

21ST CENTURY COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

Lessons from the Minority Serving Institutions
Aspiring Leaders Program



THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

ECMC
Foundation

RUTGERS
Graduate School of Education

Center for
MSIs

Position Available: *President*

QUALIFICATIONS:

- ☒ Must be able to work in a diverse environment and communicate with diverse constituents (including faculty, students, parents, media, the public, policymakers, funders, board members, coaches, and alumni)
- ☒ Must be a visionary and a change agent
- ☒ Must be able to see the role of their institution within the larger education community
- ☒ Must be able to function in a rapidly changing world
- ☒ Must have an understanding and grasp of current higher education issues and policies
- ☒ Must understand how to use social media effectively
- ☒ Must be able to raise funds
- ☒ Must be respectful of and foster learning in students
- ☒ Must be able to manage the institution's finances effectively
- ☒ Must have a deep respect for the role of faculty members
- ☒ Must be dedicated to service
- ☒ Must be innovative and entrepreneurial
- ☒ Must be a collaborative leader
- ☒ Must be able to understand and use data to push the institution forward
- ☒ Must be able to work with and manage the institution's board
- ☒ Must be able to lead on a national and global scale
- ☒ Must be able to lead through crisis



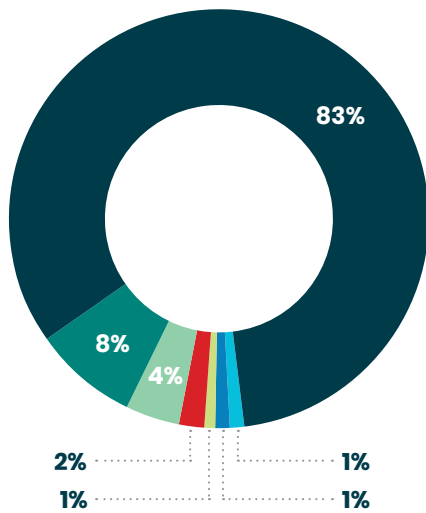
“I think centering the most marginalized voices, not only in college leadership, but in just leadership in general is really, really important.”

—Aspiring Leader

Accounting for only 7% of U.S. colleges and universities, yet enrolling nearly 26% of all students in the nation, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)¹ are a unique subset of federally-designated postsecondary institutions (Conrad & Gasman, 2015; Garcia, 2019; Garcia, 2020; Gasman & Conrad, 2013; Gasman, Baez & Turner, 2008; Nunez, Hurtado, & Galdeano, 2015). Given the important role these institutions play in American higher education, it is vital that they serve students well and prove to be a positive return on investment for stakeholders. Ensuring that MSIs are effectively led is an important step in accomplishing these goals. However, effective leaders do not just happen; they must be identified and groomed for the MSI environment. Providing access to professional development opportunities for those interested in leading MSIs is vital to ensuring diversity among higher education leadership, increasing degree attainment, and enhancing sustainability.

¹Minority Serving Institutions are federally-designated and include the following types: Alaska Native-Serving Institutions, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges & Universities, Hispanic Serving Institutions, Native American-Serving Non-Tribal Institutions, Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions and Tribal Colleges and Universities. For more information visit the [**Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions**](#)

fig. 1 **Racial and Ethnic Diversity of College and University Presidents**



- Whites
- Black or African Americans
- Latinx/a/o
- Asian Americans
- American Indian & Alaskan Native
- Middle Eastern
- Multiple Races

Source: American Council of Education, 2017, <https://www.aceacps.org/summary-profile>

According to the most recent data, 58% of the sitting university presidents in United States are over the age of 60 (ACE, 2017). These presidents are moving closer to concluding their academic careers. This fact causes many higher education researchers to debate from where the next cohort of presidents might emerge (Farrington, 2008; Freeman & Kochan, 2012; Lum, 2008). Some researchers suggest that there will be many openings for university presidencies across the country. In the past 15 years, a number of institutions turned to sitting university presidents to replace the outgoing presidents in their institutions. Colleges and universities looking to employ a seasoned president to serve their school may have problems in the future as the Baby Boomer presidents begin to retire (Farrington, 2008). The next most common pool from which to draw presidential talent is that of senior cabinet level officers within higher education.

When it comes to the issue of diversity within the college presidency, there is concern. James C. Renick, the former Senior Vice President for Programs and Research at the American Council on Education (ACE) stated, "We haven't seen the kind of progress that we expected. This tells us that higher education, collectively, is going to have to spend more time on expanding opportunities for women and people of color" (June, 2008, para. 3). Adding to the conversation, Andy Brantley, CEO of CUPA-HR, said he viewed the ACE data as "a call to action" for higher education (2019). Without diversifying the people in these senior positions, he said, pools for presidential hires will be too homogeneous.



THE MSI ASPIRING LEADERS PROGRAM

The MSI Aspiring Leaders program began in 2014 and has worked with two cohorts (45) of Aspiring Leaders who are 5-8 years from becoming a president. These individuals applied to be a part of the program through a national process that was advertised widely across higher education outlets and social media. The program application included submission of their CV and a three-minute video during which they discuss their knowledge of challenges and opportunities for MSIs, why they want to lead an MSI, how their past experiences will inform their leadership, and how participating in the program will benefit their development. They also put together a strategic business plan for an MSI in the form of a PowerPoint presentation; and they completed a servant leadership inventory. We also asked three references (one supervisor, one supervisee, and one mentor) to complete a servant leadership inventory about the Aspiring Leader. As part of the program, the Aspiring Leaders attend two forums related to skill development, solve an in-depth case study with a partner in the program, and engage with a current or recently-retired president over a two-year period. We conduct interviews during the first and second year of the program with the Aspiring Leaders, asking about their experiences in the program as well as their pathway to the presidency.

