator

There is more than ample evidence of the rich history of the president rising from the ranks of the faculty. Much of what we see in higher education today is steeped in history. President Carney describes it in this way; "If you look at the rituals of becoming president and the inauguration of the president, it's steeped in academic tradition, and so we have this popular image of the president as the public intellectual. I don't know that people have been educated to understand the extraordinary business functions that one must see to." These extraordinary business functions have emerged over time as competition and complexity have increased. Even with the increasing demands on the president for administrative competencies, there is still a preference for the academic as leader. President Mackin is one proponent of this and he says, "I think the president should first and foremost be an academic leader. I think it's unfortunate that money issues have assumed such a large role in the life of the president. Presidents are often administrators. That is a result of the competition to get money." President Mackin also makes it a point to teach every semester so that he remains connected to the academic enterprise.

President Sheeran holds a contrary point of view and he says, "The idea of an academic as president - that is an academic who is a priest in our case - is a novelty that came and went since World War II. We are today much more open to 'let's get a Jesuit who is a professional

and who has the right training who might be a fundraiser or a good manager or an accountant, but not necessarily an academic. Especially important: no matter who is selected, the person has to have a whole set of social skills.” Of particular note in President Sheeran’s comment is the desire to get a “Jesuit” who is a professional. This satisfies both his desire to preserve mission and keep faith with the heritage while providing for the administrative needs of the university. Not every order or denomination has an available supply of competent members from its religious communities and finding that right mix could be difficult.

Fiscal Integrity

So much of the society dialogue at this time has to do with financial impropriety. Americans are looking for leaders whom they can trust with their money; this includes the parents and students who come to universities and donors who contribute to them. President Long takes this responsibility very seriously and he states, “Part of one’s moral responsibility is for fiscal integrity in the institution. Why are dollars and cents part of your moral responsibility? It gives the institution the capacity to implement its mission. If you compromise the financial integrity of the institution, then you’ve compromised your capacity to deliver on the mission. The institution’s resources should be directed primarily towards its mission and not towards things that are not germane to its mission.” Again, the president returns to mission. There is a recurring theme that emphasizes that mission is the beating heart of the enterprise.

As stated earlier during a discussion of practicality, there are times when the president has to act in a way that is moral, but difficult. Most of higher education in America is in need of financial resources from tuition and gift dollars. Sometimes donors have unrealistic or questionable expectations about the use of donated funds and the president is the person who must preserve institutional integrity. President Sheeran has some first hand experience in this

area which he here describes; “During our campaign we've had a number of major donors who have come to us and said I will give you a large gift if you change this or that about your school. I have turned them down. The word is out in the community that we are trying to live by our standards of religious approach and not those of someone who wants to buy the right to determine what is appropriate.”

Economic Pressures

Chancellor Eisen describes the current situation for higher education very well and he says, “The economy exacerbated the demands on chief executives of institutions of higher education, and the economy has also exacerbated the requirement for innovation. Innovation requires cultural change. Cultural change requires leadership. So at the very same moment you are asked to exercise leadership inside to accomplish cultural change, you are drawn ever more to the outside, as it were, to raise the money necessary to achieve this change. Both of these are imperative to institutional survival.” Colleges and universities exist within the construct of the American and world economies. What happens in the broader financial markets takes a toll on higher education. If the stock market loses money, college endowments decline. If the cost of oil rises, colleges pay more to run equipment and heat buildings. If the credit markets become tight, colleges and universities have less access to loans for new construction. The president and chancellor must lead within this context.

President Powell, in a moment of dreamy optimism wishes for a simpler time and he says, “I dream of the day when we have such a huge endowment and we have a waiting list of students that I can make every decision in a vacuum without looking at issues of money. I just worry deeply that we're not going to become so market driven that we forget what our niche is and our niche here is Catholicism. We should not sacrifice that when making business

decisions.” President Powell again returns to the mission and priorities of the university as guideposts for business operations. He goes on to say, “What I try to do is look through a filter around our five priorities which are board set, Catholic identity, academic excellence, student life, making sure we have a sound fiscal base for future generations, and building our reputation. What I worry about is those decisions that get made at a level that is lower than I am and, therefore, I need to watch my rhetoric that I'm not putting so much pressure on everybody about my personal worries about enrollment which makes everyone paranoid.”