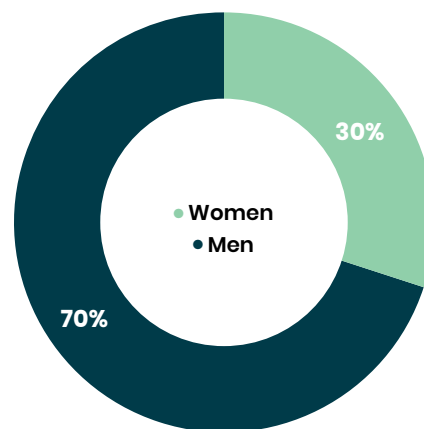


RESEARCH APPROACH

The MSI Aspiring Leaders program offers a valuable research opportunity to better understand the pathways to leadership within Minority Serving Institutions. In advance of program participation, our research team interviewed all of the Aspiring Leaders (cohort one in 2017 and cohort two in 2019; 45 Aspiring Leaders total). We asked questions related to their motives, aspirations, and expectations as they pertain to the presidency. This information, coupled with their application materials, represented the first stage of data collection. After the Aspiring Leaders attended the MSI Aspiring Leaders Forum and had time to interact with their presidential mentor, we conducted a second round of interviews. Through the second round of interviews, our team gathered information that was both formative to the program's assessment, but also illustrative of the leadership perspectives and lessons emerging from higher education administrators of color. After completing the interviews, we had the audio recordings transcribed, coded the transcripts, and looked for emergent themes in the data. This report showcases many of the themes. However, in-depth work on these themes and others in the overall data set will also be the subject of peer-reviewed work in academic journals. We aim to inform the growing literature on college presidents and racial and ethnic equity.

Brantley (2019) also stated that it is important for universities to implement succession planning for presidents. Historically, many university boards assumed their potential president would need to be an external candidate. With succession planning, he said, "presidents and institutions can reach out to those with potential for senior positions and groom them to take over later" (n.p.). Issues related to increasing diversity and accessing the pipeline to the presidency include, but are not limited to, various academic backgrounds, experiences, and consideration. In many ways, potential candidates of color are often not considered because they have not been given the opportunities to gain the experience to pursue a university presidency.

fig. 2 Gender Make-up of College and University Presidents

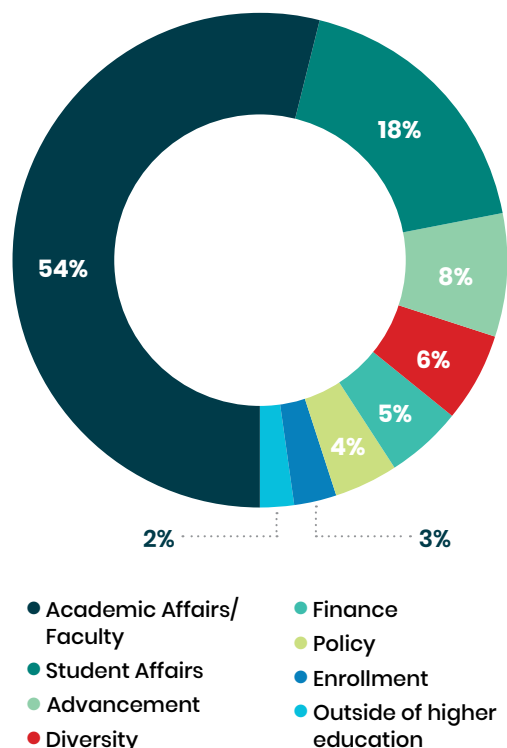


Source: American Council of Education, 2017, <https://www.aceacps.org/summary-profile>

“I think the program not only solidified my interest in serving at a Minority Serving Institution, it highlighted in a very real sense some of the challenges that are associated with leading an MSIs. I recognized that one of the principle variables is the ability to identify the resources that are necessary to maintain the viability of the institution. Fundraising is such a critical component because when you have appropriate resources, there are a whole lot of things that can be accomplished.”

—Aspiring Leader

fig. 3 Professional Pathways of Aspiring Leaders



Source: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2020

Pathways to the Presidency

College and university presidents typically hail from the faculty, with the vast majority of them beginning their careers as faculty and moving to a department chair role, then a dean, then a provost, and subsequently becoming president (ACE, 2017). However, in recent years, there have been changes, with more presidents coming out of student affairs (4%), institutional advancement (4%), and from outside the academy (15%)—including politics and the corporate world (ACE, 2017). Of note, among presidents of color, 9% hail from student affairs. Pathways to the presidency, which used to be fairly predictable, are now weaving in and out and coming from many directions.

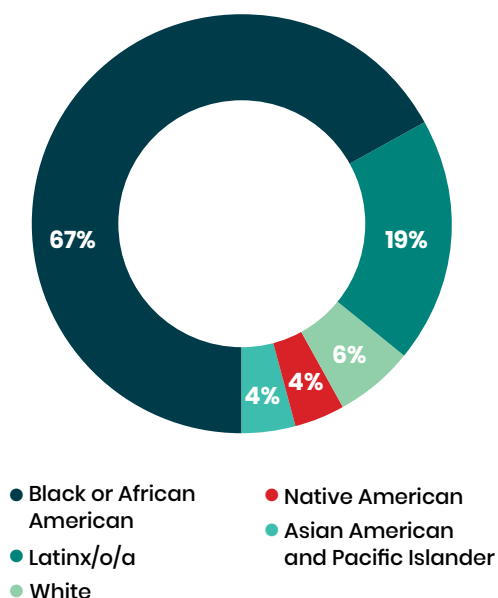
Those focused on securing a presidency in the MSI Aspiring Leaders program have a variety of backgrounds, but the majority are following a traditional academic route (53%). Of interest, and more of a recent trend, 18% of the Aspiring Leaders come from student affairs. The remainder are sprinkled across advancement, enrollment, finance, and institutional diversity with a small percent from the policy and corporate world.