Business Practices and Competition

On a very practical level, can you be moral and run the business of higher education? How do you fire someone if your ethos is based in a belief of care for the individual? President Flynn puts it this way, “There are charitable and compassionate ways to fire people and there are ‘son of a bitch’ ways to fire people. I'm not sure handling it with charity and compassion means you're a moral leader but I think that if you do not handle it well you have failed some kind of test.” Sometimes it might be perceived to be immoral to keep someone employed who is disruptive to your campus community. The president has to look at the greater good of the campus community when making difficult decisions that involve money. This could include firing someone for cause or having to make lay-offs due to economic hardship. President Carney speaks to the complexity of management and says, “There are so many facets of managing the life of the campus now that were not as high profile only a few years ago and require either different competencies on the part of the president and the ability on the part of the president to build a team that can manage all of that.” The president must remain at the moral center of the team to guide the decision making process so that the institution behaves in a way consistent with its mission.

Finally, how can our institutions be moral and competitive? How do you differentiate your institution in the marketplace? President Kirk heads a complex and comprehensive institution. St. Leo University is a residential undergraduate college while at the same time being one of the largest providers of on-line and off-site education in the country. Given this complexity, how does an institution preserve its faith-based identity? President Kirk describes it this way; “Online, our Catholic identity is an important part of our outreach; it's how we differentiate ourselves from University of Phoenix or Strayer or some of the larger not-for-profit online competitors. We use our Catholic mission and our core values, our relationship to church. A lot of people choose us because we are church related. We don't teach them because they are Catholic we teach them because we are Catholic.” And yet, at faith-based institutions, there is an expectation of behavior even in a fiercely competitive market. President Powell has a proper perspective on this and says “We have an obligation always never to speak badly against any other institution. The moral imperative is to be as good as you can possibly be in those things that you offer and be truthful about those programs.”

Media and Public Opinion

We live in a society at a time when anything we say or do can go ‘viral’ on the internet. The internet and other electronic media, however, are free of the careful scrutiny of an editor or editorial board, and comments can be dramatically taken out of context. College and university presidents can be easy sources of public comment. The president or chancellor of an institution is also a very public person. The presidents and chancellor in my interview group readily accept this as a fact of life. Chief executives in higher education are often called upon for public comment on a wide range of issues. Sr. Margaret Carney, President of St. Bonaventure University, referred to it above as the “popular image of the president as the public intellectual.”

In this role, presidents are called upon to make public statements, write opinions and sometimes appear on the televised media or before congress. All the interviewees would readily accept these roles. However, there are times when it would be better if presidential behavior would remain private for the sake of the institution. What follows are some extreme examples of presidential poor judgment and abuse of power.

American University in Washington, D.C. has a checkered history of leadership over the last several decades. Benjamin Ladner served as president there from 1994 to 2005, but he was ousted by the board of trustees over a scandal involving personal expenses charged to the university. According to a 2005 article in *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* "Auditors had questioned spending by Ladner that included French wine, expensive restaurants both here and abroad and chauffeurs who ran personal errands" (p. 13, para. 5). It was estimated that the personal expenses were in excess of \$500,000. What kind of man was he that would run up such expenses then pass them off as supposedly legitimate work expenses? This appears to be a person with a flawed sense of entitlement due his position.

Unfortunately, this was the second such scandal that rocked the presidency at American University. According to an article in *The New York Times* (1990) Richard Berendzen "was forced to resign as the university's president last spring after it was discovered that he had used his office telephone to make obscene calls to women" (para. 1). What is it that makes a president feel that they are immune to accusation and immune to prosecution? By all accounts, Berendzen is a brilliant man, though flawed by lust. He does continue to teach at the university until this very day. In each case, the offending president received a payout. Ladner received \$950,000 and Berendzen received \$1 million.

Hillsdale College in Michigan can be described as a conservative place. At the heart of their mission is a strict policy against accepting any government or taxpayer subsidy for its operations. Though founded by Free Will Baptists in the mid-nineteenth century, it has always been non-denominational and independent but staunchly conservative. It was in this environment that a heartbreaking scandal took place. One night, Lissa Roche, daughter-in-law of sitting President George C. Roche III was found dead on campus. An article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2000) says "Her death, ruled a suicide, and allegations she had made hours earlier of a 19-year affair with her father-in-law, George C. Roche III, the college's president and a conservative icon, had threatened to plunge the college into ignominy" (para. 1). Such an allegation was shocking and startling on this conservative campus. *The Chronicle* (2000) article goes on to say "It has strict behavior codes and austere rules on fraternization. Men and women are allowed to visit one another's dormitories on only five days of the week. The citizenship rules advise, "We should all develop personal virtues and dedicate ourselves to the pursuit of truth and honor in every aspect of our lives." Students who do not live up to that standard are warned that their scholarships and loans may be revoked. While administrators deny that it is policy, many current and former students say bed checks in dormitories are routine" (para. 23).

President Roche was himself a conservative icon who wrote considerably on such issues. *The Chronicle* (2000) describes his in this way "In his 28 years as president, he had traveled the country, raising more than \$300-million, and written a dozen books extolling the college's independence and its traditional approach to liberal-arts education, and decrying what he saw as the moral decay of the country" (para. 5).

Not all scandals are the stuff of soap opera intrigue. Some would appear to the majority of Americans to be mundane and relatively unimportant. In Reading, Pennsylvania, there was a

scandal involving the credentials of the president of Albright College, Col. Henry Zimon. Julianne Bassinger (2004) recounts the story well in her article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. She points out a significant number of discrepancies regarding publications, co-authors and other posts president Zimon claimed to have held. What made this situation even more dramatic was the staunch way in which the board of trustees stood by their man. This steady defense of Zimon and his credentials drove a wedge between the faculty, the board and the administration. Zimon abruptly stepped down in 2004 but not without leaving a number of critical indicators gasping for breath. Bassinger (2004) said "the endowment's value has decreased by about 11 percent since the 2001 fiscal year, to \$31.8-million this past June (2004). And the college's federal-tax records show that, while the college's expenses for fund raising nearly doubled between 1999 and the 2002 fiscal year, the most recent for which data are available, donations to the college have decreased, from \$3-million in the 1999 fiscal year to \$2.3-million in 2002" (para. 29).

Integrity of the vita and scholarship lie at the very heart of the academic enterprise. When records or research are falsified and promulgated, it is the worst kind of offense. In 2008 there was a scandal at the University of West Virginia where the president was accused of granting a degree to a woman who, though she failed to complete the course work, was the daughter of the governor who had appointed the president. The board chair, a friend of the governor and a major financial supporter also supported and defended the president's effort to confer the degree. In its wake came the resignations of two long tenured officials of the university, the provost and the registrar, for their part in the drama. Only later did the president step down.

The vast majority of college and university presidents and chancellors are upstanding individuals who remain uncorrupted by power. The above examples do demonstrate what can

happen when power goes unchecked. Still, there is a possibility that these flawed presidents may well have specific personality traits that make them more susceptible to this behavior.

Questions for discussion: How has the increasing scrutiny made possible by the electronic media changed the role of the presidency? There have been some high profile scandals involving presidents in higher education. Cases at American University and the University of West Virginia come to mind. What is your take on these situations? What, in your opinion, would cause a president to act in such a way? In some of those cases, the presidents felt they did nothing wrong though their faculties and boards of trustees (and popular opinion) held contrary opinions.

All of the presidents and the chancellor acknowledged the increase in public scrutiny, or the public role played by leaders in higher education today. For some, this fact made them more cautious, while others chose to live life normally understanding that any comment or statement could be made public. In addition, the respondents had varying opinions as to the effects of the office of president on the psyche of those in office in light of some of the scandals discussed above.

Identity and Public Persona

Like it or not, the college or university president or chancellor is a public person. How public depends a great deal on the prominence of the institution or particular events that sometimes push the institution into the light of public scrutiny. This could include scandal like those discussed above or tragedies like the shootings at Virginia Tech. Colleges and universities walk an interesting line which demarcates the publicity they want from the publicity they abhor. The president or chancellor is the person most often called on to walk this line. Most institutions of higher education have offices dedicated to public relations. The promotion of the president as

President Carney's "public intellectual" is a prime responsibility of this office. At the same time, the public relations staff and the president have to be ready to respond to troubling events.

To be this public person requires sacrifice of self to greater or lesser degrees. Chancellor Eisen put it this way; "Arnie (Eisen) no longer exists. I can only speak from now on as the new chancellor of JTS (Jewish Theological Seminary). You can't be disconnected from your institutional identification because that is who you are. One has to be really careful about what one says to whom." Going on, he describes how he has to monitor how he expresses his opinions. He says, "I wouldn't march down the street carrying a flag for a controversial cause, because I don't think I have a right to because that's a private opinion. You are trying to move institutions forward. Institutions have to stand for something. You have to gather as much consensus as you can. You also have to lead so you're going to go beyond consensus but you can't go beyond consensus in a way that threatens the institution particularly if that issue is not core to the institution."

A key question for presidents is 'can you be moral and suppress those things inside of you that cry out for justice for the sake of the institution?' Again, there is a thin line of compromise. President Mackin expresses a concern about the "neutering" of the president which he describes as follows; "The presidency has become so politicized that presidents are afraid to say anything about any issue. They are not going to speak out against an issue where there may be a donor that holds an opposing point of view. Many presidents are afraid to say anything for fear of offending anybody. I don't think that's good in terms of moral leadership. I don't find presidents speaking out on issues anymore. The politicization of the presidency has really neutered the president. Because of this you don't find too many presidents exhibiting moral leadership. Generally I have stayed away from controversial issues. The neutering of the

president is much more commonplace than ever.” While some of these issues remain internal and involve board members and donors, sometimes issues become public. President Carney says, “You can't even write a letter without thinking that everything you write will wind up on the front page of the local paper.” President Long further emphasizes that point and says, “I pay more attention to how it will be perceived externally. I've tried to communicate perhaps more carefully than I did at the outset. Any action of the president is likely to be public. No matter how internal you want to keep it, there is always an interest in people wanting to make it public. The premise I operate on is I have to assume everything will be public no matter what it is. Everything I have to do has to stand up to scrutiny.”