The Aspiring Leaders represent a wide cross section of racial and ethnic groups, with the majority being African American (67%). Of this group, roughly two-thirds are interested in leading Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) with the rest having an interest in Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) or Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs). The second largest group of Aspiring Leaders is Latinx/o/a, with the majority of this group interested in leading HSIs. Representation among Aspiring Leaders also includes Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Native Americans, and Whites. Overall, women make up 53% of the Aspiring Leaders and men 47%.

“It can be hard to make entre into the institutional advancement world. There’s a network around development and securing resources for educational institutions, and that network isn’t very heavily populated by people of color. So, getting into those networks, being able to cultivate those relationships is a skillset that is invaluable, once you’re able to get it under your belt. But breaking into that small group is a difficult challenge. One of the things that I am doing with my mentor is talking to him about how he’s done that and what were the strategies and the steps that he used to become effective in that area.”

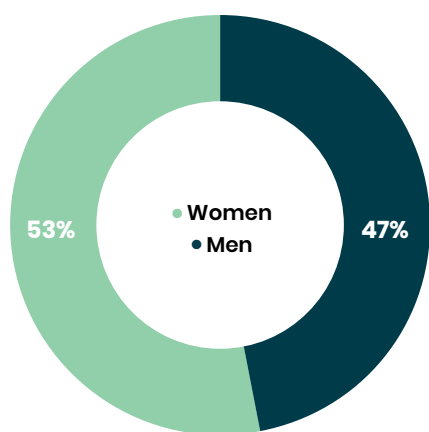
—Aspiring Leader

fig. 4 Racial and Ethnic Make-up of Aspiring Leaders



Source: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2020

fig. 5 Gender Make-up of Aspiring Leaders



Source: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2020

What Makes for a Successful President?

Although many individuals in higher education express interest in being a college or university president, the role requires a complex set of skills. Based on our research and practice in the MSI Aspiring Leaders program, we recommend an advanced degree with a demonstrated record of academic research and scholarship or evidence of involvement in higher education-related issues; at least 10 years of experience of senior level responsibilities; experience in strategic planning, program development, implementation and evaluation; experience in personnel management and team facilitation; ability to manage crises and lead in the midst of crises; knowledge of key and emerging issues in higher education; a general understanding of MSIs and their place on the higher education landscape; an understanding of the relationship between the governing board, president, faculty, and students; and considerable experience with fundraising. For those wishing to lead an MSI, it is essential to have a commitment to the mission of MSIs and to serving low-income students, first generation students, and students of color.

How Aspiring Leaders View Leadership?

When asked what traits are needed to be a leader, the Aspiring Leaders in the program told us leaders need integrity, a sense of ethics, an understanding of the mission and vision of an institution, the ability to make bold decisions, the ability to build a team of leaders, courage and bravery, communication skills, the ability to bring people together around a common mission, the ability to empower others, strong listening skills, candor, and a deep care for others above self. In the words of one Aspiring Leader, "I tend to be a leader who embraces collaboration and I'm goal driven and ambitious as well. I also see my leadership style as one that brings communities together in order to make change."

"I am willing to give any HBCU that I go to the very best that I have. I will bring everything that I have to bear for their mission, because that's the kind of person that I am."

—Aspiring Leader



MSI ASPIRING LEADERS AND THEIR CURRENT POSITIONS

Tierney J. Bates, Assistant Vice Chancellor, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Marcus Burgess, Associate Vice President for Major and Planned Gifts, Claflin University

Dara N. Byrne, Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Honora Chapman, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Humanities, Fresno State University

Angela Alvarado Coleman, Vice Chancellor, Student Affairs, North Carolina Central University

Tonia Perry Coley, Vice President of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Virginia Union University

Toya Corbett, Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, North Carolina Central University

Nicholas Courtney, Policy Analyst, National Congress of American Indians

Steve Delgado, Chief Development Officer, Homeboy Industries

Regina Dixon-Reeves, Assistant Vice Provost for Diversity & Inclusion, University of Chicago

Christopher Dowdy, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Paul Quinn College

Charlisa Holloway Edelin, Department Chair, Legal Studies, Delaware State University

Levon T. Esters, Professor, Purdue University

Pamela Payne Foster, Senior Fellow-Strategic Partnerships, Office of Academic Affairs; Professor, Community Medicine/Population Health and Deputy Director, Institute for Rural Health Research, University of Alabama

Venessa Funches, Professor, Auburn University, Montgomery

Jonathan Gayles, Chair, Department of African American Studies, Georgia State University

Sherlynn Howard Hall, Associate Dean of Arts, Sciences, and Technology, Panola College

Jessica Harris, Assistant Provost, Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville

Davida Loren Haywood, Vice President of Student Affairs, Johnson C. Smith University

Julian Vasquez Heilig, Dean, University of Kentucky

Kevin James, President, Morris Brown College

Jason K. Johnson, Assistant Vice President of Academic Affairs, Langston University

Mautra Jones, Vice President of Institutional Advancement and External Affairs, Langston University

Donna Hay-Jones, Director, Member Experience, Ivy Research Council

Christopher Jenkins, Associate Dean for Academic Support, Oberlin Conservatory

Saul Jimenez-Sandoval, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, California State University, Fresno (incoming interim president, California State University, Fresno)

Stephanie Krah, Associate Vice Chancellor, City Colleges of Chicago

Martin Lemelle Jr., Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Grambling State University

Thomson J. Ling, Associate Dean, Caldwell University

Michael L. McFrazier, Professor and Dean of the Whitlowe R. Green College of Education, Prairie View A&M University

Crystal Moore, Vice President, Strategic Education Inc.