There is no doubt that the presidents perceive a greater level of scrutiny from the media. This scrutiny is similar to that which is directed toward all in leadership whether it be in politics or in business. President Powell describes it in this way, “Our society is cynical about leadership in general. The fishbowl of the media has become much more dramatic and the access to the media and internet has exacerbated the problem. Every news item is instantaneous and anyone can share any rumor without being verified. Leadership is the dark side.” This has been made more dramatic in 2008 and 2009 because of the economic conditions and the perceived excesses of those in leadership position. President Sheeran approaches the media with caution learned over a long tenure as president and says, “I've learned to play very low profile when it comes to our newspapers and not to trust them. I allow myself, occasionally, to be a television “expert,” so I get interviewed on things that I have a particular competence in. When I serve as commentator or expert, e.g., on the last papal election, I try to position Regis as a Catholic school that is easily able to talk to people that are not Catholics and therefore not a threat. What I say is

obviously always heard as “this is the way Catholics see things,” establishing Regis as a legitimate source of what is going on in the Catholic Church.”

President Flynn discussed the level of compromise required to live life as a president. He says, “Presidents have to decide what kind a social issues or larger issues deserve and require comment. Sometimes moral leadership is taking a stand on a public issue, but I hesitate to call that moral leadership because that has to be a very political decision because the president's ultimate responsibility is not to society but to the university community.” He goes on to say, “I've always struck a balance between being aware that I have some limitations on my freedom and yet on the other hand there are ways in which I've decided I'm not going to live my life in a completely restricted way.”

Finally, President Campbell best describes how he deals with the increased media scrutiny. He says, “To quote Mark Twain ‘when in doubt, tell the truth.’ The easiest way to deal with the ubiquity of information these days is to say the same thing pretty much down the line. Schools need to know who they are and what they stand for and not be afraid to say it. We should not be all things to all people but we better be something, and we better know what that something is and to be able to communicate that.”

Scandal and the Presidency

Is there something inherent in the office of the president or chancellor that would provoke some of the behaviors described above? For that matter, is there something inherent in leadership positions that bring out the worst in people? There is ample evidence in the media about leadership gone astray and it would be easy to say that leadership can corrupt even good people. However, there are many leaders who never experience dramatic falls from grace and who serve many years honorably. It is fair to say however that men and women in positions of

power need to be careful about the pitfalls of power. This last part of the interview elicited some interesting and insightful responses from the interviewees.

President Campbell reflects on the pressures of the presidency and he says, "There is some truth to the observation that the pressures of responsibility might drive people to behaviors that they might not otherwise be prone to. Because of the pressure there can be a self-destructive impulse." President Mackin shares this point of view and says, "Sometimes presidents get a certain hubris after a while. They may be beholden to someone. Right after the spotlight comes the searchlight."

President Carney speaks with the voice of experience as she recounts her own transition to the presidency of St. Bonaventure University. She says, "I succeeded a president who was guilty of a very serious ethical failure. (The situation) Made it absolutely crystal clear that the moral/ethical concerns of the job can never be lost sight of. The current situation in this country is forcing everyone to ask questions about what do we ask of people to whom we give executive responsibility for an institution. When you are in a faith-based institution and in our case a Catholic institution you've been exposed to multiple ways of thinking about the church's social teaching, its ethical teaching, its moral teaching. You have a certain antennae for issues of justice and right conduct that you bring into a position like this. We must restore our Franciscan values. Something fundamental was violated on this campus." It is clear from her experience that the Catholic and Franciscan identity of Sr. Bonaventure set the moral bar higher than it may be at other institutions.

President Flynn offers another perspective on the presidency and the challenges inherent in the position. He says, "Anyone who is in a high stress high responsibility position feels on a certain level that they deserve to be able to have something in return for all this stress and

anxiety and almost total lack of appreciation. It's a very human desire to want some things for yourself. For the large number of us (college presidents) who are not highly paid and are not swimming in perks, there is no question that it's a very human desire to feel that there are some things that you ought to get that nurture yourself. The job is so high stress and so without support in most cases that presidents have to look elsewhere for sustenance. There are plenty of morally acceptable places to search for it but there is no question in that part of what is happening here is people feeling that they ought to be able to get some things they may want because presidents don't get very much that they want."

As discussed earlier in this section, there are a larger number of presidents for whom compensation has become very generous. Does this compensation fully meet the needs of the president or chancellor that President Flynn indicates is missing? President Sheeran questions compensation as a way to fulfill the president and he says, "The more you pay high salaries to presidents and give them high prestige so they associate with other very wealthy people as their ordinary social set, the more likely they are to think that they really own the place, and that means they are tempted to take the money out of the till or make the institution pay for their luxurious lifestyle." Institutions can be guilty of creating this kind of president. President Carney observes, "Interestingly, in certain kinds of institutions, the president stands so far above everyone else in prestige and power, real or perceived, in sort of the perks of office that I think the institution itself has created the presidency as monarchy. Sometimes the personality of the president creates it. The president may have a tendency to become the monarch but it can be moved into high gear when the president is surrounded by cabinet officers who are sycophants. If there is no system of checks and balances within the board to stop it and if there isn't honesty and courage in the president's cabinet or faculty leadership to stop it, then you get some of the

tragedies we've seen with presidents destroying the financial welfare, the reputational welfare or the academic welfare of the institution." President Long provides a more commonplace reflection on this situation and he says, "The presidency is seen as a prominent job, you get paid relatively well and you've got an enormous amount of people that suck up to you. It is possible to get a big head. I think you have to do things to keep yourself honest and keep yourself grounded. The president, by in large, is the most active one picking and recruiting members of the board. It's possible that there could be cronyism between the president and the board. That is the opportunity structure of deviance, but it doesn't completely explain why presidents misbehave."

So how does a president avoid the potential for hyper-inflated ego? President Powell provides a balance perspective on this and states, "I'm a steward for a period of time. I think the arrogance comes in when you think you're God's gift to the college. I think that changes the moral dimensions of the presidency by making this a job rather than a calling or vocation."

It is clear that the moral president or chancellor places institution and mission before self. That is truly what makes these privileged positions vocations.

Chapter III - Discussion

Looking back at Olscamp's (2003) preface, he says "Most of the decisions made by university presidents are routine and unexciting - making contracts, planning facilities renovations, accepting guest lists, approving fund-raising presentations, presiding over ceremonies and presentations and so forth" (p. xi). He would contend however that it is not these mundane items that define a presidency; rather it is the big, though infrequent decisions that define a president's tenure. Is this fair? Should leadership be evaluated on isolated instances rather than on a body of work? Unfortunately, that is the world today. People are defined by the 'big events' in their lives even when most of their lives may sit in stark contrast to the event in question.

What is to be expected from our institutions of higher education and their leaders in the twenty-first century? Should higher education have a higher purpose with leaders who stand as exemplars of outstanding moral and ethical leadership? In a world where there is destruction and decay brought about by excesses of self and the desire by many to set themselves before others, there seems to cry out a need for a new leader in the mold of Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, former president of Notre Dame,⁵ who still stands today as a paragon of the American college president. In recent months and weeks many individuals in leadership have been shown to be hypocrites due to an inflated valuation of self and an apparent sense that they are above reproach. Eliot Spitzer proclaimed that he was the champion against prostitution even while engaging prostitutes for his own pleasure. He must have thought that he was beyond the reach of law and scandal. More recently is the indictment brought against former Illinois Governor Blagojevich who was

5 Theodore Hesburgh served as president of the University of Notre Dame from 1952 to 1987. Source: University of Notre Dame web site.

trying to sell the senate seat vacated by president-elect Obama. In the last several weeks of 2008 came news of a scheme carried out by Bernie Madoff who made off with \$50 billion dollars in a Ponzi scheme. As companies file for bankruptcy and appeal to the federal government for bailout funds, there are stories of executive bonuses and lavish retreats and getaways.

At a recent board of trustees meeting at Alvernia University, a trustee who is a bank president made the statement that “this is not an economic crisis, this is a crisis of ethics” and he suggested that institutions like Alvernia, a Catholic and Franciscan university, were places where the solutions to this crisis could be found. This might include an emphasis on ethics throughout the curriculum in much the same way some institutions emphasize writing throughout the curriculum. It could also take the form of centers or lecture series which promote discussions of ethics and morality. It may well be that colleges and universities will once again be called upon to move us forward as they have done in the past with research, with social movements, with art and with technology.

Institutions that have made a difference in our society have been led by men and women who themselves hold to high ideals and have made a difference in their own ways. Over the course of my research, I have examined many examples of moral and ethical leaders who stood up well under the light of scrutiny and persevered through crises. Hesburgh and Olscamp are all wonderful examples of moral leadership in action. Others like Ladner, Roche, Berendzen and Zimon, have all had to leave their offices under a cloud of shame, doubt and mistrust and their institutions have suffered in measurable ways because of it.