James Overton, Sales Support Executive, Advantech Inc.

Curtis Proctor, Director of Advancement, College of Community Innovation and Education, University of Central Florida

Monte Randall, Secretary of Education and Training, Muscogee (Creek) Nation

Rocio Rivasdeneyra, Interim Chair and Professor, Communication Sciences and Disorders, Illinois State University

Louie F. Rodriguez, Professor and Interim Dean, School of Education, University of California, Riverside

Billie Gastic Rosado, Associate Dean, Liberal Arts, Languages, and Post-Traditional Undergraduate Studies, New York University

Timothy E. Sams, Vice President of Student Affairs, Prairie View A&M University

Kenneth K. Saunders, Co-Founder, United Solutions Consultancy Group

Heather J. Shipley, Senior Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and Dean of the University College, University of Texas, San Antonio

Nicole R. Stokes, Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, St. Joseph's University

Christine Thorpe, Dean, Nathan Weiss Graduate College, Kean University

Mary Ann Villarreal, Vice President of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, University of Utah Health

Kimberly A. White-Smith, Dean and Professor of Education, University of LaVerne

Elaine Wong, Associate Dean for the Undergraduate Program, University of California, Riverside



MENTORS IN THE MSI ASPIRING LEADERS PROGRAM

Roslyn Artis, President, Benedict College

John Bassett, Former President, Heritage University

Joe Castro, President, California State University, Fresno & forthcoming California State University System Chancellor

Soraya Coley, President, California State Polytechnic University

Mildred Garcia, Former President, California State University, Fullerton & California State University, Dominguez Hills. President Association of State Colleges and Universities

Timothy Hall, President, Mercy College

Sharon Herzberger, Former President, Whittier College

Walter Kimbrough, President, Dillard University

Elmira Mangum, Former President, Florida A&M University

Harold Martin Sr., President, North Carolina A&T University

Ann McElaney-Johnson, President, Mount Saint Mary's University

Patricia McGuire, President, Trinity Washington University

Charlie Nelms, Former Chancellor, North Carolina Central University

Colette Pierce Burnette, President, Huston-Tillotson University

Alvin Schexnider, Former President, Winston Salem State University & Former Interim President, Norfolk State University

William Serrata, President, El Paso Community College

Michael Sorrell, President, Paul Quinn College

Vinton Thompson, Former President, Metropolitan College of New York

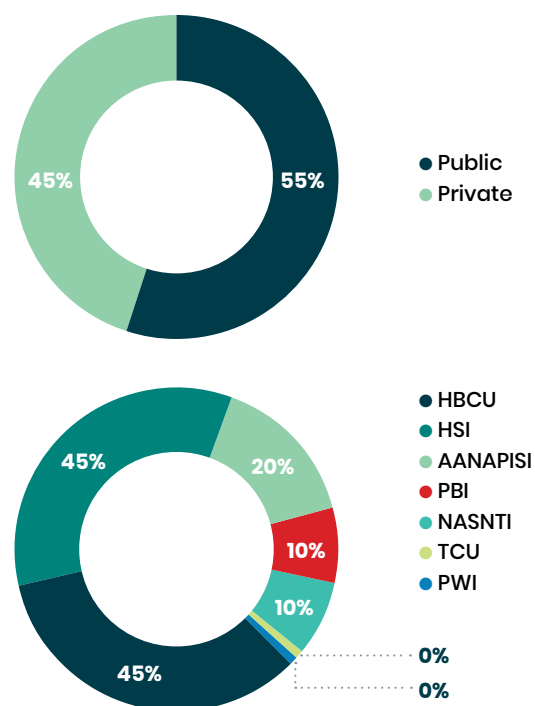
Rowena Tomaneng, President, San José City College

David Wilson, President, Morgan State University

What Makes for an Effective Mentor to an Aspiring Leader?

For those seeking to be the president of a Minority Serving Institution, it can often be difficult to find a mentor to serve as a guide through the lengthy process. Based on our research, we recommend that mentors have substantial experience as an MSI president, a record of accomplishing institutional goals, a long-term vision for higher education; a record of successful fiscal management; strong communication skills; a strategic relationship with media outlets, policy makers, and organizations outside of the institution; a record of collaborative leadership; a demonstrated understanding of the unique MSI context; demonstrated ability in achieving institutional success outcomes in the areas of student success, fundraising, board relations, and overall institutional vitality; and lastly, experience leading during a crisis.

fig. 6 Type of Institution that Mentors Lead



Source: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2020

Note: Percentages don't add up to 100 because there is overlap between HSI/ AANAPISIs /PBIs/NASNTIs. Key: Historically Black College and University (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), Tribal College and University (TCU), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), Predominantly Black Institution (PBI), and Predominantly White Institution (PWI); Native American Serving Non-Tribal Institution (NASNTI).