Is it possible for a search committee, a board of regents or a board of trustees to truly get a measure of the heart of a man or woman who stands as a candidate for the presidency of a college or university? I would argue that in depth investigation into credentials and references

could make such a measure possible. In a number of the cases mentioned above, there were warning signs present in previous positions. Given the ability to do electronic research today, it seems that in depth study is more than possible.

Our colleges and universities have set apart America from the world in terms of quality and access. Now more than ever leaders are needed who will defend the integrity of the American system of higher education and who will adhere to high moral and ethical standards of leadership.

As Americans in general, we don't seem to know exactly what kind of leader we want. We demonstrate that we are continually drawn to monoliths or icons when we elect our political leaders yet our pressing issues at home – poverty, hunger, drug abuse, sexual violence, crime – may be better handled by humanitarians. When a potential leader publicly demonstrates feeling and compassion we tend to think of that as weakness. Have we not seen abuses of presidential leadership in higher education which mirror those of industry? How many golden parachutes have safely landed ousted presidents as they fell from the ivory tower?

This is not a rant against presidential compensation and perquisites. The job of being a college president has indeed become much more complex and public. The college president, like the politician, often sacrifices privacy and a personal life to the position. There is a greater risk of exposure today for college presidents. Look how quickly the public jumped to criticize Dr. Charles Steger in the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings in 2008. In today's internet society, leaders can be easily singled out for any phrase or comment often without context or understanding of the complexity of decision making. In this context, one can understand the levels of compensation given to many of our college presidents.

I believe that it is time to embrace Greenleaf's "servant-leader" as a model for the college presidency that was evident in the early days of the founding of faith-based colleges and universities. Many of these colleges have moved away from these early congregational missions and have found it increasingly difficult to find someone from within the faith tradition to take on the role of president. With the exception of the Jesuit institutions of higher education, Catholic colleges find it more and more difficult to call a president from declining numbers of professed and ordained members. The number of lay presidents is growing. These men and women come to the position from many different backgrounds, and it is clear that some do not embrace the passion and mission of the founding orders. There is demand for qualified presidents with pedigree. With success comes edification. Institutions push them further and further up the tower and away from the people and mission they should serve.

It is time to ask the question "who wishes to serve?" Our early political fathers entered elected life in order to serve man for the common good. Heschel in his 1972 television interview made an interesting distinction when he said that he did not like politicians, but he admired statesmen. Where are the statesmen Heschel was referring to today? Interestingly, there has been an historic link between the academy and elected life. One calls to mind Presidents Wilson and Jefferson. The university was a place of higher calling in those days. The sentimental side of me pines for those days when it seemed that intelligent and highly educated people truly wanted to use their wisdom for the common good. It seems that today our leaders in politics and to a lesser extent in higher education respond to the call out of some sense of egocentric megalomania.

If it were my choice, I would select a president who feels comfortable in his or her own skin, who relates readily and willingly to the varied constituents of the college, who embraces its

founding mission and ideals, who accepts the sacrifice of privacy willingly while continuing to be human and private when possible. Most importantly, I would select a servant-leader who wishes to serve first and lead second. Only then will the service we require and hold dear be fully integrated into our institutions. By example others will embrace the model and it will become systematic.

There are those who believe that when they ascend to the top they are entitled to rights and privileges which they assume accompany this high station. There are those who ascend who are humbled by the challenge and the position and who truly wish to serve the institution. Humble ascension is the path for the future.

A Model for Moral Leadership in Faith-Based Higher Education Presidencies

Based on my research and the responses from the presidents noted above, I do believe that a college or university president is indeed a moral leader. It is clear that the various constituent groups look to the president or chancellor in this way. It is also clear that it would be a mistake on the part of the president or chancellor to make some declaration about his or her status as a moral leader. In order to be a moral leader, one must be humble enough to accept the responsibility of such leadership without saying 'look at me; I'm a moral leader.'

As referenced above, Heschel and Bernardin are wonderful examples and expressions of humility. Humility does not mean that you do not think less of yourself, but it does change the context in which you see yourself. Heschel (1951) describes it by saying "To be free of selfish interests does not mean to be neutral, indifferent, or to be devoid of interests, but, on the contrary, to be a partisan of the self-surpassing. God does not dwell beyond the sky. He dwells, we believe, in every heart that is willing to let Him in" (p. 251). Humility is active!

I want. This is a phrase all too often exulted in our capitalist society. The examples of presidential excess discussed earlier in this paper are prime examples of uncontrolled and unchecked desire. We are told that we want and need more and more goods and services. We are told that our desires should be primary in our thinking. This way of thinking would be very foreign to Heschel and Bernardin.