Types of Mentoring that the MSI Aspiring Leaders Program Mentors Provides:

Shadowing opportunities on campus and during board meetings

Advice on crafting CVs

Feedback on Aspiring Leaders' career trajectories

Assistance with problem solving in their current positions

Introductions to other leaders and institutional contacts

Types of Professional Development Provided to MSI Aspiring Leaders by Search Firm and Executive Coach Partners:

Crisis management

Managing on-line presence

Interview training

Media relations training

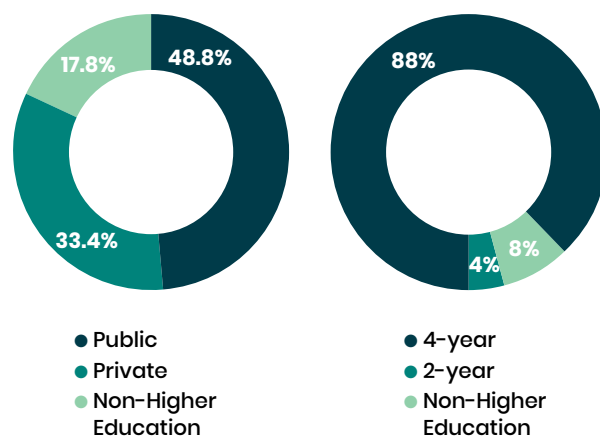
Advice on crafting CVs

More practically, Aspiring Leaders want their mentors to write letters of recommendation, to be responsive and accessible, to help them understand their areas of improvement relevant to skill development, to encourage them, to give them access to opportunities, and to be frank and honest with them. In the words of one Aspiring Leader, "When you think about navigating something like a presidency, you want to have the right people on your board of directors, or village, but that requires honesty. It requires commitment, and it requires a level of reciprocity."

What are the Roadblocks to Success for Aspiring Leaders?

Based on interviews with the Aspiring Leaders, the most common roadblocks along the path to the presidency are sexism, lack of opportunity to move forward within their institution, lack of opportunities to develop their fundraising skills, being told not to pursue a presidency by current presidents and colleagues, and a lack of a social and professional network for advancement. In the words of one Aspiring Leader, "What I've learned from being a dean is that it doesn't matter what my experiences have been, how successful I've been in the past, I'm still going to be judged as a woman and as a woman of color. And so, I think that it's important for me to be proactive and demonstrative of my ability to fill in any gaps that people might perceive me to have." In order to navigate and avoid roadblocks, the Aspiring Leaders surround themselves with a personal and professional support system, procure a 'board of mentors' to ask for advice, and regularly work to enhance their skills, especially those critical to becoming a president.

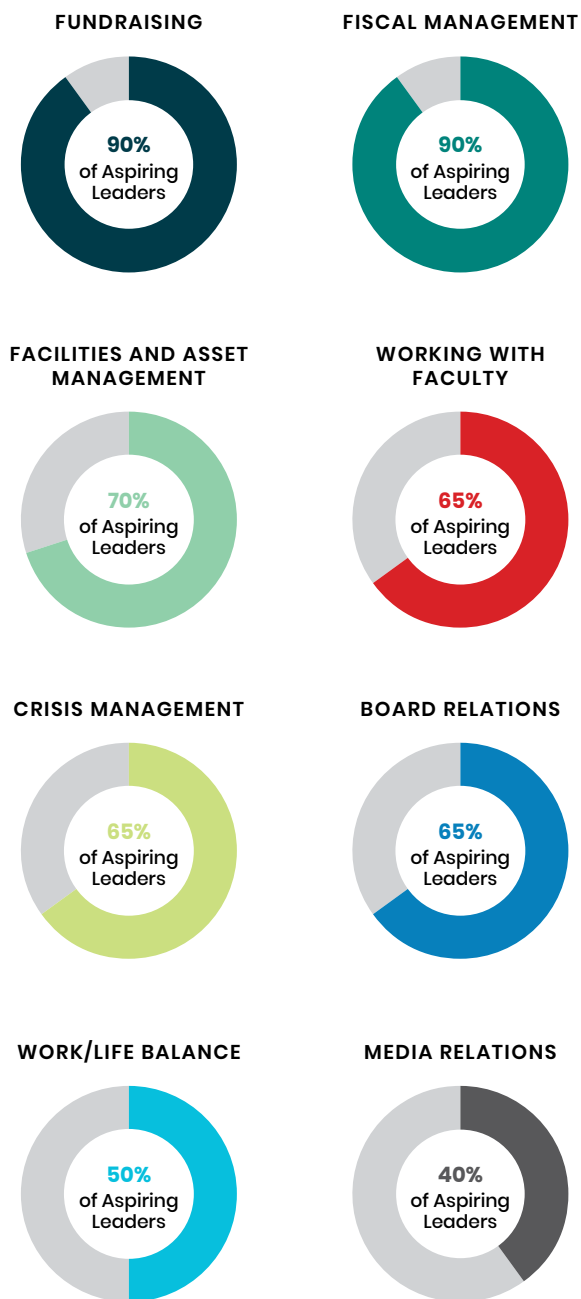
fig. 7 Type of Institution at Which Aspiring Leaders Work



Source: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2020



fig. 8 **Key Areas of Expertise the Aspiring Leaders Want to Improve/Need Support**



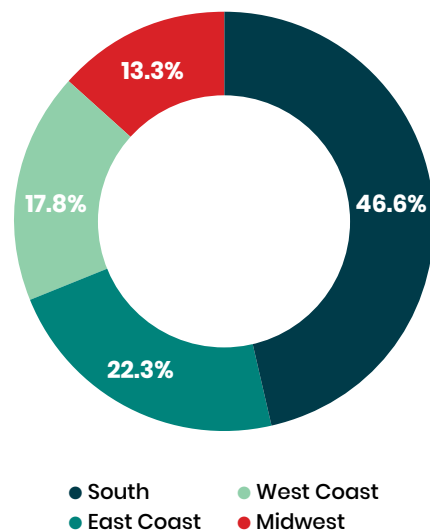
Source: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2020

What are the Impetuses that Lead to Aspiring Leaders' Success?

Aspiring Leaders told us that the greatest impetuses for their success include a mentor to open doors and make introductions for them, the opportunity to demonstrate their skills, access to low-cost or no-cost professional development, relationships with leaders who believe in their abilities, and time to invest in their personal and professional growth. In the words of one of the Aspiring Leaders, "Having somebody say, you know what; you are ready to begin this process, and when you finish, you're going to be able to do this. That's the kind of a confidence boost that you need to really say, maybe I can do this."

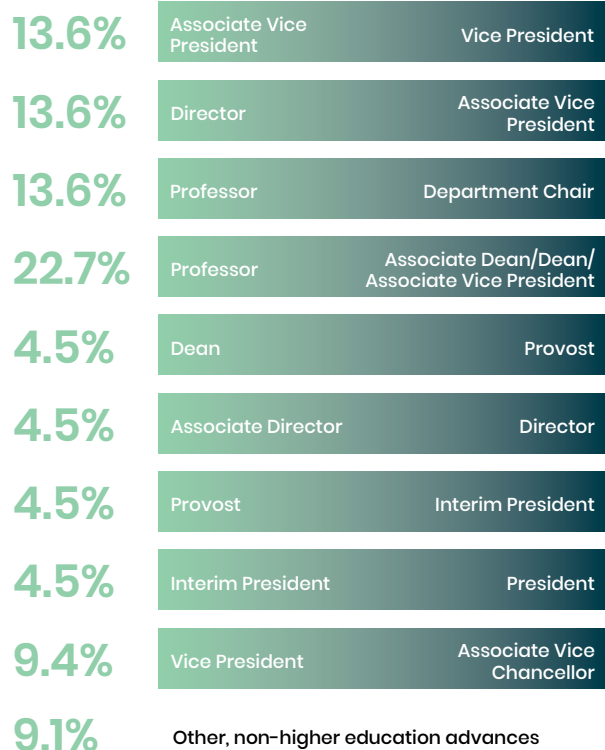
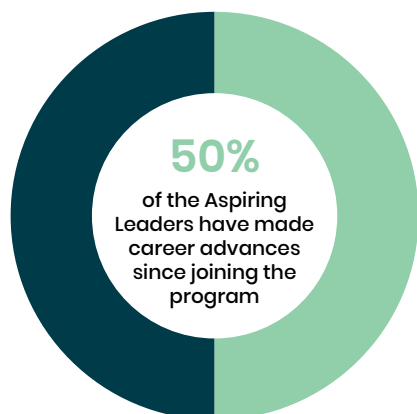
The #1 skill that Aspiring Leaders said they were missing was experience raising large amounts of money—fundraising.

fig. 9 **Region of the Nation Where Aspiring Leaders Work**



Source: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2020

fig. 10 Career Advances Since Joining MSI
Aspiring Leaders Program



Source: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2020

Recommendations

We offer these recommendations based on our interviews and conversations with Aspiring Leaders, presidential mentors, and our understanding of the research related to college presidential leadership.

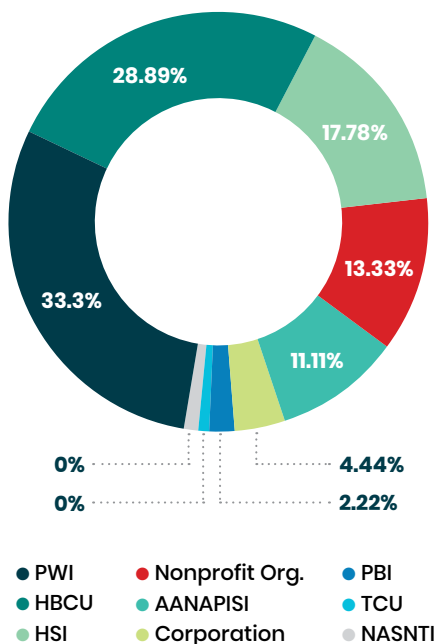
- 1 In order to attract a more diverse group of leaders at MSIs, and all colleges and universities, it is essential to look widely, and avoid tapping into “known networks” that have resulted in hiring White men. Both search firms and internal search committees must identify diverse leaders early and provide them with the opportunities, skills, and pathways that will propel them into presidential leadership roles.
- 2 To retain diverse leaders at MSIs, and at all colleges and universities, current leaders must provide opportunities for their growth, listen to their concerns, provide budgets to support their initiatives, accept their potential critiques and challenges, and encourage and respect their contributions on leadership teams.



“You have to have courage to be in this kind of role. You have to be a real strong, effective communicator. Your character will speak to everything you do, the decisions you make overall. You have to care, so you have to care not only about the institution, but the students, the faculty, the staff, everybody.”

—Aspiring Leader

fig. 11 Aspiring Leaders by Institutional Sector/Type



Source: Rutgers Center for Minority Serving Institutions, 2020

Note: Percentages don't add up to 100 because there is overlap between HSIs and AANAPISIs. Key: Historically Black College and University (HBCU), Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), Tribal College and University (TCU), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI), Predominantly Black Institution (PBI), and Predominantly White Institution (PWI).

“For me one of the reasons that I want to serve at a Minority Serving Institution is that I’ve never attended one. However, I’ve always been committed to the work that they have done. I’ve always admired the work that they have done.”