Belief is an important part of faith-based institutions. Can a president or chancellor lead without a belief structure in place? More specifically, does belief in God make it easier for that person to lead? It is when we see ourselves as made by God in His image and likeness that we see that we are no better or worse than any other human created by the same loving God. It is from this understanding that humility and sacrifice emerge. To be sure, there have certainly been those who do not share a belief in God that have been wonderfully altruistic leaders. I think Heschel would say that their lack of belief does not separate them from the divine fabric of which we are all a part.

The following summarize key aspects of moral leadership as they pertain to faith-based or church related college or university presidents or chancellors.

- A moral leader must have complete self understanding so that he or she may go beyond him or herself in the service of others.
- Moral leadership is best when firmly rooted in mission. There must be deep understanding of mission on the part of the president or chancellor. The mission provides a lens or filter through which decisions, large and small, are made at the institution.
- In addition to a commitment to mission, the president or chancellor must have an abiding and sincere interest in the faith traditions of the institution even if it is not his or her own personal tradition.

- Moral leadership is balanced, collaborative and not absolutist.
- A moral leader must be competent in the complexities of the higher education business enterprise. Lacking specific competencies, the president or chancellor must assemble a team of competent administrators to carry out this important work.
- An understanding that we are all part of a divine society created in the image and likeness of God imbeds in us a respect for all people and calls us to lead by serving. A personal belief structure is important to sustain the president or chancellor.
- To lead, one must be willing to suppress desires and sacrifice self to the common good. This also means sacrificing a level of privacy and willingly wearing the public mantle of leadership for the institution.

Final Thoughts on Leadership

Bernardin (2000) puts it exceedingly well in his address to the Centennial Conference of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1984:

“I believe in a style of leadership which is “participative.” Leadership is truly effective, I believe, only when it succeeds in involving many other people. Such leadership does not hesitate to make decisions, to cut new ground, to take stands which may sometimes be unpopular. But it does not want to stand alone. It seeks guidance; it needs support. Generally its goal is to find workable alternatives. So before it acts, it consults. It challenges people to use their own energy, talents and creativity in analyzing a situation and coming up with solutions. It seeks to create a broad base of support if not a consensus. Moreover, it tries at all times to be charitable, respectful. It deals with people as they are rather than as they should be or one would like for them to be - even when they do not respond in this way.”

Again, in Bernardin's words we see the humility and sacrifice which is so important to effective leadership.

In my reading of Heschel and from what I have learned of him, he never had a position of leadership in the way most would think of it. As far as I know, he never desired to be Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary. In many respects, leadership was thrust upon him because he did not want to lead. We look to him still today as a leader but we have to ask "of what?" Not all leaders sit at the head of the conference table. For Heschel, his leadership was his service, not only to the Jewish people, but to all people. Again I quote Heschel (1951) as he concludes *Man is Not Alone* with the following "This is the meaning of existence; To reconcile liberty with service, the passing with the lasting, to weave the threads of temporality into the fabric of eternity" (p. 296).

References

- 2 Top Officials Resign Over Transcript Scandal at West Virginia U., but President Stays. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54, 35. p.NA. Retrieved December 09, 2008, from Academic OneFile via Gale:
<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE> Lewis, L. (July 13, 2007).
- 4 Years After a Scandal, a President Steps Down. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50, 26. p.NA. Retrieved December 09, 2008, from Academic OneFile via Gale:
<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>
- A scandal and a suicide leave a college reeling. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 46, 13. p.A53(3). Retrieved December 09, 2008, from Academic OneFile via Gale:
<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE> Seymour, A J (July 13, 2006).
- A Year After a Degrading Scandal, Hillsdale Moves On. Nov 10, 2000 v47 i11 pNA*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 47, 11. p.NA. Retrieved December 09, 2008, from Academic OneFile via Gale:
<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>
- American Association of University Professors. (2008). Trends in Faculty Status, 1975-2005. Retrieved October 10, 2008, from <http://www.aaup.org/NR/rdonlyres/9218E731-A68E-4E98-A378-12251FFD3802/0/Facstatustrend7505.pdf>

American Council on Education. (2007). *The American College President, 2007 Edition, 20th Anniversary*. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.

American U.'s Chastened Trustees Approve Wide-Ranging Reforms. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 52, 39. p.NA. Retrieved December 09, 2008, from Academic OneFile via Gale:

<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>

American University trustees oust President Amid spending scandal. Nov 3, 2005 v22 i19 p13(1)*Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, 22, 19. p.13(1). Retrieved December 18, 2008, from Academic OneFile via Gale:

<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>

Benne, R. (2001). *Quality with soul: how six premier colleges and universities keep faith with their religious traditions*. Grand Rapids, MI. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Bernardin, J. (1997). *The gift of peace*. New York. Doubleday.