—Aspiring Leader

- 3 Those aspiring to be presidents of MSIs or other colleges and universities can move closer to success by building their skills across the various functions of higher education, acquiring a mentor who will be attentive and honest, and being focused on doing the work of the president rather than the presumed prestige of the position.
- 4 MSIs and other colleges and universities can support faculty and administrators who want to pursue leadership roles, by providing them with both on- and off-campus opportunities to hone their skills, interactions with internal and external senior leadership, and access to executive coaching that will help them identify their values and goals and well as prepare them for tough decision-making and crisis management.
- 5 Leaders need to mentor future diverse leaders and see this role as essential in order for leadership to diversify. All too often, leaders are pulled in every direction and don’t have time to mentor those who come after them. However, mentoring is an essential role and sharing skills, lessons, and professional contacts is integral to building the next generation of leaders.



Aspiring Leader Spotlights



Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval immigrated to California as a young child, and grew up tending the family farm as a bilingual and bicultural individual. He received his Ph.D. in Spanish and Portuguese from the University of California at Irvine, and participated in Cornell University's School of Critical Theory summer program. Saúl embraces servant-leadership in order to promote the values of an integrated society nurtured by the quest for self-empowerment through higher education. Saúl was appointed Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at CSU, Fresno in July 2019. His first semester as Provost was exciting, fast-paced, and extremely informative; he focused on his goal of visiting all the departments at Fresno State, furthering the university's graduation rate, and promoting the deep, positive impact Fresno State's students and faculty have on the community and world. The knowledge Saúl gained by visiting most campus departments by Spring 2020 proved invaluable, both for planned and unexpected endeavors. Armed with an informed perspective on the reach, breadth, and scope of Fresno State's disciplines, as well as their extensive influence, Saúl felt emboldened, hopeful, and focused when COVID-19 impacted instruction. His commitment to the multicultural students who will become tomorrow's leaders fueled his resolve to empower faculty during the transition to virtual delivery of instruction in March 2020 –specifically by cementing and maintaining strong lines of communication with faculty, staff, and students.

As Provost, Saúl embodies the power of learning, as he keeps in mind how higher education transformed his own life. He believes that higher education is ever-critical to illuminating the path of opportunity for so many. Indeed, his dedication to Fresno State is grounded on his view that higher education has profound and tangible benefits on individuals and all aspects of society. Saúl is an Aspiring Leader in the inaugural cohort of the MSI Aspiring Leaders program and is mentored by Mildred García, former president of California State University, Fullerton, California State University, Dominguez Hills, and the current president of the Association of State Colleges and Universities. As we finished this report, Saúl was named the interim president of California State University, Fresno.



Nicholas Courtney is an enrolled member of the Makah Nation. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington, and was raised in Auburn, Washington on Muckleshoot tribal lands. He is currently a Policy Analyst at the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest, largest, and most representative American Indian and Alaska Native organization serving the broad interests of tribal governments and communities. Nicholas's NCAI policy portfolio includes American Indian/Alaska Native education, health, Veteran's Affairs, and workforce development. Previous to working at NCAI, Nicholas served as the Program Director for the Native American Political Leadership Program at George Washington University. He is a member of the inaugural cohort of MSI Aspiring Leaders program and is mentored by John Bassett, the former president of both Heritage and Clark Universities.



Kevin James serves as the 19th President of Morris Brown College, a historically Black college located in Atlanta, Georgia. In this role, he leads as CEO and is responsible for leadership and management of all aspects of college operations and responsible for the development and execution of the vision and strategic direction for the college in concert with the Board of Trustees. In his nearly 21-year career as a higher education administrator and executive business leader, Kevin has been committed to improving his community through education and empowerment. His non-profit leadership experience includes serving on the 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Inc. Board of Directors, Chair of Mentoring, and Vice Chair for New Member Training. He also served on the Board of Directors of Girls Inc., located in Columbus, G.A., and was a career-readiness speaker for college students with the United Negro College Fund. Prior to his current post as President, Kevin was Interim CEO of the 100 Black Men of America, Inc. internationally headquartered in Atlanta, G.A. The mission of 100 Black Men of America is to improve the quality of life and enhance educational and economic opportunities for all African Americans. A native of Columbia, S.C., Kevin attended South Carolina State University and earned his bachelor's degree in Communication Disorders and Social Sciences from Winthrop University; a master's degree in Business Management, Leadership, and Organizational Effectiveness from Troy State University; and an Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership from Nova Southeastern University. Committed to community service, James holds memberships in several organizations including Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity, the Prince Hall Masonic Fraternity, and 100 Black Men of Atlanta, Inc. Kevin is an Aspiring Leader in the second cohort of MSI Aspiring Leaders and he is mentored by Alvin Schexnider, former chancellor of Winston Salem State University, and previous Interim President of Norfolk State University.



Tierney J. Bates has over 20 years of experience in higher education and he has progressed from entry level student affairs to senior level administration. He has worked in higher education providing leadership, vision, and responsibility for strategic initiatives/solutions in student affairs/services, diversity & inclusion, career services, enrollment, and fundraising. He is currently at UNC Chapel Hill as Assistant Vice Chancellor for Special Projects. He has worked previously in his career at, Virginia Union University, North Carolina Central University, University of Louisville, and University of Tennessee, and Bowling Green State University. Tierney is from Cleveland, Ohio and received his B.A. in Mass Media Communications with a minor in African-American history from the University of Akron, his M.A. in Higher Education Administration from the University of Akron, his M.B.A from Bryan College, and a doctoral degree from Spalding University. Tierney is a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), the National Black MBA Association (NMBAA), Southern Association of College Student Affairs (SACSA), National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) 100 Black Men of Triangle East and a Prince Hall Mason. Tierney is an Aspiring Leader in the first cohort of MSI Aspiring Leaders and he is mentored by Walter Kimbrough, the president of Dillard University.