Bernardin, J. (2000). Selected homilies and writings. In A. P. Scully (Ed.), *Selected works of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin: homilies and teaching documents*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press.

Bernardin, J. (2000). Church and society. In A. P. Scully (Ed.), *Selected works of Joseph Cardinal Bernardin: homilies and teaching documents*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press.

Brown, D. (Ed.). (2006). *University presidents as moral leaders*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Burgan, M. (2006). *What ever happened to the faculty? Drift and decision in higher education*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Chabotar, K. (2006). *Strategic finance: planning and budgeting for boards, chief executives and finance officers*. Washington, DC: Association of Governing Boards.

College Said to Offer a Deal to Ex-Chief Ousted in a Scandal.(National Desk). Nov 7, 1990

pNA *The New York Times*, p.NA. Retrieved December 18, 2008, from Academic

OneFile via Gale:

<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>

The Contours of For-Profit Higher Education. Nov-Dec 2001 v33 i6

p47 *Change*, 33, 6. p.47. Retrieved June 20, 2008, from Academic OneFile via Gale:

<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>

Geiger, R. (2000). *The era of the multi-purpose college in American higher education, 1850-*

1890. In H. S. Wechsler, L. F. Goodchild & L. Eisenmann (Eds.), *The History of Higher*

Education (pp. 360 - 376). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership. (2008). What is servant leadership? Retrieved

February 20, 2008, from <http://www.greenleaf.org/whatissl/index.html>

Harvard University. (2008). New England's first fruits. Retrieved May 17, 2008, from

http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralsm/98wrb/chri_itr.htm

Hawkins, H. (1992). *Toward system*. In H. S. Wechsler, L. F. Goodchild & L. Eisenmann (Eds.),

The History of Higher Education (pp. 332 - 345). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Heschel, A. J. (1951). *Man is Not Alone*. New York. Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Heschel, A. J. (1965). *Who is Man*. Stanford, CA. Stanford University Press.

Heschel, S. (April 2005). Following in my father's footsteps: Selma 40 years later. *Vox of*

Dartmouth. Retrieved January 22, 2008, from <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~vox>

[/0405/0404/heschel.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~vox/0405/0404/heschel.html)

- Johnson, E. (1981). *Misconceptions about the early land-grant colleges*. In H. S. Wechsler, L. F. Goodchild & L. Eisenmann (Eds.), *The History of Higher Education* (pp. 280 - 290). Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.
- Kinser, K. (July-August 2006). What Phoenix doesn't teach us about for-profit higher education. *Change*, 38, 4. p.24(6). Retrieved June 01, 2008, from Academic OneFile via Gale:
<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>
- Marcy, M. (May 2, 2008). Presidential Power and the Modern College Leader. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 54, 34, p. A36. Retrieved April 28, 2008, from
<http://chronicle.com/weekly/v54/i34/34a03601.htm>
- Moon, J & Bergquist, J. (Nov-Dec 1993). Report: academic freedom and tenure, the University of Bridgeport. *Academe*, pp. 37-45. Retrieved December 14, 2008 from
<http://www.aaup.org/NR/rdonlyres/211BF38C-2B2A-43E5-8FE0-2455BD9713BE/0/bridgeport.pdf>
- Morey, A. (Sept 2001). THE GROWTH OF FOR-PROFIT HIGHER EDUCATION. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52, 4. p.300. Retrieved June 21, 2008, from Academic OneFile via Gale:
<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>
- Mortimer, K. & Sathre, C. (2007). *The art and politics of academic governance: relations among boards, presidents and faculty*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- National Association of College and University Business Officers. (2005). *Strategic Financial Analysis for Higher Education, Sixth Edition*. Washington, DC: National Association of College and University Business Officers.

Olscamp, P. (2003). *Moral leadership: ethics and the college presidency*. Lanham, MD:
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Rudolph, F. (1990). *The American college and university: a history*. Athens, GA: The University
of Georgia Press. (Original work published 1962)

Townsley, M. (2002). *A small college guide to financial health: beating the odd*. Washington,
DC: National Association of College and University Business Officers.

The University of Notre Dame. (2009). Former presidents. Retrieved April 23, 2009, from
<http://nd.edu/aboutnd/former-presidents/hesburgh/>

Wechsler, H. S., Goodchild, L. F. & Eisenmann, L. (Eds.). (2007). *The History of Higher
Education*. Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing.

Winston, G. (June 1999). Traditional versus for-profit colleges: what are the
differences?. *Current*, 413. p.3(7). Retrieved June 01, 2008, from Academic
OneFile via Gale:
<http://find.galegroup.com.dml.regis.edu/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>