Mary Ann Villarreal is fueled by an unwavering commitment to ensure the doors to receiving a degree remain open and the table is set for everyone to participate. As the inaugural Vice President for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at the University of Utah, she provides leadership and strategic oversight of diversity and inclusion initiatives across the University's academic and health sciences campuses. She also serves on the Association of American Colleges & Universities' Board of Directors and the executive committee of the Association of Public Land-Grant Universities' Commission on Access, Diversity and Excellence. Prior to her current role, Mary Ann served as the Associate Vice President of Strategic Initiatives at California State University, Fullerton; the Associate Dean at Colorado Women's College at the University of Denver; an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Colorado, Boulder; and an instructor as well as an Assistant Professor of History and Ethnic studies at the University of Utah. Mary Ann was raised by her grandparents in a small Texas town. She enlisted in the U.S. Air Force Reserves and became the first member of her family to earn a degree. She holds a bachelor's degree in Women's Studies from Mount Holyoke College and a Ph.D. in History from Arizona State University. When not working, Mary Ann enjoys the quiet moments of drinking coffee on the deck with her partner and the laughter when they play board games with their two children and her grandmother. Mary Ann is an Aspiring Leader in cohort two of the MSI Aspiring Leaders program and is mentored by Joseph Castro, the president of California State University, Fresno and forthcoming chancellor of the California State University system.



Regina Dixon-Reeves is the Assistant Provost at the University of Chicago. In this role, she provides leadership for diversity and inclusion programs, faculty development initiatives, and strategic planning across the University. Previously, she served as the Executive Director of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Chicago Medicine and Biological Sciences.

Reeves has a doctorate in sociology with a concentration in higher education from the University of Chicago. Her areas of expertise include mentoring of early career faculty and graduate students, strategies that increase academic productivity, and student support programs that increase college retention of first-generation students. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Marquette University.

Reeves is a past president (2009–2010) and current treasurer of the *Association of Black Sociologists* and served as chair of the organization's Professional Development Committee for 16 years. She is a member of the editorial board of *Issues in Race & Society: An Interdisciplinary Global Journal* and former chair of the Minority Scholars Committee of the Midwest Sociological Society. Reeves was selected as a fellow in the inaugural cohort of the Aspiring Leaders program. Regina is in cohort one of the MSI Aspiring Leaders program and is mentored by David Wilson, the president of Morgan State University.

ADVICE FOR FUTURE PRESIDENTS FROM PRESIDENTIAL MENTORS

On Managing Institution Crisis and Current Events:

- 1 Senior leaders carry the brand of most organizations. What they are doing and what they are saying is important to how the organization is viewed.
- 2 Managing unexpected and difficult situations is now a competency of leadership. Having experiences dealing with crises will help you stand out as a candidate.
- 3 If a crisis occurs on campus, the president should always be honest, even if the truth isn't attractive.
- 4 If institutional leaders can't say that they are sorry, that's a big problem. Taking moral and legal responsibility is a big deal, not only to those affected by the crisis but it also helps soothe the community.
- 5 When managing crises, institutional leadership must consider the core values of the institution. If those core values are under attack, there needs to be a plan in place to address the concerns of the community.
- 6 As you enter the role of president, you must understand that crisis will arise. How you handle the crisis makes all the difference.
- 7 When dealing with a crisis, presidents must know who they are, what they value, and what they perceive as the right thing to do as an institution and as an individual.
- 8 Crisis and risk management is about planning, understanding the institution's vision, and critical reflection of your institution.
- 9 As presidents, losing sight of the people—including students, staff, faculty, alumni—on your campus is doing a disservice to your institution.
- 10 On your leadership team, there should be some level of constructive conflict. As a leader, you must ensure that you create an environment where everyone feels comfortable enough to share constructive feedback.

“To be a president, you have to be incredibly tough and the question is can you teach that? How do you skill build around being tough or are some people just tough and some people less tough? Where am I on that spectrum?”

—Aspiring Leader

ADVICE FOR FUTURE PRESIDENTS FROM SEARCH FIRMS

On Applying for a Presidency:

- 1 Owning and telling your story is an important part in the application process.
- 2 The best evidence of how someone will perform in a position is how well they have performed in the past.
- 3 Have you ever had a stumble in your career and you are unsure of how to mention it in the interview process? First, own it, take responsibility, then provide full and complete context, and finally, talk about what you have learned through the process of stumbling.
- 4 If you know that you are interested in a particular job, be sure to keep a running list of all of the skills necessary for your next position and be strategic about crafting your current role to include gaining competency in these skills.
- 5 Don't oversell any role on your CV. Your CV should match what your references say. References should be able to attend to all of the qualities and responsibilities mentioned on your CV.
- 6 Interviewers are not simply interested in those who are charismatic. Skilled interviewers will see through a great talker. They want someone who is able to be successful.
- 7 When giving examples, acknowledge areas where you've led and areas where you worked hand-in-hand with others.
- 8 Worried about your social media presence during an interview? While you want to be authentic, you also want to be mindful that your words can be misinterpreted and taken out of context. Be prepared for comments on what you post and address them appropriately.
- 9 If you are in multiple searches at the same time, that's okay. However, these institutions should not be dramatically different institutions, as it is a sign that you may not be authentically interested and committed to an institution.
- 10 Finding the right fit is critical. If you change yourself to fit an institution, you may realize that that institution may not be the right fit and you may not want to be there. The board should want to embrace you for who you are and want you to be successful being your authentic self.

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